

Having Change and Making Change: Muslim Moral Transformations in Post-  
Suharto Jakarta, Indonesia

By

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وَلِلَّهِ غَيْبُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا أَمْرُ السَّاعَةِ إِلَّا كَلَمْحِ الْبَصَرِ أَوْ هُوَ أَقْرَبُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ

عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

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## Table of Contents

Acknowledgments.....	ii
List of Figures.....	vii
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1    Managing Change.....	31
Chapter 2    Changing Hearts and Lives at Initiatives of Change Indonesia.....	101
Chapter 3    The Banquet of Change.....	157
Chapter 4    Kahfi Motivator School and Islamic Hypnotherapy.....	196
Chapter 5    Kahfi, Motivation, and Motivasi.....	255
Afterward.....	305
Works Cited.....	320

## **List of Figures**

Figure 1	Mass Hypnotic Induction.....	206
Figure 2	Targeted Abilities and System of Instruction.....	219
Figure 3	Rolling out the Prayer Mats at Kahfi.....	233
Figure 4	Decorating the Walls at Kahfi.....	233
Figure 5	Planning Session Upstairs at Kahfi.....	234
Figure 6	Rapid Recitation of the Qur'an.....	236
Figure 7	Sources of Thought from Al Qur'an (1A).....	242
Figure 8	Sources of Thought from Al Qur'an (1B).....	242
Figure 9	Sources of Thought from Al Qur'an (2A).....	245
Figure 10	Sources of Thought from Al Qur'an (2B).....	245
Figure 11	Sources of Thought from Al Qur'an (3A).....	248
Figure 12	Sources of Thought from Al Qur'an (3B).....	248
Figure 13	A PowerPoint-Mediated Interpretation of <i>Pyscho-cybernetics</i> .....	272
Figure 14	Om Bagus on Public Speaking in the Conceptual Era.....	278



Figure 15	Recruits and Facilitators at Kahfi Ospek 13.....	298
Figure 16	A Military Aesthetic at Kahfi.....	300
Figure 17	Kahfi Motivator School Graduation for Cohorts 9-10.....	303

## **Introduction**

### **Prelude**

In 2008, when I started a project about revisionist history and post-New Order Indonesia, I imagined the death of former President Suharto early in that year would galvanize further historiographical reform. When the prophesied reforms failed to materialize, and when I repeatedly failed to engage Indonesians of my acquaintance in a meaningful dialog about the place and use of history, I moved in a different direction. My focus on history tended towards systemic analyses. I was interested in the structural logics that enabled and constrained political efficacy. My Indonesian interlocutors, however, voiced almost exclusive interest in agentic accounts. Asked what was the most grievous issue facing the nation, “corruption” was the usual reply. When I prompted for a solution, greater moral character was the almost-invariable response. I could not engage my friends in a debate about corruption without the need for personal moral accountability being the primary conclusion: my persistent wails of structural inducements were summarily unconvincing.

Returning to conduct my fieldwork in 2010, I was pulled ever further afield from my historical queries. Instead I was drawn directly into the operations of two small-scale organizations dedicated to achieving the kinds of moral awakenings I had heard about in prior years. Moral growth would salve social ills, the argument seemed to go. This was frequently an element of my discussions at both Kahfi Motivator School (Kahfi) and Initiatives of Change Indonesia (IofC), the two aforementioned organizations. Looking at themselves and their society, my acquaintances in these groups advocated moral projects of personal transformation.

Structural interventions did not appear to be “live options,” in the sense that William James gives the phrase. When I say “agency” here I do so with a degree of deliberate naivety. Rather than a firm sociological category, by “agency” I intend the belief and prospect that individual humans can play a determining role in achieving desired outcomes, both within their own lives and in the lives of their socially-bonded fellow humans. This possibility is in dialogue not only with a notion of “structure,” but for many of my interlocutors with the “hard structure” of divine ordination. The fact that the following dissertation deals primarily with the experiences and perspectives of young, mostly twenty-something Indonesians of middle or aspiring middle-class is hard to separate from the question of “agency.” At university and freed from familial constraints, or having just graduated but not yet bound to a new family of one’s own, the sense of personal possibility appeared to be dizzying. Along with virulent fears – the uncertainty of a career, the personal and financial prospect of marriage, the maturing debt to one’s parents – the intoxicating sense of efficacy evinced by my interlocutors owes something to their class position and life-stage. If there is an age-cohort for whom agency means anything, it is this one: young, educated, unattached. In the years since my research began, the horizons of possibility for many of these people, and for this author, have shifted. Former openings now appear considerably more bounded and aspirations often more humble.

“Agency” as a category in this work is one I supply: neither it nor its possible glosses figures prominently in the conversations underlying the arguments of this dissertation. Thus although I make frequent recourse to an agentive framing in my prefatory remarks, the bulk of the analysis in the project proper relies on an equally fuzzy category of “change” (*perubahan*). “Change” proved to be a vehicle for incredibly diverse aspirations, a point I return to several times over the course of this project. Oftentimes the people employing the language of “change”

were not clear about what, precisely, it denoted. At a minimum it seemed to reference movement, improvement, and difference. Change was considered, absent other qualification, a likely moral good. And achieving change required some notion of agency – even if it were only tacit. This partially justifies my admittedly undertheorized use of the term. Furthermore, “agency” is not a wholly etic concern: In contemporary Indonesian social-science, key categories of analysis have been largely imported from the Euro-American canon. Thus a term like “subjectivity” is often expressed as *kepribadian*, a noun that in times past used to denote something more like “personality” or “identity.” In government publications and academic research alike, Indonesia is awash in the language of *sosialisasi*. A transliteration of “socialization,” the term carries senses of inculcating, spreading and disseminating. *Sosialisasi* also, however, produces *kepribadian*: this is the social construction of subjectivity. My interlocutors at Initiatives of Change Indonesia were keen advocates of the language of *kepribadian*. They desired to develop within themselves, and socialize within Indonesia, *kepribadian* that “cared,” (*yang peduli*), that was moral (*yang bermoral*), and that could change (*yang dapat berubah*). It is this final element of agentive possibility that gives this dissertation its title: “having change and making change.” In Indonesian, *ubah*, or change, is something that is either “had” (*berubah*) or “done” (*mengubah*). The first, according to grammarians, has a subject but no object: “climate changes” (*iklim berubah*). The second has a subject and an object: “I change the reflective thoughts of my neighbors” (*aku mengubah pemikiran tetangga-tetanggaku*). Furthermore *berubah* doesn’t demand an explanation of change: it is descriptive rather than causal. Something has happened, *berubah* announces, without clarifying the doer, the done-to, or the rationale.

In Indonesian political discourse one abstract noun greatly predominates over the other: there is much more talk of *perubahan* (change, often without an object) than there is of *pengubahan* (change, always with an object and clear causality). When my friends and acquaintances translated “Initiatives of Change,” the word they used was *perubahan*. When a classmate at Kahfi, Tomo, spoke of wanting to become a more devout Muslim, the word he used was *berubah*.<sup>1</sup> I belabor this point about “change” to complicate my own conceptual reduction in terms of “agency.” The very language of *berubah* obscures agency even when it contains an earnest desire to be efficacious. The people described in this dissertation are interested in acquiring the tools of change, and then of changing themselves and others. The details of this prospect, however, reveal the continuing complexity of human and divine efficacy, even understood in a political circumstance that tends to foreclose discussions of structure. Tools of change that work, then, might be a fairer characterization than “agentive technologies,” when it comes to my discussion of the discourses adopted and adapted in these groups.

### **Acknowledged Misgivings**

Before beginning in earnest, I want to pause and recognize several pertinent criticisms. Firstly, I am aware that parts of this project rest uneasily alongside the materials they are designed to contextualize – pointedly so in terms of the historical chapter and the ethnographic arguments that follow it. As this project evolves, remedying this situation is my first priority – here I simply beg the indulgence of my readers. The notion of “*adab*” (a key Islamic concept I translate as “right relations”), suggests itself as a category with wider reach than the uses I have accorded it here, and may be one approach to bring added coherence to the project. Perhaps a theorization of “authenticity,” and the demands made of it, could add similar thematic unity. A

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<sup>1</sup> *Ingin berubah menajdi Muslim yang lebih taat.*

final underdeveloped argument concerns the place and role of affect in the organizations I describe. The recent emergence of pronounced affect as a desired disposition and a marker of moral authority in Indonesia deserve a richer treatment than I have thus far managed to provide – tracking the genealogy of this phenomenon is either a necessary revision of the current project or a point of departure for the next.

My observations throughout this project are limited by the setting for much of this research – at the State Islamic University and in its immediate environs. The Islamic State University Syarif Hidayatullah (UIN), located to Jakarta’s southwest in the city of Ciputat, has long been an important site of Muslim scholarship and activism. The flagship of the Indonesian Islamic State University system, UIN plays host to a diverse collection of students and faculty, drawn from across the archipelago and, increasingly, the world. Ideas developed in Ciputat have often echoed out into broader Indonesian society. Arriving on campus in the fall of 2010 I intended to embed myself amongst student activists, hoping to explore how historical narratives shaped political debates. I imagined I would be near the center of future changes in Indonesia and Islam. Instead of campus groups, however, I was quickly swept into the orbits of the two off campus communities I have already mentioned: Initiatives of Change and Kahfi Motivator School. Both organizations targeted the spiritual stature of their membership. Instead of history and politics, I suddenly found myself studying efficacy, ethics, and moral transformations. Although these weighty issues may resonate in other regions of the archipelago, the material I have direct access to remains that produced by or for young people in and around Ciputat.

Both IofC and Kahfi are each dedicated to unique visions of “change.” Change is understood along at least two axes: as a process of personal moral reform or transformation; and as a vessel for re-imagined social and political possibilities. While IofC stresses both of these

aspects, Kahfi is often more circumspect about the latter. Kahfi promotes personal moral attainment, but in almost every formal sense leaves aside questions of social or political obligation. Later in the dissertation, I argue that the complex logics of change evinced within the practices of these groups can be profitably understood against long-term historical processes of managing change, and in particular, managing the potential changes wrought by Islam in the Indonesian archipelago. The partial quietism of Kahfi can be understood in this light – as part of a long-term de-politicization of Islam only ever unevenly achieved. Separate from their political ends, however, the moral interventions advocated within these two recently-established organizations reveal profound negotiations of efficacy and subjectivity. Tracking the diverse modalities of change conceived within these groups opens up complicated projects of categorical purification, cultural assimilation and social organization that exceed their particulars.

Late in the drafting of this dissertation, I was alerted to several methodological concerns that had escaped more serious comment within the body of the project. The first concerns access: why Initiatives of Change Indonesia, why Kahfi Motivator School? Ideally the following pages suggest the significance of these organizations in understanding broad patterns of Muslim knowledge practices, moral possibilities embraced by contemporary Indonesians and globally circulating discourses of efficacious selves. However I do not address, other than through narrative happenstance, why I have selected these organizations. It was not purely what a more scientific procedure would consider “convenience sampling.” During the course of my fieldwork I liaised with a variety of groups, including prominent Muslim campus student organizations such as *Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam*; *Pergerakan Mahasiswa Islam Indonesia*; and *Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah*. Although I was graciously received by these organizations, the preponderance of their activities often seemed directed at the intensely local politics of the State

Islamic University Jakarta campus. In addition to their political exploits, these large student groups comprised important social outlets for their membership. Unlike prior historical periods, however, they did not seem as invested in achieving outside social visions, at least, not in my cursory visits to their events. Once potent sources of activist energy (part of the birth of the New Order and part of its demise as well), their consolidated university form seemed most interested in institutional re-production. A similar criticism was relayed to me by other acquaintances, like my research assistant Abdul Fatah, who had transitioned his primary loyalty from *Pergerakan Mahasiswa Islam Indonesia* to Initiatives of Change Indonesia. He complained that “campus politics” (dismissively characterized as bolstering ones resume by election to various and frequently redundant student government bodies) distorted the possibilities of these movements. “Politics,” for Abdul Fatah and many others, was a dirty word. Its mere invocation, *politiklah*, was meant as a dismissive characterization of base, personal interest. He viewed his participation at IofC, as detailed in chapter three, as part of a socially meaningful project of personal growth and “familial” improvement. This was not possible in the more established student organizations.

I also experimented with other organizations offering different sorts of moral possibilities. My brief involvement with *Kesatuan Aski Mahasiswa Muslim Indonesia* (KAMMI) ended following my participation in a Palestinian solidarity event organized by the group. KAMMI is a mostly “modernist Muslim” student auxiliary of the “Islamist” Prosperous Justice Party (*Partai Keadilan Sejahtera*). The solidarity event was co-sponsored by a vast list of prominent Islamist media outlets and political organizations. For two-days I cast myself in the profoundly uncomfortable (in terms of audience, not idea) position of advocating for the basic humanity of Jews, who were not otherwise charitably characterized in the course of a number of speeches and seminars. I left frustrated, having generated the impression that I was at least a



Jewish stooge if not actually an American intelligence agent (my name didn't help, for those literate in biblical history). For similar reasons, despite living immediately next door to *Pesantren al-Umm*, an important site for the *tarekat Tijaniyah* (a Sufi order most prevalent in Africa) in Indonesia, I did not avail myself of the opportunity to further study the organization. *Pesantren al-Umm* is also the spiritual home of *Front Pembela Islam*, a Muslim vigilante movement implicated in many recent violent clashes as they seek to express their vision of moral order. I struggled to imagine how I would be received as other than an intelligence agent, despite several acquaintances who were graduates of the institution. Limitations like this encouraged my focus on Kahfi Motivator School and Initiatives of Change.

My interactions with *Jamaah Tabligh* (the Indonesian affiliate of a global Muslim proselytization network) were far more rewarding. However, folding in yet another organization felt like too ambitious a reach for this dissertation. Instead I leave open the possibility of revisiting my generous interlocutors at *Jamaah Tabligh* in the conduct of a subsequent project. The giants of Indonesian Muslim organizations, *Nahdlatul Ulama* and *Muhammadiyah* held less appeal for me, not just because of their ample representation in scholarship, but also because their sheer size posed logistical difficulties in terms of access and meaningful analysis. Members of IofC and Kahfi are frequently also members of *Nahdlatul Ulama* or *Muhammadiyah*, although I seldom inquired directly about this fact. My understanding of Islam in Indonesia is beholden to many predecessors who have worked closely with either *Nahdlatul Ulama* or *Muhammadiyah*. Nevertheless, they are scarcely mentioned in the following chapters, except as proxies for “traditionalist” or “modernist” sympathies in terms of personal performance of Muslim religious obligations.

In place of these larger and more established organizations, I highlight Initiatives of Change Indonesia and Kahfi Motivator School. I characterize both as “small-scale.” The nature of that scale deserves fuller elaboration than it has received in the body of this dissertation. There are about fifty currently active members of IofC. To that number there are approximately two hundred peripherally involved individuals – people who have moved on to another stage in their life or who are only occasional attendees at IofC events by dint of their location (far from Jakarta). Another five hundred or so have been involved at one point or another. Some of these alumni maintain personal friendships with current membership, if diminished participation. Others appear as anonymous names on email lists – perhaps they went to one workshop, but elected not to continue their involvement, or perhaps they were vital members who have simply drifted away and are largely unknown to current participants.

Kahfi has a larger reach than IofC, although it is sharply dwarfed by much more established Islamic pop-psychological or motivational outfits. There are approximately three hundred and fifty current students at Kahfi. To that number there is a further five hundred alumni, along with hundreds of others who did not meet the graduation requirements but maintain some ties to the institution. The obligatory first seminar on “Public Speaking in the Conceptual Era,” the first step to enrolling at Kahfi, is often attended by three-hundred to four-hundred people, although less than half of that number ultimately registers for classes. It has been operating for twelve years, and from a first cohort of fifteen students, current classes admit one hundred and fifty. By comparison, *Manajemen Qolbu*, the television program that was one prominent manifestation of AA Gym’s media empire, was routinely watched by millions during its 2004-2006 heydays (AA Gym got his national start on RCTI’s morning program *Hikmah Fajar*, *Manajemen Qolbu* was originally a spinoff from this program, although it became the

name for the entire branded enterprise). Ary Ginanjar, the founder of *ESQ* an Islamic-business-leadership and spiritual enhancement seminar program, has reached an audience of millions since he founded the organization in 2000 – tens of thousands of people attend *ESQ* workshops per month at the current rate. Even larger still, of course, are the tens of millions of people on the membership rolls of either *Muhammadiyah* or *Nahdlatul Ulama*. Om Bagus, the central figure at Kahfi, has probably directly addressed thousands of people, if not tens of thousands, across his various for-hire presentations, which are often broadly similar to materials covered at Kahfi. But Kahfi Motivator School is small, and it's easy to meet people in Jakarta who have never heard of it.

The lure of Kahfi and IofC was only partly a matter of convenience – although it was a fact that they were happy to have me, and welcomed me to participate in ways that student groups, understandably, did not (I was not a university student). Contrasted to established popular Muslim preachers like Yusuf Mansur, AA Gym or Arifin Ilham, Om Bagus was an aspirant on his way up. Having transitioned from a livelihood based on entertainment (as a commercial and commercial voice actor), Om Bagus is, as of this writing, acquiring the Islamic bona fides to bolster his authority in moral domains. Kahfi, along with its no doubt earnest altruistic commitment to empowering youth, is a useful testing ground for the theories and practices Om Bagus employs with other audiences. Joining the school, I had the distinct sense that I was witnessing a phenomenon a little closer to its genesis. It's an open question how far that trajectory extends, but Om Bagus and many of his students aspire to the kind of media empire of more well-known public Muslim moralists. Although I wish them every success, observing this moment was meaningful to me regardless of its outcome – even if they don't take over the world, they convincingly represent a certain set of historical possibilities.

There is another dimension to my interactions within these groups that bears mention – what I contributed to their efforts. What is often a tacit quid-pro-quo of research was explicit at Kahfi: I was given access to teaching materials and classroom time in exchange for services rendered. For this reason I translated a number of hypnosis scripts into Indonesian, lent my minor prestige as a foreigner to hired motivational performances and taught the occasional class on a subject with which I felt comfortable. My mere presence conferred greater rhetorical authority to the speakers to whom I listened. By contrast, at IofC, with its frequent hosting of foreign visitors, all that was expected was that I be a sincere participant – a role I was happy to fulfill. I nevertheless felt obligated to demonstrate greater gratitude for the access I was granted. Towards this end I also taught classes, but more usefully I made myself available to the many IofC members who aspired to travel abroad. I have edited many applications – both simple visa requirements and prestigious academic scholarships – for acquaintances from IofC.

Despite the small stature of these groups, the participants within IofC and Kahfi have the potential to wield a disproportionate influence in the Indonesia of the future. Very few members (actually, none that I knew of) of either organization were part of the cosmopolitan ultra-wealthy Jakarta set that stands first in line to inherit ownership of Indonesia's large businesses and the levers of its politics. However, as part of the slim Indonesian middle-class, the highly-motivated memberships of these organizations evince a strong possibility for upward mobility. As many of them enter the ranks of the civil service, a mammoth bureaucracy in Indonesia, they stand poised to rapidly advance to positions of real authority. One friend from Kahfi has been swiftly promoted within the Ministry of Fisheries. A former president of IofC is instrumental in the founding of a Tanri Abeng University, a new private university bankrolled by the eponymous industrialist. Another long-time IofC member is pursuing a Master's degree in the United States

as he rises through the Ministry of Religion hierarchy. While both groups contain a disproportionate number of teachers (the State Islamic University was once a teacher's college), there are a lot of projects undertaken on the side, some of which will probably meet with splashy success. Beyond the vastly improved material prospects of their membership, IofC in particular tries to cultivate a political ethic that links personal moral development to broad social responsibility. Among the Indonesian human rights lawyers of the future, I would be very surprised not to see IofC members. Already they have become important players in domestic efforts at interfaith peace and reconciliation – often through partnership with the Wahid Institute, the think-tank and foundation established by former President Abdurrahman Wahid.<sup>2</sup>

Initiatives of Change Indonesia and Kahfi Motivator School were founded after organizational regulations were relaxed following the collapse of the Suharto-led New Order government (1966-1998). Moral renewal is a dominant feature of the discourses employed at both organizations, reflecting the appeal of this prospect for many Indonesian audiences. Although they participate in broadly popular projects of moral argumentation, as I have just established, they are very minor players in a national scene. Yet despite their recent vintage and slim membership rolls, both have something vital to say about Islam, state, and subjectivity in the present era. The vast appetite for “change,” the absolutely ubiquitous presence of self-improvement discourses, the marriage of spiritual and psychological literatures within the self-help canon: these are phenomena not limited to Indonesia or the immediate past. Changes “done” and changes “had” both exert enduring appeal. Their tremendous salience has yet to receive a commensurate scholarly reckoning.

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<sup>2</sup> Leadership at the WAHID Institute had worked with early IofC leaders under the auspices of *Gerakan Pemuda Ansor*, the youth wing of *Nahdlatul Ulama* (the massive traditionalist Muslim organization of which former Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid was also chairman). Thus *Nahdlatul Ulama* become a connection between IofC members and organizations with allied social commitments.

Initiatives of Change Indonesia and Kahfi Motivator School did not simply appear in the liberalized public sphere of the post-New Order world fully formed. Macro-historical changes in the Indonesian state helped generate the conditions for their emergence. Individual actors, too, played a part in founding the organizations, acting in accordance with their, no doubt, individual motivations. And although both organizations are committed to investing their activities with local meanings, they draw freely on globally circulating discourses of personal change. There are a lot of parts to this story. To tell it, then, requires some shared contexts. Thus I tell some of the other stories, in broad outlines, which have done so much to structure the very possibility of each of these organizations. This is also a tale about Indonesia, Islam and the Dutch.

### **The More Things Change...**

Once upon a time Indonesia was said to have shuddered beneath the burden of three and a half centuries of Dutch colonial rule. This timeframe, *tiga setengah abad*, became a rote element of the standardized history taught in postcolonial Indonesia. Three and a half centuries – an erroneous but not an arbitrary claim. In the fresh dawn of Indonesian independence no less a figure of erudition than Pramoedya Ananta Toer framed the character of colonization in precisely these terms. In the perennial translators’ favorite, *Tales from Jakarta (Tjerita dari Djakarta)*, the first story “Djongos + Babu” (“Houseboy + Maid”) caustically locates the history of the titular houseboy and nursemaid deep in the colonial past.<sup>3</sup> Pramoedya writes, “Since Jan Pietersz Coen, the hereditary inheritance of the family was genuine slave’s blood. Not half-hearted slaves – loyal to the roots of their hair. And maybe not just since Coen. It is more likely the case already

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<sup>3</sup> Benedict Anderson highlights this collection in *Language and Power*, and translates the opening passages of this story (221). James Siegel has published his own translation of “Djongos + Babu,” entitled “Flunky + Maid.” In the 1999 publication of *Tales from Djakarta*, Julie Shackford-Bradley translated this story as “Houseboy + Maid.” Nancy Florida has also rendered this story as “House-Boy + Maid: A Very Long Family History.” I would argue that in addition to its literary merits, this repeated attention is occasioned by its historical probity. Thus I am unable to resist the temptation to translate this opening passage, once more, myself.

since Pieter Both or even at the time Houtman wandered across all the oceans (6).”<sup>4</sup> In a helpful footnote to his translation of this passage, published in *Language and Power*, Benedict Anderson explains that “J.P. Coen was the founder of the Dutch East India Company stronghold of Batavia (Jakarta) in 1619. Pieter Both was the first governor-general in the Indies (1609-14). Cornelis de Houtman led the first Dutch naval expedition to the Indies, 1595-97” (222). By endorsing this particular historiography, Pramoedya locates the genesis of a colonial subjectivity from the very *presence* of de Houtman. The Dutch had merely to appear and servitude was instantiated. This nationalist narrative of immediate rupture finds the seeds of Indonesian-ness at the dawn of the colonial encounter – the writhing submission described in Pramoedya’s short-story is the mirror image of heroic resistance valorized by the historians of the independent state. Pramoedya himself, a true believer in a certain trajectory of nationalism, imagines the Native elites as static corrupted elements in the historical tableau. Indeed, both sides of this proposition cast the inhabitants of the archipelago in the static role of acted upon. Change, when it comes, flows from the dynamism of Europe into the supine bodies of the colonized. This argument suggests itself as the outcome of the processes it claims to describe.

Three years before Pramoedya’s *Tjerita dari Djakarta* was published (1957), President Soekarno addressed Indonesia’s legislature on the ninth anniversary of the declaration of Independence. The speech is collected in the second volume of *Dibawah Bendera Revolusi* (*Beneath the Revolutionary Flag*). Repeating his frequent assertion that Indonesia suffered under three and a half centuries of colonial rule, Soekarno exclaims, “For three and half centuries we have paid the pricy penalty of our collective failure to safeguard the unity of the nation. For three

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<sup>4</sup> Sejak Jan Pietersz Coen turun-temurun keluarga itu memang berdarah hamba. Hamba yang tak tanggung-tanggung – setia sampai bulu-bulunya. Mungkin juga bukan sejak Coen saja. Besar kemungkinan sudah sejak Pieter Both atau di saat-saat Houtman mengelana di semua samudera

and a half centuries we have carried out the sentence. Now we are independent because we have re-forged [*menggembelng-kembali*] the unified nation [*kesatuan bangsa*] (181).<sup>5</sup> Nationalism anachronistically locates itself in an eternal past; this observation is not, of course, new: the very idea of nationalism is animated by a historicity and a futurity – a bi-directional projection of particular present circumstances into a universalized and atemporal narrative that nevertheless claims logical exigency. This is our famed nationalist teleology, which truly requires no further introduction. And so for Soekarno the idea of Indonesia as a return to a pre-colonial national unity has considerably greater appeal than to imagine it a largely arbitrary space, delimited by Dutch peregrinations and host to diverse ethno-linguistic communities on separate national trajectories. And thus those organized under the sign of Independence are also all those peoples who the wanderings of de Houtman touched – the territorial expanse of the Netherlands East Indies as the natural and right boundaries of Indonesian sovereignty. From Soekarno’s place at the podium, colonialism becomes an interregnum, albeit one extending across the better part of four centuries. Soekarno hoped to wrest the timeless essence of the nation from the grasp of a colonial story of Native stasis and enshrine it as a founding principle of the post-colonial state. As a result, the Indonesian revolution requires that nothing, really, change: it orbits on an axis, rotating in a fixed plane.

If Soekarno’s revolution required an unchanging nation, its static features were transcendentalized in the heavy hands of the New Order propagandists. The New Order government, famously, stood at the levers of change and did everything possible to stymie their operation. The fantasy of simultaneous social stasis and economic mobility was brilliantly

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<sup>5</sup> Tiga setengah abad lamanya kita membayar denda yang mahal atas kelalaian kita memelihara kesatuan bangsa. Tiga setengah abad lamanya kita menjalani hukuman. Sekarang kita telah merdeka karena dapat menggembelng-kembali kesatuan bangsa itu.



distilled by Mary Margaret Steadly in *Hanging Without a Rope*: “Change guarantees continuity, in other words: progress makes nothing happen” (75).<sup>6</sup> *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*. As Razif Bahari formulated it in “Remembering History,” the New Order, “used strategies both to suppress and to engender the past, that is, to arrest dissonance in the discourse of history as well as to assert continuity between the glories of *Orde Baru* prosperity and stability and the continued development of the modern nation-state that it purportedly ensured” (64). The New Order objective was not, strictly speaking, just the preservation of a static society. Rather the elusive vision was a singular vector of progress – fixed identities, fixed languages, and fixed allocations of power, all traveling along a smooth continuum of economic advancement. To the extent that the New Order succeeded in securing one or of the other of these elements (rigidity of language, say, or formal maintenance of the nuclear-paternal family),<sup>7</sup> it never accomplished the sum of its ambition. Yet in its drive to inoculate the population against the very possibility of change, Suharto’s government faithfully maintained its colonial legacy.

The fall of the Suharto government in 1998 allowed for the public expression of previously foreclosed historical curiosity. Elements of the long-standardized national history became subject to fresh review. Contemporary Indonesians evince a vast appetite for change. The public fetish of *pembangunan* (development) has been supplanted in the yearning for

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<sup>6</sup> Steadly casts a sharp gaze on both the New Order fantasy of development and stasis alike. Fixing the past as a static object of commemoration is imagined as a constitutive element of the future delivery of economic advancement. The passage from which the above quotation is drawn is worth citing at some length:

*Pembangunan* (“development”), the New Order’s special mantra and its symbolic alternative to the uncontrolled and therefore destructive forces of *politik*, links the stability of “nothing happening” with the desirable national goal of economic progress. In the official rhetoric of the New Order, social stability is a prerequisite for orderly infrastructural transformation; the “directed” economic changes of *pembangunan* in turn promise to make national stability a future reality...New Order history is thus not so much a matter of events as of memorial. Election, anniversaries, monuments, museums, tombs, the monthly *tujuhbelasan* (“seventeenth”) commemoration of Indonesia’s August 17, 1945 declaration of independence—these endless spectacles and simulations of the Age of Development—are replicas of imaginary mileposts on the teleological Road to Order-Without End (75).

<sup>7</sup> See, for an elaboration of this argument, Saskia Wieringa’s article, “The Birth of the New Order State in Indonesia: Sexual Politics and Nationalism.”

*perubahan* (change): and here we can see the desire for changes to occur, without necessarily supplying a subject and object for those changes. At the same time, dense suspicions about the attainability of “change,” in either configuration, pervade public discourse, expressing an earned cynicism reflecting the dubious prospects of agentive political activism. Yet despite the yearning for change, the same stories continue to be told. Flipping open the pages of a middle school history textbook, published “post-Reformasi,” I am struck by the claim that, “the people’s suffering under Japanese occupation for three and a half years was almost the same as the suffering under Dutch colonialism for three and a half centuries” (Prawoto, 11).<sup>8</sup> The oft-repeated rhetorical flourish of Soekarno has become canonical, a veritable state-sanctioned fact. In the face of such relentless cultural and historiographical dogma, it is unsurprising that Indonesians cast wide nets, beyond the reaches of the archipelago, in their search for sources of meaningful change. This, too, is not new: incorporating outside elements in dynamic reconfigurations of self and society is a long-standing practice, whether we start from Hindu kingdoms, the crucible of Islam or the pressure of a colonial state. It has only ever been partially managed by those aspiring to govern.

### **A Litany of Change**

This project is a story about change: who can perform it, how it is accomplished and what it means. Islam looms large in this telling. It was against the specter of Islam that the Dutch first mobilized the knowledge-making apparatuses of colonial rule (Chapter 1). This took place in the aftermath of the Diponegoro War (1825-1830), a bitter conflict that pitted vast swathes of Javanese society against a sliver of the native hierarchy and their Dutch allies. Mobilized, in part,

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<sup>8</sup> “Penderitaan rakyat di bawah pendudukan Jepang selama tiga setengah tahun hampir sama dengan penderitaan di bawah penjajahan Belanda selama tiga setengah abad.” This ninth grade history textbook opens the discussion of the Japanese occupation with the conventional narrative: “the warm reception of the people towards the Japanese swiftly changed once it was known that the Japanese were the same as the Dutch” [*sambutan baik rakyat kepada Jepang segera berubah setelah tahu bahwa Jepang sama dengan Belanda*] (11).

by a project of Islamic renewal, the forces led by Prince Diponegoro were nearly victorious. Terrified of a similar eruption, Dutch colonial governance had at least two related motivations: to thwart the possibility of uprising and to maximize the extractive potential of their colonial holdings. Javanology and the Cultivation System (*cultuurstelsel*) comprise important elements of this twinned legacy.<sup>9</sup> The Natives were brought into a globalized economy through rents secured by Dutch stewardship (ignoring the massive history of trade that predated European colonial expansion) at the same time as ossified and passive “culture” was carefully ascribed to the now-subject population. Preserving this hard-won stability meant the neutralization of Islam, initially misinterpreted relative the imagined influence of the Ottoman Empire, itself understood in the shadow of the Dutch experience with the Catholic Church.<sup>10</sup> For a long time, the Dutch didn’t need to know much to about Islam except its incomplete hold on the lives of the Natives. Buried in this characterization was the dark fear that Islam had already taken root in the souls of the subject, and together these possibilities comprise the all/nothing thesis of Dutch colonial scholarship.<sup>11</sup>

When the Cultivation System gave way to the “Association Theory,” dramatized so adeptly in Pramoedya Ananta Toer's *Bumi Manusia (This Earth of Mankind)*, the sudden interest in “associating” with natives was in the context of an emerging understanding of Islam.<sup>12</sup> The

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<sup>9</sup> See Kenji Tsuchiya’s “Javanology and the Age of Ranggawarsita” for an excellent introduction to the creation of the category of Javanese culture in this context. For its enduring postcolonial salience (especially as a totem of political quietism), see John Pemberton’s *On the Subject of “Java.”*

<sup>10</sup> For an excellent history that rolls back some of the received wisdom on Dutch toleration and Protestantism alike, see Charles Parker’s *Faith on the Margins*.

<sup>11</sup> This is precisely Nancy Florida’s argument in “Writing Traditions.” Setting the terms at the outset of the article, Florida observes, “Colonial scholarship on ‘the Javanese’ was thus often propelled by a desire to penetrate the private, inner recesses of native subjects in order to observe the presupposed falsity of these subjects’ Moslem claims and professions” (187).

<sup>12</sup> Pramoedya credits much of the impetus behind the Association Theory to Snouck Hurgronje, but tends to obscure the significance of Islam in this story, for reasons probably reflective of his own strong humanist orientation. Hurgronje’s influence is taken up explicitly here, in chapter 1. For an Indonesian scholar’s discussion of *Bumi Manusia* in light of this history, see Yohanes Hartadi’s “The Colonial Doubling, or the Challenge for Colonial Authority.”

Association Theory recognized, *pace* the post-Diponegoro maintenance of *rust en orde*, that change was coming to the Indies. If key Native elites could be enlisted in projects authorized by the wisdom of the Netherlands intelligentsia, perhaps the coming changes could be channeled in ways that presented a minimum of disruption. Coupled with a dawning sense of a moral responsibility for civilizational uplift, this theory gave birth to the “Ethical Policy” (*Ethische Politiek*), which theoretically obtained through the end of Dutch colonial rule (Ricklefs, 183-84; Vickers, 17-18). Islam was the fulcrum on which the changing policies towards change shifted. The great insight of Snouck Hurgronje was that Islam, of itself, might portend only individual (and thus harmless, interior, personal) transformation. Supporting a richer embrace of Islam, for Snouck, was the first step on setting the natives along a course of secular disenchantment. His argument, according to Harry Benda in “Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje,” was that the state’s tolerance could plant the seeds that would eventually blossom into Islam’s political and cultural irrelevancy. Instead of thwarting all things Muslim, the Netherlands East Indies government might cultivate ever greater Muslim devotional character amongst the Natives: that their Islam might be a tool of their pacification.<sup>13</sup> Of course, only so long as the fundamental political/religious distinction could be honored. Divorced from this-worldly affairs, the colony was to be closed to the social imaginings encouraged within the Islamic tradition.

The establishment of a government agency directed towards administering religion, and above all Islam, was a culmination of the theories and policies flowing through the Indies at the end of the nineteenth and the outset of the twentieth century. Snouck Hurgronje’s first

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<sup>13</sup> Snouck Hurgronje’s role in this is discussed in Eric Tagliacozzo’s *The Longest Journey*, a text directed to the history of Southeast Asians and the Hajj pilgrimage. Hurgronje is also the central character in Michael Laffan’s *The Makings of Indonesian Islam*, part of a dyadic Geertz-Hurgronje pairing that Laffan sees as key to the authorship of an “Indonesian” Islam. See also Azyumardi Azra’s *Islam in the Indonesian World* for an account that also features prominent indigenous experts. This history also sets the stage for Luthfi Assyauckanie’s *Islam and the Secular State in Indonesia*.

government posting in the Netherlands East Indies, in 1889, was as an advisor for Arab and Islamic Affairs – a role his years in the Arab peninsula (1884-86) had left him well equipped to fulfill. Following his successful sojourn in Aceh, he became the Advisor in the Office for Arab and Native affairs (*Kantoor voor Inlandsche en Arabische Zaken*), an 1898 revision of the prior bureaucratic entity that became the Office of Native Affairs following Snouck Hurgronje's return to the Netherlands in 1907.<sup>14</sup> This office, in another incarnation, persists to the present. It is part of a vehicle for the maintenance of the categorizing impulse fully manifested in post-Ethical Policy colonialism. The contemporary Ministry of Religion (*Kementarian Agama*) is ceaselessly forced to enunciate the proper boundaries of religion and culture.<sup>15</sup> Inheritor to the colonial project of religious management, the Ministry today directs the bulk of its policies towards Islam. As the administrative unit tasked with ensuring the stable operation of religion as a category (and culture as religion's "other"), the Ministry of Religion continues to influence how Islam is expressed in the public sphere and inculcated in educational institutions. The government is still in the business of channeling and directing religious aspiration, today bending the appetite for change along a nationalist arc. Massive shifts in the political orientation of successive administrations have meant little, in practice, for the ambit of the Ministry's ministrations.

The outline I have traced for this story of religious management, in its gross contours, is of course open to the criticism of being overdrawn. Here I recall Ann Stoler's insight late

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<sup>14</sup> See especially Chapters 3 and 4 of Michael Laffan's *Islamic Nationhood and Colonial Indonesia* for the full details of Snouck's work at the helm of this office, as well as the result of his time in Jeddah. See also Howard Federspiel in *Sultans, Shamans and Saints*, for a particularly innocuous read of this office – "the office undertook studies designed to reveal the needs of various Muslim populations under Dutch control and give advice on upgrading the general welfare of those populations" (100). According to Federspiel, the dark machinations attributed to the office are mostly nationalist fantasy, since it really proved to be a temporizing influence on the more starkly anti-Islamic motivations of other colonial actors. This despite its acknowledged role in the intellectual enterprise of more fully categorizing and controlling the native population.

<sup>15</sup> See Myengkyo Seo's *State Management of Religion in Indonesia*.

in *Carnal Knowledge*, ascribed to colonial regimes but just as pertinent to their post-colonial inheritors:

Colonial regimes were uneven, imperfect, and even indifferent knowledge-acquiring machines. Omniscience and omnipotence were not, as we so readily assume, their defining goals. More important, they were part of what I have called “taxonomic states,” whose administrations were charged with defining and interpreting what constituted racial membership, citizenship, political subversion, and the scope of the state’s jurisdiction over morality. (206).

Stoler is interested in the manifold operations of this taxonomic impulse, but above all she understands the state’s jurisdiction over morality insofar as it consists of regulating sex, sexualities and bodies. For present purposes, however, the categorizing enterprise extends into moral reaches beyond bodies and the mingling of their parts. Exigencies of rule demanded that the colonial regime come to know the moral stature of its subjects, and just as importantly, regulate the moral inputs that were understood to galvanize those subjects’ actions. These efforts, in turn, have continued throughout the various configurations of postcolonial governance.

The taxonomic operations of the state described by Stoler (and the structures that will be traced in Chapter 1 of this work) have served vital socio-political functions throughout history: The colonial regime had to teach itself to recognize religion or risk its irrational eruption. Islamic rebellion in Java was a harsh educator. And this task was hardly consigned to the past with the advent of indigenous rule. From the outset, the independent Indonesian state enrolled itself in the diligent demarcation of religion and culture, morality and politics, private rectitude and public admonitions. Receiving the categorizing baton from its colonial predecessors, the machinery of modern Indonesia maintained the legacy of definitional and divisional labor. Yet, like its forebears, in these regards its efforts were always “uneven, imperfect, and even indifferent.” Just as quickly as social forms were stabilized, the subjects constituted within these forms set themselves to re-arranging their constituent elements. The story that follows is thus never really

a tale of equilibrium. Animating changes have continued to emerge from within the very categories so assiduously stabilized by Dutch and Indonesian discourse alike.

The history I have darted through above forms the conceptual background for a project that is, at its heart, insistently local and particular. This macro-history generates and constrains the possibilities for moral activism in contemporary Indonesia, in ways both hidden and exposed. My attentions will next turn from historical narratives to discrete manifestations of the profound desire for moral transformation found in an organization known as Initiatives of Change. The roots of this organization in Indonesia date to at least the 1950s. However changing political orders brought the formal exclusion of Initiatives of Change's prior incarnation: the Moral Re-Armament movement, outlawed in the twilight of Soekarno's rule. Early in the post-Suharto years, President Abdurrahman Wahid lifted the ban on the Moral Re-Armament movement, allowing its successor organization (Initiatives of Change Indonesia) back into the country. Examining how this "foreign" organization was taken up, localized, and Islamized (Chapter 2) provides an initial introduction to shifting configurations of the concept of change. The kinds of change attempted within Initiatives of Change Indonesia rely on careful linguistic maneuvers that protect Islam from the possibility of corruption, while enabling Muslims to avail themselves of non-Islamic technologies. Their operation is best understood in the context of changing legal and administrative possibilities in post-New Order Indonesia. At Initiatives of Change Indonesia, Christian practice is rendered morally neutral and rhetorically available for Muslim personal transformation – despite the well-policed boundaries that should prevent this from happening.

The further unfolding of this legacy regarding Initiatives of Change Indonesia is where Stoler's taxonomic states meet the purifying impulse of modernity so central to Webb Keane's *Christian Moderns*. Keane elaborates how a notion of efficacy or agency becomes recognizable

and isolated, a process Keane refers to as, “the sorting out of proper relations among, and boundaries between, words, things, and subjects” (4). A semiotic ideology is what allows for this sorting, as well as the sorted form. In this attention to “proper relations,” Keane has an unexpected ally in the Islamic notion of *adab* (Chapter 3), which can be understood as fulfilling a metapragmatic role. The “right relations” of *adab*, an insight linked to my observations of sociality at Initiatives of Change Indonesia, allow for different kinds of change from those that might be attributed to other models of agentic action. *Adab* allows for the hierarchal ordering of existence at the same time as it facilitates the negotiation of competing ethical injunctions. Notions of *adab* help explain plural models of Muslim sociality that are, I will argue, obscured in the recent scholarly emphasis of piety: although all relationships may ultimately point to the Divine, their local rights and responsibilities are still highly significant.

Related politics of translation, adaptation and assimilation run through the practices and curriculum of the Kahfi Motivator School, an innovative institution that teaches public speaking, Islamic hypnotherapy and motivational practice, all free of charge. Despite the very different models of change advocated within this institution, there is a related flexibility in re-assembling the ostensibly purified categories of discourse. A particular kind of dynamism is especially evident concerning the practice of Islamic Hypnotherapy (Chapter 4). Here the story the west used to tell about itself (objective, scientific, morally neutral, secular) becomes an instrumentally vital story for the successful appropriation of hypnotherapeutic practice. The foreign is domesticated precisely through the epistemic neutrality ascribed to western technologies of inter- and intrapersonal change. In the course of assimilation, broadly salient patterns of guilt and redemption are used to anchor the featured technologies of change to their new audiences. This affective association furthers the degree to which knowledge and practice feel meaningfully



possessed by their new community. The process at work at Kahfi highlights the extent to which the policing of boundaries in the dominant forms of the Islamic tradition in Indonesia are concerned, above all, with preventing the misattribution of agency and misrecognition of origins – not in blocking the influence of the foreign.

Islamic hypnotherapy represents a successful localization—and Islamization—of a technology of change. The theories of efficacy embedded in this practice resist the ready interpretation of globalized liberal subjectivity. The complexity of this agentic landscape comes into sharper relief by shifting from the study of hypnotherapy, as taught at the Kahfi Motivator School, to the concept of “motivasi” organizing motivational practice at the same institution (Chapter 5). The variety of selves convened in self-help discourses demonstrate the enduring desire to *be changed*, as much as to change oneself. Motivasi, in its Indonesian particulars, also carries a threatening potential concerning how it imagines collectivity. As I shall argue, whether mobilized by motivasi or exclusivist religio-political claims, Indonesian ideas of collective efficacy rely on the (post-1965) available model – the military. How we understand the widespread adoption of a militarized aesthetic, however, deserves the same caution with which we greet the seeming superficiality of self-help discourses: the uniforms and pageantry betray a complicated assemblage, an organizational aspiration not reducible to the violence of its borrowed social and sartorial framework. This final argument, an appeal to perplexity in the face of the too familiar, animates the ethnographic anecdote closing this project (Afterward).

### **Accessing Change**

As I claimed at the outset, this undertaking began as a study of history and historiography. Eventually, in place of “history,” moral transformations, ethical interventions, and efficacious change coalesced as the new center of gravity for my research. The exploration

of these phenomena was spurred by my partial assimilation into two communities located near my institutional perch at the State Islamic University Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta. The Kahfi Motivator School and Initiatives of Change Indonesia proved to be vital arenas for my introduction to the complex matrices shaping moral and social reform in contemporary Indonesia. In both organizations, the generous welcome of the membership enabled the observations that became the heart of this project.

Although the vogue for boilerplate disclaimers concerning positionality has largely elapsed, unmourned, I nevertheless feel compelled to partially revive this late twentieth-century scholarly convention. The arguments I make in this project are inextricably bound up in the configurations of access and participation that were available to me – and the “me” of this project was a moving target. If this is always already the case, it was still poignantly so within the communities convened at Kahfi Motivator School and Initiatives of Change Indonesia. I am cognizant of my role within the processes I identify, not just during the term of my fieldwork, but as I have maintained many of the relationships formed during that time. I didn’t just study how people conceive of change – to a considerable extent, I offered myself as the subject of change in concert with the transformations attempted by my interlocutors.

As a married, white, male, foreigner, and especially as an American, I was imagined to bring certain innate qualities to each of these communities. At Initiatives of Change Indonesia it was assumed that I carried a native fluency in humanist and pluralist logics, both ideological positions heavily identified with *dunia barat* (the western world) in contemporary Indonesia. Initiatives of Change Indonesia positioned its moral work within a framework of pluralist values and so I was frequently asked to be a representative of those discourses, however ineptly. At the same time, I represented instant diversity. To the extent that an argument applied to me, it could

be assumed to be universal, given how fundamentally different I was imagined to be from my Indonesian acquaintances.

At Kahfi Motivator School, the culturally specific models of sociality (especially assertiveness) affiliated with *gaya barat* (western style) were understood to be important elements of the discipline of public speaking. The related dispositions were automatically ascribed to me by dint of my whiteness and native use of English (it helps that I am also, already, loud and brash). Thus I was presumed not to be afraid of appearing *angkuh* (arrogant; overbearing) or *sombong* (inexcusably proud; aloof; *mistakenly* superior). To be white was already to be *sombong* – the least I could provide from such a vantage was insight into the effective registers of persuasive speech. The skills taught at Kahfi Motivator School demanded that the students re-examine privileged manners and etiquette. As the bearer of western norms, I was a ready and repeated example for my fellow students. I constituted both a subject and an object of lessons concerning efficacious public address. At the same time, my whiteness opened the doors to the institution, drew me to the front of the class, and ensured that, if nothing else, I would be heard.

In a project addressed to moral transformation, my own piecemeal awakening deserves at least passing mention. Over the course of conducting fieldwork I was changed in moral terms both meaningful and legible to those around me. As my religious dispositions became coherently Muslim, I came to constitute a different sort of lesson for audiences in both organizations. Now, not only was I the elite foreigner, but I was also a proof of the tradition. The power and appeal of Islam was imagined to be manifest in my formal entrance into the tradition – although this process of conversion had probably begun many years prior to my fieldwork with my first sustained exposure to classical Sufi literature. My new identification as a Muslim was easily

assimilated into the stories about Islam and moral suasion that circulated within Kahfi Motivator School.<sup>16</sup> At Initiatives of Change, however, this was a more vexing development. If my presence before guaranteed a root minimum of diversity, in these new terms that diversity would demand separate enunciation. What did it mean, in an organization committed to religious pluralism, to witness a conversion to the internally dominant religious identity? We never really, collectively, answered that question. Even after the initial concern had been obviated – that becoming Muslim necessarily set me on course for an ardent *Salafi* position – a sense of unease persisted. For many Initiatives of Change Indonesia members my conversion narrative worked as the same sort of proof it was imagined to be at Kahfi Motivator School. But for some of the senior leadership I was now suspect: this was not the kind of moral awakening they envisioned in their proselytization efforts. Initiatives of Change could advocate interfaith moral renewal precisely because it didn't encourage anyone to cross acknowledged boundaries of religiosity. Conversion threatened this status quo, since it of course also suggested out-conversion, a particularly fraught subject for Muslims in Indonesia. Probably as a result of these changes, my interactions within the organization began to skew towards the younger membership. Fewer of these newer members had grappled with the complexities of the organization's own history as detailed in Chapter 2, below. This changing social location is ultimately reflected in my argument: I look at how the Christian genealogy of Initiatives of Change is negotiated in language and practice, but not really how it is discussed, since I was no longer included in those discussions.

I approached this project with the disciplinary posture of a historian despite the ample baggage of literary studies I carried from my formal training. My first thoughts were almost

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<sup>16</sup> “Welcome to my everything,” one acquaintance proclaimed, exuberantly, in English, greeting the news of my conversion..

always, and summarily, wrong. Years of anthropological reading had provided not a whit of ethnographic training. The bumbling, in time, became the method. I was relentlessly educated and re-educated, hailed by one set of ethical imperatives only to be upbraided for my ignorance of competing norms. At Initiatives of Change Indonesia, I presented materials on subjects I was familiar with, but I also enrolled in the Youth Camp as a neophyte participant. At Kahfi Motivator School I performed white male oratorical privilege, but I also spent multiple nights, weekly, duly recording the lectures of Om Bagus. I wasn't an average member and I couldn't be a typical student. Thankfully my arguments do not rely on assuming those subjectivities.

My approach to these materials has been shaped by the work of my mentors – including those whose own work extends to shores well removed from Indonesia. At the outset of *The Politics of Mourning in Early China*, Miranda Brown sets forth her methodology in terms I would like to largely borrow here: “because language is not a transparent vehicle of meaning, and the past simply does not await recovery through a straightforward reading of sources, I will lavish much attention on the language of my sources, their provenance, and their interpretation...in actual practice, this means quoting rather than paraphrasing my sources so as to allow competing readings sufficient room to shape my story” (6). In several places, particularly as it pertains to the assimilation of “foreign” knowledge into the practices disseminated at Kahfi Motivator School and Initiatives of Change Indonesia, I will similarly expend much ink. The point is less a celebration of linguistic particularity and more an attentiveness to the multiple meanings present in particular articulations, a common-place fact rendered all the more important when it transpires against the shifting horizons of multiple languages. For this reason I ask the readers indulgence in places where the varied senses of key terms may seem a bit belabored.

Throughout the ebbs and flows of my involvement with the two organizations introduced in these pages, I was also an active participant in the Universitas Islam Negeri community. Formally hosted by the Center for the Study of Religion and Culture, then under the able leadership of Dr. Irfan Abubakar, I nevertheless spent a disproportionate amount of time in the International Office at the administrative center of the campus. In exchange for office space I offered off-the-cuff translation services – which proved to be a useful way to ingratiate myself. The faculty and staff who peopled the International Office proved to be such gracious hosts that it was difficult to move on from their hospitality. As a result of that time well-spent, some of their thoughts have become incorporated in this material – in one case, in a recorded interview, but mainly through my liberal borrowings from their perspectives on my preliminary observations. In this way, even as I collected data, I tried to subject my analyses to the scrutiny of the people described within them, as well as to their peers from overlapping communities. I haven't tried to import, wholesale, the narratives offered at either Initiatives of Change Indonesia or the Kahfi Motivator School. But my hope is that when my acquaintances from those institutions read this document, they will find a representation of their communities that is critical, charitable, and recognizable.

### **Parting Remarks**

By way of closing this introduction, I want to anticipate the major arguments of the following pages. I list these in roughly reverse order to how they will appear in the text itself. The first is my sharp disagreement with the interpretative dominance of neo-liberalism. The partial and incomplete triumph of a certain globalized economic order need not be relentlessly re-inscribed as the “real” of so many discrete social and cultural phenomena. Against this conceptual crutch I will advocate a return to particularistic analyses that take seriously the

internal motivations others ascribe to their activities. Thus I see “motivasi” as not merely an ideological supplement to late capitalism (which remains one viable possibility), but it also as part of the surviving faith in the efficacy of language and the differential capacity of individuals to mark the souls and beings of others. My second argument concerns the over-representation of “piety” in current literature addressed to Islam. The corrective that piety once offered has become instead an obstacle to recognizing the existence and operation of other social and ethical obligations. Thus I will suggest that the term “adab” allows some of these other moral arguments back into scholarly frames. Mirroring parts of this project back to me, one critic characterized this orientation as an attention to “surfaces rather than depths.” This strikes me as apt – “adab” invites some of the natural ethical weight of social surfaces into discussions of the Islamic tradition. Rightly relating is not simply a matter of manners, it is the fulfillment of overriding Islamic imperatives: to be merciful and to be just.

Throughout the dissertation I will attend to an argument that makes its appearance early in the second chapter. This concerns the rhetorical availability of discourse – the ways in which presumed moral neutrality makes ideas, knowledge and practice accessible to new audiences. Whether cast in terms of profane language or the amoral character of science, this framing is one way the contemporary Muslims (and indeed, their intellectual ancestors) incorporate new elements into the tradition. This kind of instrumental secularity deserves careful distinction from the political projects of secularism that seek to assert a related neutrality as the fundamental epistemological grounds for public discourse. In my research, amoral western science is nested within Muslim projects that locate the divine on all horizons. My first, and thus final, argument will be about historical continuity – the lasting impress of Dutch colonialism on the postcolonial state’s definition and management of religion. If this last story has been the best told by others

before me, it nevertheless provides the vital context for the rapid emergence and tremendous draw of the moral renewal movements at the center of my writing. Conceptual possibility, alongside legislative reform, allowed for the enunciation of groups like IofC and Kahfi in the aftermath of the New Order regime. Taken together, these four arguments will comprise the substance of my intervention into existing scholarship. On one final occasion I assume responsibility for the infelicities of their articulation.



## Chapter 1

### Managing Change: Islam, the Dutch and Postcolonial Indonesia

#### Openings

This chapter is addressed to the back story, as it were, of the Indonesian state's relationship to Islam. Different tendrils of this story reach deep into the history of Islam in the archipelago and reflect social and philosophical developments unfolding on independent, if intersecting, global trajectories. In the face of such a complex web of relations, I chart a humble course: here I consign myself to an analysis of several shifts that exert an outsized influence on contemporary Indonesian possibilities, particularly as they pertain to Islamically-guided moral projects. Thus I highlight the years on either side of the Diponegoro War (1825-30), pursuing an understanding of the conflict's impact on the formation of the colonial regime and attendant scholarship addressed to Islam. Next I revisit the "pacification" of Aceh (1873-1914, although pockets of resistance persisted past that point), a point of entry into the high colonial regime organized beneath the paternalistic philosophy of the Ethical Policy (1901). From here I skip past the formation of the early nationalist movement (important if well-charted terrain), focusing instead on the Dutch response to the mobilization of Islam during the Indonesian Revolutionary War (1945-49). Shifting from colonial regimes to postcolonial orders, I look at the formal place of religion in the newly independent state, as reflected in the official state ideology (Pancasila). Reviewing the changing political prospects of Islam during the New Order, I bracket this discussion with a detour into the legal status one of the organizations at the center of this study

(Initiatives of Change, previously Moral Re-Armament Movement). I arrive finally at the conceptual terrain governing contemporary efforts to manage religion and its social potentials – a foundation, of sorts, for the ethnographic accounts that follow.

I argue that the set of constraints within which contemporary Indonesian Muslims imagine personal, social, and moral efficacy are shaped by the above history, understood in concert with broad global currents of economic and political possibility. My contribution here is to see how a particular model of change (personal, non-structural) came to predominate in Indonesia. That model, I argue, has been extensively shaped by state-level interventions into the religious lives of the archipelago's inhabitants. The genealogy of this concept, I contend, extends back well beyond postcolonial politics into the formative moments of Dutch colonialism. These continuities continue to exert significant influence in structuring the horizons of personal and social change. The observation that Islam manifests, in part, the impress of a particular colonial regime is hardly unique to my argument (Michal Laffan in *The Makings of Indonesian Islam*; Yudi Latif in *Indonesian Muslim Intelligentsia and Power*; and Nico Kaptein in *Islam, Colonialism and the Modern Age* all provide good places to start along this path). Rather than recapitulate that line of reasoning, my aim here is to trace how “change,” emanating from Islam, has been managed through successive political orders in the archipelago.

“Change” is the organizing principle for two moral improvement organizations that comprise the heart of my larger study (Initiatives of Change Indonesian and Kahfi Motivator School). Both of these institutions emerged in the particular political and cultural climate that followed the collapse of the Suharto regime in 1998. This context is essential for understanding the scope of their operations, the reach of their ambitions and the nature of their practices. A major element of the reforms inaugurated in the *Reformasi* era (the period following the

resignation of Suharto on May 21, 1998) was the relaxation (or at least, revision) of regulations governing the formation of political, social and religious organizations. These regulations were accretions dating not just to the New Order of Suharto, but to the “Old Order” of Soekarno, and before that, Dutch colonial administration. Despite the executive and legislative reforms of the post-Suharto era, for the modern Indonesian state, “religion” remains a force requiring careful management. The theories of religion that inform Indonesian governmental strategy are heavily indebted to the theories employed by their Dutch colonial predecessors. Islam, for reasons both demographic and orientalist, figures most prominently in the state management of religion. Before examining the contemporary conditions that frame the possibilities for moral renewal movements, it is useful to reflect back on the historical legacy that has done so much to shape the legal and cultural landscape within which they formed. Along with its criminal code and religiously administered family law, Indonesia inherited a peculiar tunnel vision from Dutch colonialism. This was a fundamental inability to recognize Islam as anything but one of two administrative possibilities: a lurking, omnipresent (and largely invisible) threat; or a superficial veneer masking deeper cultural truths: a false-consciousness easily manipulated in pursuit of more *real* aims.<sup>17</sup> This sharp divide is maintained even as the state embraces all sorts of Muslim performances, whether to bolster its popular legitimacy or out of actual conviction. The management of Islam has been remarkably continuous, although the state ideological location of the tradition has been subject to massive revisions. For hopefully transparent reasons, I refer to this as the all/nothing hypothesis. For a richer understanding of this stark binary, I turn first to a crystalizing moment in the colonial encounter: the Diponegoro War.

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<sup>17</sup> For the recognition of the stark terms of this divide, I am indebted to Nancy Florida in “Writing Traditions.” There Florida introduces a line of reasoning key to the argument in the next section of this chapter: that the Diponegoro War was the inauguration of politically motivated scholarship on Islam in the Netherlands East Indies.

## The Long Shadow of Prince Diponegoro<sup>18</sup>

In the eighteenth century, the Dutch presence on the island of Java assumed new political significance. Whereas earlier the Dutch had been one trading force among many, during this period they began to consolidate direct control over increasingly large swathes of territory. A royal succession battle in the Islamic kingdom of Mataram left sovereignty splintered between two (and eventually three) forces. The Dutch, partially responsible for the ensuing chaos but still alert to the opportunity, intervened and brokered first the Treaty of Giyanti (1755) and then the Treaty of Salatiga (1757). The first of these treaties established two parallel sultanates, one in Surakarta and one in Yogyakarta. The Treaty of Salatiga further divided the Surakarta Court, carving out the new independent principality of Mankunegara (Ricklefs *A Modern History*, 129; Florida *Writing The Past*, 27; Andaya and Andaya *A History*, 257-8). Into this uneasy *détente*, the convulsive history of Western Europe intervened. First the long faltering Dutch East India Company (*Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie*, VOC) finally collapsed, pressured by the British and first nationalized by the Dutch Batavian Republic in 1796, then fully absorbed by the Republic in 1800.<sup>19</sup> Thus just as indigenous political institutions were neutered, the “private” operation of colonialism became a state enterprise. After Napoleon Bonaparte swallowed up the Batavian Republic in 1806, a new Governor General was dispatched to the Indies. Herman Willem Daendels, serving in this capacity from 1808-1811, revolutionized the relationship between Dutch colonists and their native subjects (Carey *Power of Prophecy*, xi). It was a short,

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<sup>18</sup> Throughout this section, except in verbatim quotations, I employ the current Indonesian orthography, thus writing “Diponegoro.” Old Dutch sources use “Diepo Negro,” and due to different orthographic conventions other sources use “Dipanegara” and “Dipanagara” (open “A” vowels are vocalized as “O” in Javanese). All of these naming conventions obscure, somewhat, the fact that “Diponegoro” is a title rather than a personal name. Prince Diponegoro was given the birth name Bendera Raden Mas Mustahar (Carey *Power*, 69). He was next Raden Mas Antawirya. He came to be called Diponegoro only in the course of the eponymous war.

<sup>19</sup> This synoptic history replicates the conventional account. Recent scholarship by E.M. Jacobs, published as *Merchants in Asia*, points to more local factors in the decline of the VOC, relating to the Asian spice trade as well as competition with the British in India. In either event, transfer of authority from the VOC to the Dutch state ushered in the dawn of a new colonial order, fully realized in the aftermath of the Diponegoro War.

brutal, reign, now incorporated in independent Indonesian historiography as a foundational national trauma.

The Napoleonic Wars provided a pretext for the British to launch an assault on Dutch holdings in Java. Sweeping to a swift victory in 1811, Thomas Stamford Raffles was installed as the Governor General. Departing from both the monopolistic trade orientation of the VOC and the short-lived economic rationalization of Daendels, Raffles initiated a project *to know* the inhabitants of Java, to better maximize the economic potential of the island.<sup>20</sup> Published in two volumes shortly after the end of his tenure in 1815, *The History of Java* (1817) set a high mark for subsequent colonial knowledge production. Early in the second volume Raffles describes the relationship between his Dutch predecessors and the “Mahomedan natives.” Raffles first examines the impact of the Hajj pilgrimage on Javanese life, focusing on the institution that had most troubled colonial officials. Raffles writes that, “Pilgrimages to Mecca are common....As soon, however, as the Dutch obtained a supremacy, they did all they could to check this practice, as well as the admission of Arab missionaries, and by the operation of the system of commercial monopoly which they adopted, succeeded pretty effectually” (3). In Raffles’s telling, a previously widespread practice of Muslim pilgrimage is thwarted through the commercial controls on shipping instituted by the Dutch. This substantiates both the involvement of the

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<sup>20</sup> The gap between the British conduct of colonialism and the Dutch was especially large, according to contemporaneous British observers. An anonymous review of the French translation of F.V.A. de Steur’s memoir of his service during the Diponegoro War, published in Cochrane’s *Foreign Quarterly Review* in 1835, captures the British response to the Diponegoro War:

The valuable work of Sir Stamford Raffles, only tended to increase the general regret, that so fair a possession which had derived immense benefit from the more judicious and enlightened system of administration under the British government, had been restored to its former masters, who, there was every reason to apprehend, would replace it under the same narrow system of colonial policy which had so long oppressed the inhabitants, and cramped the resources of the island, by rendering everything exclusively subservient to the interest of the mother country (220).

The remainder of this review is given over to de Steur’s striking portrait of Diponegoro, followed by the *Review* author’s synopsis of his capture and exile, described in some detail: how Diponegoro delayed negotiations, until the end of *Ramadan*, and how the administration of de Kock respected that desire, only to capture him once the parlay began.

Javanese in major Islamic circuits and the beginning of a concerted Dutch effort to manage the implications of that participation.

The Dutch interference in pilgrimage was part of a defensive posture towards a source of political, economic and social legitimacy that they were ill-equipped to understand. Despite blocking “the admission of Arab missionaries” and Javanese pilgrims, however, the Dutch did not yet have a coherent policy towards the tradition. Raffles comments on the ad hoc character of the Dutch management of Islam and the blocking of pilgrims: “it does not, however, appear that this arose from any desire to check the progress of Mahomedanism on Java, or that it was with any view to introduce the doctrines of Christianity, that they wished to cut off the communication with Mecca; their sole objects appear to have been the safety of their own power and the tranquility of the country” (3). The Dutch response to Islam prior to the Diponegoro War suggested a reactive experiment in isolating the economic subjects of their colonial activities. Instead of a comprehensive approach to the place of Islam within the lives of their subjects, the Dutch repression of the pilgrimage stemmed from the observation that “Mahomedan priests have been found most active in every case of insurrection” (Raffles, 3). Preventing insurrection, then, was simply a matter of limiting contact with the outside world. The traumatic encounter with Prince Diponegoro would change all this. Controlling access to other geographical centers of Islam would not be enough – the Dutch would have to first truly know the character of the colonial subject and parse her Javanese interior from her Muslim exterior.

The Diponegoro War broke out nine years after the Dutch were returned to power in Java. It was a consuming conflict that devastated Central Java, grinding through an estimated 200,000 Javanese casualties, along with a further 15,000 casualties on the part of the Dutch – including, of course, native soldiers from elsewhere in the archipelago (Carey, “Origins of the

Java War,” 52). The arrested dynastic struggle that had splintered the Mataram Kingdom set the backdrop. Referred to as the “Java War” in colonial historiography, here I use the Indonesian emphasis on Diponegoro to better reflect the key role of the prince. In short, the conflict was motivated by Diponegoro’s effort to re-unify the kingdom, expel the Dutch and restore authentic Islam to the island. He was aided by aristocrats chafing under Dutch taxation, Muslim scholars offended by the institution of European rule, and peasants either sharing in his religious conviction or obligated by the terms of their servitude to support him. In the first year, Diponegoro almost won. By 1827, however, the tide had turned. In November 1828, one of Diponegoro’s key allies, Kyai Mojo (an important Islamic scholar married to Diponegoro’s cousin, the daughter of Prince Mangkubumi) was induced to surrender (van der Kroef “Prince Diponegoro,” 447-8). With dwindling support Diponegoro fought a rearguard action, eventually captured in the course of negotiations with the Dutch commander Generaal Merkus de Kock in March, 1830. From there he was sent into exile far to the east, in Makassar.

Prince Diponegoro was born in the new (post-Giyanti Treaty) kingdom of Yogyakarta in 1785. He was not directly in line for the throne, as his mother was a royal concubine. In his youth, he was educated by Islamic scholars under the tutelage of his famous great-grandmother, Ratu Ageng Tegalreja. According to Peter Carey, citing Diponegoro’s own autobiography *Babad Dipanagaran*, his great-grandmother was “renowned...for her Islamic piety and the pleasure she took in reading religious texts, as well as her firm insistence on preserving traditional Javanese *adat* (customs) at court” (*Power*, 75). This unity, between “*adat*” and “Islam,” was unremarkable at the time of Diponegoro. *Adat*, in colonial scholarship, came to mean the “non-Islamic” customs that predominated in an area, a source of systematic rules or laws outside the dictates of Islam. Within the Islamic tradition, however, *adat* like *urf* denotes customs or practices of an

area that can be a supplement to Islamic jurisprudence (in fact, in some jurisprudential tradition, *adat* would trump rulings derived from *qiyas* or analogy, although, of course, explicit scripture or *hadith* would always obtain).<sup>21</sup> We will return to this distinction, *adat* and Islam, time and again as it became a core filter through which the Dutch attempted to sever colonial subjects from the threatening potentials ascribed to the Islamic tradition. Inoculating the colonies against change required that the colonial subjects be unchanging themselves, static bearers of an ancient culture. The exclusion of Islamic dynamism came through the valorization of presumed *adat* essences.

In post-Independence Indonesian historiography, the Diponegoro War is seen as a heroic struggle against the fundamental illegitimacy of colonialism. In Dutch colonial scholarship, however, it was the last quixotic gasp of an old order. Justus van der Kroef imagined Diponegoro to be advocating a “program of national purification with [an] emphasis upon the distinctive Hindu-Mohammedan antecedents... as opposed to the ‘contamination’ of Western civilization, brought in the wake of more than three centuries of Dutch rule over the East Indian Archipelago” (“Prince Diponegoro,” 424). The “Hindu-Mohammedan” past, of course, became just the “Hindu” past in the scholarship undertaken immediate after the Diponegoro War (see Kenji Tsuchiya, “Javanology”). As Nancy Florida argues in “Writing Traditions,” the Dutch division between “Java” and “Islam” filtered out into indigenous knowledge practices as well. Writing about a “native” Javanologist working late in the nineteenth century, Padmasusastra, Edwin Wieringa describes the extent to which Padmasusastra had become inhabited by Dutch philological conventions: “Padmasusastra was following Dutch norms; he had not only adopted their literary norms by writing in prose and not, as was usual in Javanese discourse, in metres

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<sup>21</sup> For a basic introduction to this argument, see Gideon Libson’s “On the Development of Custom as a Source of Law in Islamic Law.”



(*tembang*), but also had taken over their taboos. The majority of nineteenth-century colonial philologists focused on classical Old Javanese literature, quite deliberately neglecting New Javanese Islamic texts” (“Ethnoknowledge and the Sea of Progress,” 223). Fifty years after the Diponegoro War, even Javanese scholars interpreting Javanese texts were beholden to the colonial distinction between authentic Java and foreign Islam. The relentless search for pre-Islamic Java ran in parallel to the promotion of contemporaneous *adat* as an authorizing tradition capable of resisting Islam. This would remain the case until colonial policy was re-imagined at the dawn of the twentieth century.

The outbreak of the Diponegoro War, reflecting economic grievances, cultural myopia (the ill-fated road planned atop Diponegoro’s ancestors’ burial site), and religious reformism introduced colonial administrators to the vast organizing reach of Islam amongst the inhabitants of Java. The tenacity of the Javanese forces, coupled with a diverse alliance that incorporated religious teachers, court aristocrats and peasant vassals, took the Dutch by surprise. Some later scholars address this conflagration dismissively. Harry Benda, in an otherwise excellent piece on the colonial administration of Islam, mentions in passing “though the so-called Java War was easily suppressed by the Dutch, village unrest, fanned by Muslim scribes, continued to plague the colonial government on Java” (“Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje,” 338). However, according to Nancy Florida in *Writing the Past*, “the year 1830 is, then, a watershed year in Javanese history, marking the final end of indigenous royal political power, the defeat of the last serious military challenge to Dutch authority on the island (prior to the Indonesian national revolution), and the beginning of high colonialism in Java” (56). Only long after the fact would Dutch administrators talk about an easy victory, a perspective then reflected in the work of Benda. In 1830, the significance of the war was immediate and obvious. Revisiting documents produced during the

war suggests the extent to which the colonial narrative of easy victory and non-Muslim subjects was a post-facto achievement.

General Hendrik Merkus de Kock (1779-1845), the lieutenant Governor General during the Diponegoro War and the military commander who eventually captured the prince, was a prolific writer of letters and notes. In one letter in the extensive de Kock archive kept at the Nationaal Archief in the Hague, written late in the conflict (June 1829), de Kock writes to the Commissioner General of the Dutch East Indies. Occasioned by the death of a young Dutch Major General named Bischoff, who died from an illness unrelated to the war, de Kock took the opportunity to re-appraise his audience of his Javanese opponents. De Kock characterizes Diponegoro's ability to galvanize the masses on the basis of an Islamic appeal:

[Diponegoro] takes enlightened [*wakkere*, awake] and enterprising [*ondernemende*] Natives, often from the low classes [*lagere Volksklasse*] and elevates them to a lofty status, then [they] issue judgments. He has placed the ancient Javanese government [*aloude Javasche Regering*] and institutions under his dominion [*allenheersching*], so as to revive [*herleven*] them, and especially to glorify [*verheerlijken*] the Islamic teachings [*Mahomedaansche leer*], so as to give himself an image [*schijn*] of exemplary [*voorbeeld*] steadfast compliance [*nakoming*] with Islamic law [*voorschriften*], to give inexorable [*onverbiddelijke*] strength to the hordes [*krijgsbenden*, martial gangs] that follow him. He thus has assured the cunning *tarekat* [Sufi orders, *tarijken*] and the fanatic priests a state to be achieved soon in the indefinite near future, here, as in all lands and all times, by great upheaval [*grootte beroeringen*] that the crowd [*welkemenigte*] so readily prays for, including Dipo Negro. (“Rapporten van de luitenant-gouverneur-generaal De Kock,” 5).

There are several instructive elements of this account. The first is the social revolutionary aspect of Diponegoro's wartime rule. Instead of through purely hereditary claims, Diponegoro elevates leaders on the basis of their Islamic bona fides, here referred to as their “awake” and “enterprising” character, which is to say, something like “merit.” Furthermore, this one short passage highlights several of the core elements of Diponegoro's coalition – the “low classes,” the “fanatic priests” and the *tarekat*, or Sufi orders. There is also the repeated identification of the “ancient Government” of Java with the Islamic tradition. This replicates Diponegoro's rhetoric

without disputing it. Whatever the historical merits of this position, it is at a minimum clear that the combatants in the Diponegoro War did not see a distinction between Javanese royal and cultural patrimony and Muslim convictions.

August Willem Philip Weitzel, a Dutch military officer and statesman, drafted *De Oorlog op Java van 1825 tot 1830* (“The War on Java from 1825 to 1830”), published in two volumes in 1852 and 1853. A massive history of the conflict, it is assembled almost entirely from the notes of de Kock. One early passage, where de Kock characterizes Diponegoro, is worth reviewing precisely because it differs so greatly from the post-Diponegoro War Javanological standards of knowledge (the separation of *adat* and Islam, Java and Muslim). De Kock writes:

Mangkoe-Boemie [Prince Mangkubumi, Diponegoro’s uncle] and Diepo-Negoro stood, as it were, directly opposed to the royal adviser and the Resident [highest ranking Dutch administrator in the area]. Although [Mangkoe-Boemie] was of gentle disposition [*zacht van inborst*] and weak character [*zwak van karakter*] he was pulled along by the unmistakable superiority [*meerderheid*, majority] of Diepo-negoro. This [superiority] followed from the Prince of the House of Mataram himself, more so than any of his generation; he was Javanese above all, and he cherished *adat* with the holiest reverence [*heiligsten eerbied*], and held the most intimate hatred [*innigsten haat*] for the conquerors of his fatherland. As a Muslim in his soul [*ziel*], he was zealous [*ijverig*] and fanatically believing [*geloovig tot dweeper*], and he carried his contempt with him, for all who thought differently, and he had revulsion [*afkeer*] for all innovations [*nieuwigheden*]. (7-8).

This is a stunning characterization, insofar as de Kock holds his adversary in some considerable esteem.<sup>22</sup> For our purposes, however, the key feature of this passage is the place of *adat* and the simultaneous attribution of essential Javanese-ness (“*hij was Javaan boven alles;*” “above all

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<sup>22</sup> Elsewhere in Weitzel’s text, de Kock discusses the insurgents’ motives. Relating events in the Kedu Regency [*Residentie Kadoe*, a colonial administrative unit in Central Java extending from present-day Semarang south to Magelang], de Kock made a note at the end of September, 1825. De Kock characterized Diponegoro and Mangkubumi as in open rebellion against the legitimate monarch and the Dutch administration, and remarks that they have sent their emissaries across Kedu to communicate to district heads that they, “planned to invade the Regency, in order to expel the foreign usurpers [*vreemde overweldigers*], to restore the ancestral [*voorvaderlijk*] system of governance [*regeringswijze*]; morals [*zedes*] and customs [*gebruiken*], as well as the pure Muhammadan religion [*zuivere Mahomedaansche godsdienst*]” (85). Rather than a later accretion, as has sometimes been argued, de Kock at least acknowledged the Islamic reforming impulse from the very outset of the conflict.

Javanese”) and devotion to the Islamic tradition (“*Als Muzelman in zijn ziel;*” “As a Muslim in his soul”) As has been established in the work of Nancy Florida and others, *adat* becomes Islam’s opposite in the colonial scholarship written after the Diponegoro War. During the conflict itself, from the vantage of colonial administrators, adherence to *adat* and commitment to Islam were part of the same constellation of beliefs animating Muslim opposition to the Dutch presence on Java. The final line, too, calls out for attention. What were the innovations (*nieuwigheden*) that provoked such revulsion in the Prince? Perhaps we can read in this the fundamental Islamic reformist impulse to purge the tradition of the accretions and “unlawful innovations” (*bidah*) that are imagined to corrupt it. For the post-war scholar officials, it would take years of careful reading to find an “essential” Javanese identity separate and removed from Islam.

The long-term success of the Dutch project of de-Islamizing the conflict can be seen, in part, through its later rhetorical availability for other sorts of arguments. The Diponegoro War has become a highly frequent citation in studies of agrarian revolt and millenarianism, both understood in deconfessionalized and decontextualized terms. In a truly ambitious comparative book, *Prophets of Rebellion*, Michael Adas interprets Diponegoro, as the title suggests, under the sign of prophethood. Adas is invested in demonstrating that millenarian movements rely on a charismatic figure to anchor them: “Popular discontent and millenarian tendencies must be amalgamated and articulated either by a prophetic leader (or leaders) or by prominent figures in established socioreligious organizations, such as cult-shrine networks and secret societies” (93). This leads him, ultimately, to suggest that Diponegoro, under the influence of unnamed teachers, developed a “deep commitment to the syncretic, highly mystical variant of Islam that was characteristic of the religious school in central Java. Thus Dipanagara gained the extensive

religious training and youthful commitment that has been common to many prophets in the Islamic tradition” (94).<sup>23</sup> Yet Diponegoro did not see himself as a prophet, even if he did see himself as reformer and possibly a “Rightly Guided ruler,” a *Ratu Adil* (Just King) as various formulations express it.<sup>24</sup> This inability to see the motives of Diponegoro, despite the vast wealth of resources, Dutch and Javanese, attesting to it, is symptomatic of the manner in which Dutch historiography erased accounts at variance with the all/nothing hypothesis. This maneuver was so successful that scholars working almost 140 years later are still misrecognizing the Islamic aspirations at the heart of the war.

The most complete account of Diponegoro is probably the recent publication of Peter Carey’s long-finished dissertation, published as *The Power of Prophecy*. Carey synthesizes a wealth of Dutch sources, along with some Javanese materials, to chart out the life and influences of the prince.<sup>25</sup> Carey is incredibly sensitive to the Islamic aspirations expressed so clearly by Diponegoro, but still unable to escape the interpretative legacy of the conflict. Thus he reads the prince in terms of an opposition between “real” Islam (Islamic reformism) and “Javanese Islam,”

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<sup>23</sup> There is considerable confusion here about Muslim leaders and Islamic prophets. For his argument, Adas relies on the German anthropologist Katesa Schlosser and her 1950 article, “Der Prophetismus in Niederen Kulturen,” (“Prophethood in Lower Cultures”). Schlosser explains that although “Islamic doctrine claims Muhammad as the Seal of Prophets,” which is to say the last Prophet, “this is not actually the case” (61). Figures like the Mahdi, the just ruler of the Islamic millennium, are understood as prophets by Schlosser and Adas. And here some of the precision of the term within Islamic discourse is eroded – Schlosser also claims that the Islamic tradition, in this regard, is purely derivative of the Jewish tradition it upholds.

<sup>24</sup> Tucked amongst the notes by de Kock, the Nationaal Archief also contains a short Malay language *précis* of the Joyoboyo prophecies (one can imagine de Kock’s native informant poring over a Javanese manuscript, rendering it swiftly in market Malay). Probably dating to the decades before the Diponegoro War, the *Ramalan Jayabaya* prophesied the coming of a just ruler who would restore order to a world turned upside down. The Jayabaya of the title, a long-deceased monarch in Kediri, East Java, was the alleged author. This text served as one of the legitimizing cultural forms for Diponegoro’s claims of Islamic leadership and political dominion. It has remained a source of interpretation for times of political upheaval – the death of Suharto, in 2008, prompted a minor flurry of Joyoboyo prophecies to be re-circulated across the Indonesian Internet.

<sup>25</sup> It is thus somewhat disappointing that this magisterial account relies so heavily on Dutch sources for its “history.” The Javanese literature incorporated is read against that history, and cited where it accords with the presumptively authoritative Dutch account. In this way Carey misses an opportunity to do what Nancy Florida does so clearly in *Writing the Past, Inscribing the Future*: to leverage the Javanese manuscript tradition not just against colonial historiography, but against many of the troubled conceits of normative history. This amounts to taking seriously the imagined efficacy of entextualization, the capacity for narrative to *do* things rather than merely relate them.

even as he expressly denies the salience of these categories for Diponegoro himself: “Diponegoro was no Islamic reformer. Instead, he was a traditional Javanese Muslim for whom there was no inherent conflict between the spirit world of Java, and membership of the international *ummat* (community of Muslim believers) and its spiritual and politico-cultural centres in the Hadhramaut (present-day South Yemen) and Ottoman Turkey” (xvi). Carey, trying to bridge the *adat*/Islam distinction is forced, like all contemporary commentators, to contend with the terms introduced in the post-Diponegoro War colonial project. About the lasting influence of the conflict, however, he is less circumspect: “Diponegoro did not prevail in achieving his goal of restoring the high state of the Islamic religion in Java. His wider moral vision of securing an honoured place for Islam in the life of the nation, however, is still being negotiated...” (xvi). This claim is a little opaque, at least, insofar as Diponegoro figures in post-Independent Indonesian discussions about the place of Islam. Fully enlisted in a nationalist project that sees only anti-colonial resistance, the deep moral transformations imagined by the Prince have little bearing on contemporary discussions of Islam and the public sphere.

### **Negotiating with Terrorists: from Diponegoro to Aceh**

Victory in the Diponegoro War ushered in new scholarly efforts to penetrate the lives of the “Natives.” It also wrought a new extractive regime designed to recoup the state’s expenses in prosecuting the conflict (and once those were recovered, maintained simply as an effective means of gathering rents). Called the “Cultivation System” (*Cultuurstelsel*), this policy demanded that a certain percentage of fields be given over to cash crops to be surrendered to the Netherlands Indies government. Colonialism in the Indies, as an articulated suite of economic, political and cultural operations, began in earnest from this period. Expanded efforts to understand the primeval origins of the subject population were often undertaken by the same

administrators who oversaw the new taxation schemes. As colonial officials became more enmeshed in this hybrid society, they emerged as patrons of Javanese arts (Florida, “Writing Traditions.”) The Cultivation System spurred the development of an “*Indische*” culture (“Indies- ish”), part of the increasing reach of the state into the lives of its subjects (Milone “Indische Culture,” 420). One result was the increasing capacity of elite Javanese to access traditionally European domains. As they participated more fully in the cultural productions of the colonizers, new nuances entered into the narratives about the Indies. Raden Saleh, a famed painter from the Indies, even managed to affect the image of Prince Diponegoro.

The capture of Prince Diponegoro, achieved by Merkus de Kock’s deception, has often been understood in context of the dueling images painted by Nicolaas Pieneman and Raden Saleh.<sup>26</sup> Pieneman’s work, today housed in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, was commissioned by de Kock or his family. Meanwhile, Raden Saleh – European trained and patronized – has come to be understood as the author of a “proto-nationalist” counter-image, and thus today his image of Diponegoro hangs in the National Gallery of Indonesia. (According to Peter Cary in “Raden Saleh,” it had originally been given as a gift to King Willem III by the painter, but a Dutch cultural organization donated it to Indonesia in 1978).<sup>27</sup> Yet even as these images have become central to the historical imagining of Diponegoro’s defeat and exile, their prominence greatly post-dates the conflict. Painted by Pieneman and Raden Saleh in 1835 and 1857, respectively, they reflect gradually coalescing narratives of Javanese surrender – cultured and submissive, on one hand, cultured but defiant on the other. However, there was a simpler sort of

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<sup>26</sup> See Chapter 6 in Rajaram’s *Ruling the Margins*, for a discussion of the relative location of Diponegoro and de Kock in the two paintings. Rajaram’s interpretation is heavily indebted to Werner Krauss in “Raden Saleh’s Interpretation of *The Arrest of Diponegoro*.” Krauss, in turn, relies on Peter Carey’s “Raden Saleh, Dipanagara and the Painting of the Capture of Dipanagara at Magelang (28 March 1830).”

<sup>27</sup> Lost in the near-universal celebration of Raden Saleh as an accomplished painter in the European fashion, at least in his own lifetime, was his extraordinarily auspicious lineage. Claiming descent from the Prophet both maternally and paternally, Raden Saleh was part of the important Hadhrami (from Hadhramaut in Southern Yemen) Arab community.

story told about Muslims, Diponegoro and surrender. Instead of images, it was this version of Diponegoro's capture that proved so instructive for later colonial ventures.

Shortly after the bitterly-won victory of the Diponegoro War, the Dutch recommitted themselves to the conflict known as the Padri War, then rocking the area covered by the contemporary province of West Sumatra, home to the Minang people. The Padri War was also a war of Islamic reform.<sup>28</sup> It was spearheaded by a leader referred to as Tuanku Imam Bonjol and it pitted Muslim social revolutionaries against a traditionalist aristocracy and religious elite (although in that respect it was unlike the Diponegoro War, in that the overwhelming majority of the aristocracy in Java supported Diponegoro). The Dutch, originally "invited" by the traditionalist elite in 1821, achieved a temporary peace that disintegrated into renewed warfare, this time pitting both sides of the Minang divide against the Dutch and their Javanese soldiers. As Jeffrey Hadler argues in *Muslims and Matriarchs*, Imam Bonjol had succeeded in uniting the forces of "adat" and "Islam" in opposition to the Dutch. However, later Dutch historiography interpreted away this achievement and left the normative account one of local tradition versus foreign Islam, with the Dutch supporting the beleaguered forces of authentic local custom. And so the Dutch slogged back into the West Sumatran highlands in 1833, bringing the active phase of the conflict to a close only with the capture of Tuanku Imam Bonjol in 1837 (Hadler "A Historiography of Violence," 978-980; 987). Imam Bonjol's capture and exile were achieved in eerie parallel to Diponegoro's. The Dutch general, having laid siege to Imam Bonjol's base, invited the leader to sue for peace. Once Imam Bonjol entered into the protected custody of the negotiation, he was arrested and forced into exile (although according to Dobbin in "Tuanku Imam Bonjol" the aged guerilla surrendered himself, see p. 17-19). There is a pattern to this

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<sup>28</sup> For a clear introduction to the theological and pragmatic motivations of the "Padris," see Christine Dobbin's *Islamic Revivalism*.



duplicity that suggests something about how the Dutch understood their Muslim adversaries. Its resonances emerge later, in the context of the Acehese War (1873-1914), a grueling forty-year conflict.

Almost four decades after the capture of Imam Bonjol, the Dutch began their extensive military operations in Aceh, the independent sultanate located at the northern tip of the island of Sumatra. Operating with the flimsy pretext that the Acehese were planning on forging a treaty relationship with the Americans, the Dutch sent successive military expeditions to the sultanate (Missbach “The Aceh War,” 44). This war would drag on until military supremacy was achieved with the assistance of the scholarly interventions of the famed Dutch Arabist and colonial administrator Christaan Snouck Hurgronje, a giant in the history of Indonesian Islam. The eventual strategy (in concert with Snouck Hurgronje’s cultural insights) prefigures contemporary counter-insurgency practices, and so it survives in the annals of military combat as well as in the Indonesian nationalist (and Acehese) telling. Long before the Acehese were subdued through the new insights of Snouck, however, a debate emerged amongst the colonial elite about the most practical approach to achieve their aims in the region.<sup>29</sup> A Dutch artillery officer G.F.W. Borel, present during the second Acehese expedition (1873), returned to the Netherlands and wrote a scathing account of military mismanagement. Entitled *Onze Vestiging in Atjeh* (“Our Office in Aceh”), Borel’s book reserves its harshest judgments for the commanding general, Generaal Jan van Swieten (who published a rejoinder, *De Waarheid Over Onze Vestiging in Atjeh* – “The Truth about Our Office in Aceh”). About the Acehese, Borel characterizes them as “haughty and proud, they will not admit defeat in the battle against the Dutch; they will never admit it, so

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<sup>29</sup> Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje (1857-1936) is perhaps the most discussed figure in the history of Islam in Indonesia. Following convention, I refer to him as Snouck (the first part of his dual surname), a common practice also remarked upon in Kaptein’s *Islam, Colonialism and the Modern Age* (4).

long as they can carry weapons and their masters remain in fortified *kampung*, forests and jungles” (42). To this, Borel remarks, “honor to whom it’s due!” (*eere wien eere toekomst!*). Instead of cultural mastery, Borel advocates major revisions in military strategy to accomplish victory.

The book was not well received back in the colony, and an industrious publisher (normally responsible for the Semarang-based newspaper *Die Lokomotif*), collected a set of “letters,” or essays, attacking Borel’s critique, published as *Open Brieven aan den Heer G.F.W. Borel*. One of these letters presents an extended history of the successful prosecution of the Padri War. The author describes in approving detail how Imam Bonjol was deceived (63-65). Perhaps, the letter writer appears to be suggesting, this is the strategy most appropriate for Aceh as well. Aceh, then and now, is reputed to be a bastion of Islam. If Islam could be interpreted out of the “Natives” on Java, no such possibility was imagined for “the Verandah of Mecca,” as Aceh, long the sally-point for trips West across the Indian Ocean was known. Yet the very “Muslimness” of Aceh prompted the letter’s author to advocate similar duplicity as had achieved victory against Prince Diponegoro and Imam Bonjol. In the Dutch imagination, their Muslim political opponents were beholden to systemized irrationality. Islamic law was thought to place its illogical demands upon Muslim subjects (who were always already hypocrites for their inadequate adherence to this law). However, because of the falsity of their faith, Islam, they were ineligible as targets of moral suasion. Impervious to rationality and morality, their false beliefs and misguided honor were the legitimate points of entry for Dutch military deceit. It was appropriate to deceive them because they were so committed to their own foundational deceptions. When dealing with Muslims, the Diponegoro War taught the Dutch, moral expediency wasn’t merely a matter of convenience; it was a matter of necessity. And so,

beginning their Acehese campaign, colonial elites imagined that the same unsubtle trickery would work again – since their opponents were once more irrational Muslims.

### **Ethical Colonialism and Secular Islam**

The Acehese War was not, however, brought to a swift conclusion. Instead of a singular figure galvanizing political and moral aspirations, the Dutch encountered a militarized populace resisting their advances. There was no Diponegoro or Imam Bonjol to capture and exile – the death of a leader resulted only in the selection of a new leader. Even sacking the palace was pyrrhic, in that the sultan and his associates had already fled to outside the city, thus beginning decades of guerilla warfare (Bakker “The Aceh War,” 60). The interventions of Snouck Hurgronje, a story already well-told in Benda’s “Christian Snouck Hurgronje,” Laffan’s *The Makings of Indonesian Islam*, Latif’s *Indonesian Muslim Intelligentsia* and elsewhere, proved pivotal. Snouck brought a rich understanding of the Islamic tradition, built on years of Arabic study as well as years of passing himself off as a Muslim in Mecca, coupled with a deep contempt for actual Muslims. His core contributing conclusion was that Islam wasn’t the problem, politics were. Writing in *Nederland en Islam* years after his return to the Netherlands, Snouck observed, “Its true, that the overwhelming majority of the Native Muslims find no reason to entertain higher political questions; they have enough before them with their village authorities, district heads, regents or princes and their European administrators and so stay indifferent to the division of power in the larger world” (69). Snouck saw little reason to fear rank-and-file Muslims. What his experiences in Aceh had taught him, however, was that local elites must be cultivated and brought over to a way of thinking amenable to Dutch supremacy.

Snouck recognized that the categorical opposition between adat and Islam could not be maintained. He didn’t dispute this distinction, forged after the Diponegoro War. Rather, for

Snouck it was a question of efficacy – he doubted that adat elites were adequate to the task of resisting Islamic political aspirations. Harry Benda distills Snouck’s conclusions on this front: “though *adat* institutions formed the traditionally most powerful barrier against Islam and though their representatives were thus the obvious allies of the colonial power, the *adat*, because of its intrinsic conservatism as well as local particularisms, could not be expected to stem the expanding influence of the dynamic and universalistic faith of the Prophet” (“Christaan Snouck Hurgronje,” 343). Beyond the inability of adat to thwart further Islamic consolidation, Snouck imagined “adat” to be imperiled: “Additionally, the reception of [Islamic] law, achieved voluntarily, is partial and incomplete, and many *adat*, in places between those where the sacred law has penetrated, raise claims for official protection” (*Nederland en de Islam*, 62). For adat to be protected, of course, it had first to be more fully elaborated.

A major arena where the relationship between adat and Islam came to be negotiated was law. Snouck’s influence here was widely felt, although much of the development of an “adat law” canon took place in the hands of other scholars. “Adat law” was the further refinement of a long-term governing logic in the Netherlands East Indies. In the plural juridical regime of the colonies, wholly distinct legal systems obtained for different classes of colonial subjects. Daniel Lev has written, evocatively, about the period in which these systems coalesced as well as about their enduring influence on postcolonial orders. Reflecting on the extraordinary complexity of plural law, Lev writes, “it recorded accurately the economic and political arrangements fashioned by Dutch power from the eighteenth century onwards. But the picture presented above is unadorned, lacking any of the ideological patina that developed with the colony and its legal establishment” (“Colonial Law and the Genesis of the Indonesian State,” 62). The “ideological patina” that developed, according to Lev, was at least internally consistent: “Once engaged, the

gears of the legal system spun their own logic, often quite genuine in the way of legal logic, serving to legitimate and excuse a less gratifying reality underneath” (ibid). To translate this critique into less poetic terms, concerted Dutch efforts were applied to the problem of how the archipelagic inhabitants should relate to one another, in legal matters. Yet these massive efforts, and the careful legal rhetoric they supported, served only to obfuscate real and abiding colonial and local interests alike. This was all the more insofar as one of the legal systems was “adat law.”

Of particular concern, for Lev, was the way that “adat law” erased from view the conditions of its articulation. About “adat law” Lev writes, “the treatment of local customary (adat) law is one of the most perplexing and ambiguous themes in Indonesia’s colonial history, and deserves serious reconsideration” (63). The core illogic of the adat law regime, according to Lev, has been replicated in scholarship addressed to it: “the chief difficulty with most analyses of the *adat*rechtspolitik [adat law policies] is their isolation of it from the rest of colonial policy, as if it were somehow an issue apart in the colonial environment” (ibid.). Adat as a pure articulation of authentic native customs – if such a thing had ever existed – certainly was no longer possible inasmuch as “native customs” now took place within a colonial order. This becomes less perplexing if we imagine some of these colonial scholars not envisioning “adat” separate from the Dutch presence, but discrete from Islamic influences.

The formulation of the “adat law” regime was a joint production. Taking inspiration from the pioneering insights of Snouck Hurgronje, back in the Netherlands Cornelis van Vollenhoven set out to document positive law for all of the identified “adat” in the Indies. Snouck, despite his sometimes tempering influence on colonial policy, was solidly invested in a project of continued Dutch superiority. According to Lev, van Vollenhoven cuts a considerably more tragic figure:

“Out of a genuine respect for Indonesian cultures, he nevertheless helped to imprison them in a cage of elegant policy that rendered them ever more vulnerable to outside manipulation...

Committed religiously and philosophically to a world of cultures different but equal, he came, I think, to see the modern state as a terrible threat to local history, imagination, and law” (64). For van Vollenhoven, the taxonomic impulse came from a place of paternalistic concern. Lev is less clear, however, about how van Vollenhoven’s project fit into the ongoing colonial effort to manage Islam. For this, somewhat counter intuitively, we can turn to the work of Franz and Keebet Benda-Beckmann, as it relates to the insights of Peter Burns on these questions.

Peter Burns, in “The Myth of Adat,” undertakes a devastating historical and legal deconstruction of the category “adat law.” Published almost thirty years ago, this remains the defining revisionist account of Dutch legal policies in the Netherlands East Indies. Written with a firm command of the Dutch sources and a wandering gaze across key legal questions, Burns punctures the holistic view of “adat” maintained within colonial scholarship. Adat law provided a quasi-scientific idiom, according to Burns, for the continued ascription of native stasis to the archipelago’s inhabitants. Adat for the colonial legal scholars was an essentialist vision of quiescent subjects: “An Indonesian community constituted a whole. It was not to be regarded as just a collection of individuals. Its internal relationships were organic. Moreover, that sense of organic relationship extended to the environment in and from which the community derived its life” (56). Nevertheless, Burn’s methodical critique of “adat” as a colonial fantasy has, itself, been subject to revisionist arguments. Writing in “Myths and Stereotypes about Adat Law,” Franz and Keebet Benda-Beckmann suggest that van Vollenhoven’s legacy deserves to be reviewed once more. Describing contemporary Indonesians efforts to leverage “adat law” in their negotiations, the Benda-Beckmanns argument is against a totalizing vision of colonial

dominance. They dispute both the extent and the effects of the colonial effort to codify adat law. They further dispute the genealogy of “adat” that foregrounds its colonial genesis. Where they do concede to the “adat law” critics is in terms of Islam: “[van Vollenhoven’s] greatest weakness is his treatment of Islamic law, although his elaborate summary and analysis of materials on religious law in the Dutch East Indies show that he paid more attention to Islamic law than later scholars of adat law” (175). For the Benda-Beckmanns, this amounts to an oversight. But if we take seriously the tragic figure described by Daniel Lev, it becomes easier to imagine that van Vollenhoven intended to protect the simple village natives not only from the ravages of the modern state, but from the universalizing claims of Islam.<sup>30</sup> Diverting aspirations anchored in the Islamic tradition became a full time job in the colonies.

Whether in terms of “adat” law or just adat, colonial efforts to separate Muslims from Islamic politics were not purely intellectual endeavors. Snouck addresses the violent parallel to his scholarly pursuits in the introduction to *The Acehnese* (1906), the English translation of a text produced shortly (1893-94) after the conclusion of his “work” in the restive former sultanate. Snouck first angrily rejects the “European” narrative of Dutch failure in subjecting the Acehnese to their rule (vi-vii). Then he characterizes the Acehnese themselves as only superficially, and violently, Muslim: “From Mohammedanism...she really only learnt a large number of dogmas relating to hatred of the infidel without any of their mitigating concomitants; so that the Acehnese made a regular business of piracy and man-hunting at the expense of the neighbouring non-Mohammedan countries and islands” (vii). Here, of course, is the famed civilizing mission with its repressive commitments. Snouck ends his re-cap of the history that

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<sup>30</sup> Zezen Zaenal Mutaqin writes about his confusion when he encountered “adat law” for the first time. Familiar with “adat” from Islamic jurisprudence, he confesses considerable surprise at the notion of a non-Islamic body of positive law. His account is instructive, in part for its gentle refutation of Benda-Beckmanns’ claims about the continued salience of “adat law” for contemporary Indonesians. (“Indonesian Customary Law and European Colonialism.”

has transpired since the Dutch publication of his work by remarking that, “Now no one any longer doubts that the dogmas of Islam on the subject of religious war, so fanatical in their terms, supplied the principal stimulus to this obstinate rebellion...that only a forcible subjugation followed by orderly control over the administration could bring about peace” (xvii). Where the “fanatical dogmas” have taken root, only “forcible subjugation” can bring about peace. Snouck’s insights into Acehese culture did not, in any way, temper his firm belief that only violent repression could succeed in thwarting Islamic political ambitions. This established a template that obtains into the postcolonial order: if the violence threatened and wrought by the state since Independence took on a more arbitrary and uneven character, it was still linked closely to the theories of Islam that demanded its subjugation to a civil(izing) authority.

When Snouck Hurgronje left Aceh for Batavia in 1899, he assumed leadership of the newly-created “Office of Native and Arab Affairs” (*Kantoor voor Inlandsche en Arabische Zaken*), later just the “Office of Native Affairs” (*Kantoor voor Inlandsche Zaken*). Although there had been an “advisor” position fulfilling this role (indeed, Snouck himself was originally the “Advisor for Arab Affairs,” on arriving in the Netherlands East Indies in 1889), now there was an office (*kantoor*) (Laffan, *Makings of Indonesian Islam*). According to Indonesian nationalist history, this office was interested, above all, in thwarting the political aspirations of Muslims (and later, all communities in the Indies). Harry Benda characterized Snouck’s mission in exactly these terms: “the ultimate defeat of Indonesian Islam, the freeing of its adherents from what Snouck Hurgronje called the ‘narrow confines of the Islamic system, was to be achieved by the association of Indonesians with Dutch culture” (“Christaan Snouck Hurgronje,” 344). From this angle, the office’s task was to defeat Islam from within, to sow seeds of secular liberal modernity that would preempt the eruption of Islamic political and moral orders. This was the



“Association Theory,” the novel notion that enhanced assimilation of Native elites to the Dutch intellectual and social order would filter down, as progress, to the rest of the colony.

Recent revisionist accounts have challenged the conventional history of the office. According to Howard Federspiel, the “Office of Native Affairs” had an anodyne role: “[it] undertook studies designed to reveal the needs of various Muslim populations under Dutch control and give advice on upgrading the general welfare of those populations” (*Sultans, Shamans, and Saints*, 100). Given this valuable service orientation, Federspiel continues, “it became highly attentive to the rise of the nationalist and communist movements in the first quarter of the century, which led Indonesians involved in these movements to view the office as a security arm of the government” (ibid).<sup>31</sup> According to Federspiel, the office was a sometimes bumbling but largely good-willed effort to assess and serve the subjects of the colonial regime. This reading, of course, ignores the history of the colonies that preceded the establishment of the office, as well as Snouck’s central role in subduing the Acehese insurgency. Snouck’s explicit writing, in conjunction with the long-term projects initiated after the Diponegoro War, suggests that Benda’s narrative retains its analytic acuity. The “Office of Native Affairs” was, then, part of a strategy to control the political potentials of the Islamic tradition.

The deliberate revision of colonial policy, of course, wasn’t targeted only at Muslim political aspirations. As the extractive colonialism of the Cultivation System had worn out its welcome for Dutch liberals in the homeland, moral uplift became the new fantasy. Thus these

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<sup>31</sup> Elsewhere Federspiel has greeted these colonial efforts with greater skepticism:

In the latter half of the nineteenth century the study and general observations of the Dutch scholars G.A. Wilken, C. Van Vollenhoven and C. Snouck Hurgronje on the role of religion and custom in the lives of Indonesians resulted in the adoption of an official policy designed to encourage some aspects of religious activity, but giving custom clear precedence. The pilgrimage and Muslim social and educational activities were encouraged, since they were considered to increase standard religious belief and lessen the chances of adopting fanatical religious beliefs inimical to Dutch rule (*Islam and Ideology*, 14-15).

new policies were not only pragmatic political maneuvers designed to foreclose the possibility of Muslim political activism, but also reflected a felt civilizational burden.<sup>32</sup> Thus was born the Ethical Policy. One of the far-reaching consequences of the Ethical Policy, a pointed practice of secularizing Muslim elites (and “de-adat-ifying” them), was the insertion of a new category into the adat-Islam divide. This was the notion of western scientific modernity. The possibilities offered by the epistemic neutrality promised in the language of science have survived all manner of ideological assaults. Disparate constituencies still rely on the immense pragmatic potentials of science’s supposed moral neutrality. Although Snouck imagined this would deliver the elites to the self-evident rightness of the cause of the Dutch, it instead proved to be a catalyst for nationalist aspirations. And by inserting a third pole in the adat-Islam spectrum, Snouck unwittingly offered up conceptual tools that still exert considerable appeal to Indonesians struggling to articulate coherent visions of change.

The Ethical Policy has long been understood as a sea change in Dutch colonial administration of the Netherlands East Indies. Equally, in the hands of Snouck Hurgronje and a stable of similarly-oriented (if not similarly trained and equipped) administrators, it became the vehicle for the promotion of Islam, narrowly understood as an interior, personal, tradition. We have already alluded, in the Introduction, to Snouck Hurgronje’s vision for Islam: apolitical, quiescent, secular, and eventually, irrelevant. Snouck Hurgronje was skeptical about the enlistment of Native allies in this quest, however. Adat and Islam, the opposition first identified

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<sup>32</sup> The identification of practical politics does not obviate the moral weight Snouck and his compatriots attached to their efforts. These values had a decided domestic hue that has re-appeared in postcolonial policies. As Elsbeth Locher-Scholten writes in *Women and the Colonial State*:

In line with this liberalism, Snouck Hurgronje encouraged a middle-class Western family lifestyle for Indonesians of the elite. Or, as he maintained in 1911: as a result of Western education Javanese women would cooperate with their *priyayi* husbands “to bring the Native family to an association with our family system”. He also appealed to Europeans to accept Javanese girls as boarders in their homes and family in order to stimulate monogamy and to improve the education of their future children. (190).

after the Diponegoro War, and steadily reified across the nineteenth century, was inadequate to the task of policing Islam. Instead, to govern Muslims, according to this theory, it would be necessary to delve into their world and parse its constituent elements for those most amenable to secular modernity. The Muslims must be given scientific modernity if there was any hope of continued Dutch influence on their lives. Adat, as adat, would not survive this development – the application of social sciences to the Indies populations generated ever-more particular adat identities, and so the holistic vision of an Indies-adat imagined by figures like van Vollenhoven perished with the advances of science.

### **Misrecognition at the End of an Era**

It is during World War II that we next pick up our thread of Islam and change. The 1920s and 30s saw the successful Dutch suppression of Indies nationalism, although Muslim political activists, like their erstwhile communist allies, remained connected to global networks (See Roff’s “Indonesian and Malay Students” for a discussion of the important circuit to Egypt at this time). Just as it had for the 19<sup>th</sup> century rebels before them, opposition to Dutch rule meant exile to the eastern reaches of the archipelago for imprisoned leaders – whereas Imam Bonjol and Prince Diponegoro were sent to Sulawesi, now the destination was Boven Digoel.<sup>33</sup> Although hardly static, the 1930s were relatively quiet on multiple fronts.<sup>34</sup> This momentary idyll was pierced, sharply and irrevocably, by the swift Japanese conquest of the Dutch East Indies. Shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor the first Japanese forces landed in the archipelago. By early March 1942, Japanese military supremacy was complete throughout the Indies, and the troops were often welcomed as liberators.

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<sup>33</sup> See Mrazek’s “Boven Digoel and Terezín” for a typically poetic excursus on the modern technology of the penal colony

<sup>34</sup> This should be understood in contradistinction to the teens and twenties, the period discussed by Takashi Shiraishi’s *An Age in Motion*.

The Japanese quickly established an extractive regime that excelled the Dutch: petroleum from East Kalimantan and labor from Java. These new rulers were initially uninterested in the political ambitions of their subjects, but by late 1944 halting preparations for eventual independence were begun (Benda “The Beginnings of the Japanese Occupation”). Harry Benda, in *The Crescent and the Rising Sun*, has persuasively argued for a fuller recognition of the massive influence exerted by the Japanese in their brief three-and-half year rule. In concert with broad nationalist projects, this was especially visible in their success at re-mobilizing Muslim political aspirations. Japanese influence on Muslim political activists, in the context of the “all/nothing” hypothesis, became a marker of the falsity of these Muslim actors during the revolutionary period that followed the surrender of the Japanese to allied forces on August 15, 1945. In the turmoil of the revolutionary war, the Dutch found themselves consistently unable to understand the role played by Muslim forces, blinded by an interpretive legacy of their own device.

At the level of gross propaganda, an inability to acknowledge the motivations of their opponents led to the Dutch publication of documents like *Japansche Intrigues: Da Nasleep van de Japansche Bezetting* (“Japanese Intrigues: the aftermath of the Japanese Occupation”). Written by a pseudonymous “Mas Slamet” in 1946, this book laid out the case for a Japanese conspiracy behind Indonesians’ anti-colonial ardor. Written from Jakarta, but published in the Netherlands for a Dutch audience, this slim pamphlet documents Soekarno’s extensive collaborations with the Japanese. The same author, or someone using the same pseudonym, addressed the Japanese role in the independence movement for Indonesian audiences as well; publishing another 1946 pamphlet entitled *Tipoe Moeslihat Djepang* (“The Subtle Trickery of Japan”). And for good measure, there was the 1946 English and Indonesian publication of *The*

*Holy War 'made in Japan' (Perang Sabil Bikinan Djepang)*. Texts like these read like transparent propaganda today. But their original audiences may have found them more compelling – their emphasis on the falsity of Muslim political motivations reflects sincerely held belief on the part of colonial administrators. This latter fact becomes evident when we review some of the “secret” memos produced by intelligence agents operating in revolutionary-era Indonesia. Even in the halls of Dutch colonial power, administrators who had spent decades in the colonies (or even been born in them, as was the case with Ch O. van der Plas), could barely discern the relationship between Islam and the political demands of their restive former subjects. It was utterly inconceivable that Muslims would imagine political justice and accountability within an Islamic idiom. It simply must be outside agitation. Islam was, echoing Nancy Florida’s reading of the Louis Couperus novel *The Hidden Force*, literally unseen.<sup>35</sup>

The exigencies of the Dutch military effort to regain control of the colonies threatened to undermine the conceptual advances pioneered by Snouck Hurgronje. The rejection of the blanket, if inept, mental repression of the realities of Islam, launched in the wake of the Diponegoro War, had allowed for new nuance in the management of Islam.<sup>36</sup> The scholar-officials of the Office of Native Affairs had a rich and complicated understanding of the practices and theologies dominant in the colony. Nevertheless, they were forced to contend with a colonial bureaucracy too long trained in the reactive policies of the post-Diponegoro War period. Despite the pioneering analyses of figures like Snouck Hurgronje and D.A. Rinkes, work

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<sup>35</sup> Discussing the colonial anxieties evidenced in this novel, Florida writes, “On the one hand, [Islam] inspired suspicion as a dangerous reality that, it was feared, could and perhaps would appear anywhere and everywhere. On the other hand, Islam remained a phantom whose presence was denied, in a nearly exorcistic gesture, to genuinely Javanese realities. Islam represented danger, but a danger that a spectrum of colonial authorities needed to understand, and hence saw, as foreign, alien, and intrinsically un-Javanese” (190).

<sup>36</sup> The sophistication of the Office of Native Affairs had quickly born fruit: Douwe Adolf Rinkes, one of Snouck’s successors in the Office of Native Affairs, was instrumental in undermining *Sarekat Islam* in the 1910s, a Muslim proto-nationalist movement, at least if Pramoedya in *Sang Pemula* is to be believed. Rinkes’s training, however, included the serious philological study of some of the Muslim saints instrumental in bringing Islam to Java.

continued to the end by G.W.J. Drewes and C.A.O. van Nieuwenhuijze, Dutch authorities were largely unable to recognize Islam as other than a vast seething horde, waiting to erupt, or an irrelevant garnish on a deeper cultural inheritance, easily manipulated. This interpretation was perhaps so persistent not merely because of its usefulness, but because of its concordance with then-dominant understandings of secular modernity as an unfolding historical inevitability. The ferment of the Indonesian revolution all but guaranteed that these sophisticated analyses of Indonesian Islam would be shunted aside in favor of the more familiar all/nothing hypothesis.<sup>37</sup>

With the defeat of the Japanese in the Pacific War, the Dutch state re-emerging from Nazi rule was desperate to retain its overseas holdings. The stuttering unfolding of Indonesian Independence challenged Dutch politicians and colonial administrators to reconcile their assumptions about native passivity with the militancy of the Revolution. As the Indonesian revolutionaries debated the relationship of Islam to the state, their erstwhile colonial observers did the same. The European confusion is a near palpable presence in the archives. A trove of intelligence documents now accessible in the Dutch Nationaal Archief demonstrates the remarkable endurance of this analytical impasse. The story we turn to now is one of a native informant, Major Radenmas Sardjono Soerio Santoso.<sup>38</sup> Major Soerio was one of the first peoples of the Indies to attend the elite Dutch Royal Military Academy (*Koninklijk Militaire Academie*) in Breda (Matanasi *KNIL*, 36). He was precisely the sort of figure Snouck imagined could spearhead the secularization of the archipelago. Of noble birth (denoted by the title “Radenmas”), Major Soerio was given the opportunity to associate with Dutch elites during his

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<sup>37</sup> Ismail Goksoy, in “The Policy of the Dutch Government Towards Islam in Indonesia,” convincingly argues for the continuities between the colonial era and the Dutch approach to Islam during the revolutionary period.

<sup>38</sup> In the archives and scholarly accounts, the same individual appears as Suryo Santoso, Soeryo Santoso, Soeria Santoso, Soerio Santoso, and additional permutations related to the spelling of his surname as Santoeso. From his signature on a variety of archival documents, it appears that he referred to himself as Soerio/Soeria. He ended his career in the KNIL in 1950 with the cessation of hostilities – accounts differ whether he remained in Jakarta or retired to the Netherlands.

years at the military academy. Here was a scientific and modern man, beholden to neither adat nor Islam. And he was loyal to boot.

Fleeing to Australia in the face of the conquering Japanese, the colonial government-in-exile sought to keep watch on both the Japanese and their former subjects. In Melbourne, these intelligence operations were re-formed under the banner of the Netherlands East Indies Forces Intelligence Service (NEFIS, an English acronym reflecting its Australian location).<sup>39</sup> One of their assets in the former capital Batavia was our friend from above, still on active duty as a Major in the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army (*Koninklijk Nederlands Indisch Leger* or KNIL). During the Japanese occupation, Major Soerio diligently filed his reports and appears in the literature shepherding nationalist leaders through the occupation. Rudolf Mrazek, in *Sjahrir: Politics and Exile in Indonesia*, places Soerio firmly in the frame of a study club associated with the future Prime Minister Sjahrir. Mrazek writes, “Major Santoso, as far as we know—as the war fronts moved towards the islands sometime late in 1943—became very close to Sjahrir’s people and to Sjahrir personally” (244).<sup>40</sup> He opened his doors to the earnest young men that made up Sjahrir’s clique, in Mrazek’s telling through the persuasion of his son Iwan Santoso, who shared their nationalist enthusiasms.<sup>41</sup> In point of fact, Soerio never quit working for the Dutch, and there is good reason to view his hospitality with a little more skepticism. Quite likely Soerio was keeping this non-collaborating nationalist cohort under supervision. Later in the same work

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<sup>39</sup> See Bob de Graaf’s “Hot Intelligence” for a thorough characterization of NEFIS and its operations. For a dated but still accurate description of the NEFIS archive, see Yong Mun Cheong’s “The Dutch Archives.”

<sup>40</sup> The closeness of Soerio to Sjahrir, a key political figure in the nascent state, explains in part the pronounced Dutch preference for Sjahrir. Along with Soerio, Mrazek documents a number of connections between “liberal” nationalists and the major proponents of the ethical policy in prewar Dutch East Indies.

<sup>41</sup> Petrik Matanasi, in *Knil*, his history of KNIL, reports a similar observation: “Soeriosantoso was connected to the Syahrir crowd through his son Iwan. About Soeriosantoso, Syahrir claimed ‘that Major was watched closely by Japanese police, he was nevertheless active amongst the Indo-Dutch, the Ambonese, and former members of the military’” (98). The constituencies Matanasi incorporates from Syahrir’s quotation are all groups presumed loyal to the Dutch – people from Ambon, by dint of their Christianity, the Indo-Dutch in terms of blood loyalty, and of course the military.

Mrazek discusses the attendees of a wedding held in Batavia during the Revolution in 1947. Sjahrir and Soerio are both on the guest list, and Mrazek remarks on the strangeness that the guest list included, “Major Santoso, one of the mentors of the same young people during the war, a veteran of the prewar Dutch colonial army, and now again, as a major in the Dutch army, on the opposite side” (340). Soerio (Major Santoso) wasn’t just on the opposite side then – there is every reason to believe he had always been on the opposite side of the nationalists, working as an active member of an intelligence unit.

In late 1945 NEFIS was folded back into the postwar colonial administration and Major Soerio received a promotion, becoming *Het Hoofd van de Afdeling Intelligence en Loyaliteitsonderzoek* (“the Head of the Intelligence Division and Loyalty Research”), first for West Java, and then for the Indies as a whole. Major Soerio’s new role had him responsible for determining who amongst the nationalists had been collaborators under Japanese rule.<sup>42</sup> In his capacity as an intelligence officer, he was also a major adviser to the acting Governor General, van Mook. Van Mook relied on Major Soerio’s insights to assess whom the Netherlands could negotiate in good faith with – who were the real partners for political dialogue in a fragmented and frighteningly disorganized nationalist movement. In keeping with this mandate, Major Soerio set his sight firmly on those Islamic leaders who had risen to prominence during the Japanese administration of the archipelago. The loyalty of these figures was doubly suspect – as the recipient of Japanese patronage and as public advocates of Islam. In the analyses Major Soerio wrote to this effect he strongly evinced the all/nothing hypothesis of Islam in the Indies. A model modern of the Snouck mold, his scientific observations were unable to apprehend Islamic politics as other than smoke screens for deeper motivations.

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<sup>42</sup> This “loyalty research” and zeal for uncovering collaborators was a strange export from the Nazi-obsessed postwar Netherlands that deserves more attention than can be offered here.



Having drafted a document exposing, in his view, the enduring Japanese influence on Muslim organizations, Major Soerio came in for a rebuke from Charles O. van der Plas, a long-time colonial administrator and ardent advocate of the ethical policy. The back and forth between Major Soerio and van der Plas adopts the form of close textual commentary. Van der Plas writes, of the various figures Major Soerio had indicted in an earlier memo, “the penultimate paragraph is unfair. They are not all Japano-philis, those that occupy [positions in] mosques, langgars [small prayer halls] and religious schools.” In the next document in the archive, Soerio excerpts this remark, reprints it on the left, and reiterates the point of his original memo:

It was my intention to argue that the kyais [Islamic scholars] that Japan elevated to official positions still perform those functions in the Kementarian Agama [Ministry of Religion] and all the offices of the residencies [administrative unit]. (For example Imam Zarkasji, Z. Djambik, S.S. Djaman, Al Makmoer and the others mentioned in the report). These governmental institutions oversee mosque committees and keep watch over the langgars and madrassas. In former times, under the Netherlands Indies Government, these kyais were “pemimpin agama” [religious leaders] but under the Japanese they were “pemimpin rakjat” [leaders of the people], whispered with the sense the words have come to hold. Again, what I want to communicate is that the organization of Japan is still 100% intact, but now in service of the Republic.

For Major Soerio, the two colonial narratives ultimately collapse on top of one another. Major Soerio endorses both the all and the nothing side of the Indonesian Islamic proposition. Islamic mobilization is still wholly under the sway of the Japanese propaganda. And at the same time, it represents the enduring and hidden long-game of Muslim activists.

The exchange doesn't end there. Later, when van der Plas criticizes Major Soerio's analysis, writing “the report also lacks the acknowledgement of the huge loss of prestige for the kyai who worked for the Japanese,” Major Soerio responds with a breathless rebuke, worth citing in full:

I am certainly in disagreement with this note. The kyai-latihan [kyai training] still forms the back-bone of Masjoemi [the pan-Islamic political party], a statement I can establish

with facts and names. I have in my possession the actual attendance records from the kyai-latihan; they are no less influential and fanatical now than before. The evidence is that now anyone who falls in battle is “mati sjahid” [dies a martyr], which didn’t used to be the case. Japan was very clever to set “Kemerdekaan” [Independence] as the final stage of victory. Japan was just a means to that end and now the struggle continues. “Losing-face” is broadly (except for some very servile elements) not even mentioned!! [underline and double exclamation original]. Far from dismissing them, the Republic attaches even more importance to the kyais than the Japanese did, and from the Office of Religious Affairs (including all the collaborators) they have made a Department with a cabinet-level Minister, they still make use of the kyais (including those who did kyai-latihan) in regional and local government (pemerintah daerah – regional government) and seat them in the K.N.I. [Komite Nasional Indonesia, the revolutionary forerunner to Indonesia’s legislative body].

I would like to very sharply correct this matter and I draw your attention to the role of Masjoemi in the Popular Front and the presence of H. Agoes Salim<sup>43</sup> in the inner circle of Sjahrir. (“Japanese Islambleid”).

For Major Soerio, religious elites have been molded by the Japanese wartime efforts and are still under their thrall. The “kyai-trainings” were propaganda seminars run by the Japanese to bring traditional religious authorities into the fold of the Japanese war effort. Major Soerio assumes that all participants in these exercises (and there were many) are necessarily still beholden to the Japanese. This interprets the whole anti-colonial struggle as a long shadow cast by a rising sun: it is an argument that relies on a view of Islam as at once monolithic (ignoring the insights of Snouck Hugronje) and utterly superficial (ignoring more of Snouck’s insights). The association theory has worked too well: Major Soerio’s analysis can admit no information not already ideologically available to politically-motivated colonial scholarship that “cannot see” Islam beyond its familiar binary. At precisely the same time, Major Soerio is still convinced that scheming Muslim political aspirants have adopted the patronage of the Japanese as part of their

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<sup>43</sup> Haji Agoes Salim was a key nationalist figure – first in *Sarekat Islam* and later in the Republic. He served as an early mentor to Soekarno and later had a pivotal role in securing Indonesia formal recognition from Arab states as the new Republic’s foreign minister. For Major Soerio, and allied colonial administrators, H. Agoes Salim represented an Islamic fifth column, a particularly suspect wing of the nationalist alliance. See Formichi’s *Islam and the Making of the Nation* for a glancing discussion of Salim’s role in the prewar nationalist movement, especially p. 22-28. Note too that Major Soerio is still keeping tabs on Syahrir.

long-term strategy – an analysis that appears contradictory today, but exemplified the logical endpoint of Dutch colonial scholarship on Islam.

At the same time as Charles O. van der Plas was engaging Major Soerio in this debate, he was also drafting intelligence assessments to reflect the deep threat (or opportunity) represented by “The Mystical School” he claimed typified Indonesian Islam (“De Mystieke School”). Counting the adherents to different “mystic” traditions, van der Plas tries to assess what role these communities are playing in the rebellion. Van der Plas identifies two schools – a “Quranic” and a “kedjawen” school. Although they appear separate, van der Plas reveals on the second page that since the time of Diponegoro they have constituted a homogenous entity. This fact is, however, very secret: “The organization is very secret, in this understanding, so that only initiates (tjantriks) knew this.”<sup>44</sup> The internal translation of *ingewijden* (initiates) for *cantrik* is also revealing. *Cantrik*, rather than a technical term in Javanese Sufism, is a general Javanese word for disciple, student, follower or servant of a “spiritual” teacher. Even explicitly addressing Islam, van der Plas falls prey to the categorical confusion that is the legacy of colonial scholarship on the tradition. Nevertheless, van der Plas is trying to collapse the adat-Islam distinction that has obscured so much Muslim political activity from the eyes of their colonial observers. His cumbersome efforts in this regard, while terminologically confused, probably reflect a genuine commitment to understanding the various expressions of Islam within Java as “authentic” to the tradition.

Among many other interesting features, a truly curious element of this document is the speculative theological typology it endorses. Van der Plas creates a chart, ostensibly showing the relationships between “kedjawen” and “Quranic” oriented Muslim groups in the Indies (his

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<sup>44</sup> De organisatie is zeer geheim, in deze verstande, dat slechts ingewijden (tjantriks) hiervan afwisten.

attributions in this regard are also suspect). In the center of the chart are four levels, or stages [Dutch *staps*]. These four levels are instantly recognizable to anyone with a passing familiarity with a wide variety of Sufi traditions – *shariah*, *tariqa*, *haqiqa* and *ma'rifat*. These conventionally denote the four ascending stages of a seeker's relationship to the Divine (the path or law; the way or order; the reality or truth; intimate knowledge or being subsumed in the divine). Van der Plas describes, beneath the chart, how different organizations (*tarekat* chiefly, along with what today might be considered “new religious movements”) operate on different of these levels (“De Mystieke School”). Instead of the obvious holistic relationship, it's clear that van der Plas imagines the normative Sufi progression as comprising separate and discrete religious traditions. He goes on to analyze the sum of the nationalist leaders as “gurus,” explaining that *kijai* is a technical term for leaders of *pesantren* (Islamic schools), whereas “gurus” like Ir. Soekarno are mystic leaders not attached to a single institution. This is the “all” side of the proposition – the dark seething mass of Islam, shaping all political demands in the archipelago. That the intelligence officials writing and responding to these documents could be so clueless is really less astounding than it seems. Despite growing up in Surabaya, van der Plas knows even less about Islam than Major Soerio – and indeed, why would he. Recall that he was an ardent proponent of the Ethical Policy. The modern trajectory Snouck launched was supposed to leave Islam behind in the past. Its persistence was either false foreign manipulation (and finally, in the Japanese the Dutch saw their long prophesied threat of the Ottoman Empire), or deep, penetrating irrationality.

### **Pancasila and the Secular State**

Independent Indonesia inherited the categories of adat, Islam and science. Although Muslim political activists comprised core cadres of the nationalists who proclaimed

independence, their political visions were but one source of the achieved state form. The negotiation amongst these different constituencies has often attracted outside attention, frequently framed within the post-World-War II languages of political science, especially as it pertains to the political entanglements of religion. In this the Indonesian case is far from unique. Contemporary accounts of religious life and experience frequently explore their formation adjacent to notions of secularity and secularism. By “secularity” I mean a set of epistemic conditions that forbid access to “religious” logic, whereas by secularism I intend a political project oriented towards the inscription of secularity as the basis for civic engagement. In the Indonesian case, I’m not sure how analytically useful either category proves itself to be.

There is an important story behind the imagined relationship between Indonesia and the secular. The drafting of the Ethical Policy and the ministrations of Snouck Hurgronje were explicitly conceived as efforts to shift the political aspirations of Muslim natives towards liberal, secular modernity. The postcolonial inheritors of this legacy, while greatly altering the details, retained the same approach towards Islam: something to be carefully managed lest its potentials spill too far into the domains rightly governed by the state. In the recent past, since the fall of the New Order government, Indonesia has persistently excited outside observers given its status as the country with the “largest Muslim-majority population.” Ensuing discussions have often centered on the relative weakness of so-called political Islam (measured by proxy in the form of political parties) despite the apparent deepening religiosity of the archipelago’s inhabitants.<sup>45</sup> The question is often framed with some variant of: “why does Indonesia’s secular democracy

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<sup>45</sup> Robert Hefner’s *Civil Islam* is the most nuanced of these accounts. Saiful Mujani and William Liddle’s 2004 article, “Politics, Islam and Public Opinion” is a representative example of the more straightforward, “why aren’t Islamist parties more successful” approach. This is replicated in their 2009 piece, “Muslim Indonesia’s Secular Democracy.” For a more historically grounded interpretation of Indonesian political-religious possibilities, see Arskal Salim’s *Challenging the Secular State*. Chiara Formichi’s *Islam and the Making of the Nation* also belongs to this discussion, although it charts a biographical approach centered on the figure of Kartosuwiryo.

persist?” But this invites the further question: How is Indonesia possibly secular? A brief detour into one chapter of the history of the Indonesian state delivers us to the doorstep of the organizational ethnographies that follow in later chapters. Their projects of moral transformation are indebted to ongoing efforts to manage the place and influence of religion in public life.

The declaration of Independence issued by nationalist leaders on August 17, 1945 was notable for its confidence and its brevity. Made under duress (Vickers *A History*, 95), the proclamation in its entirety read, “We the nation of Indonesia hereby declare the independence of Indonesia. Issues concerning the transfer of power, etc. will be organized with care and in as short a time period as possible.”<sup>46</sup> The language of the proclamation contrasts with that employed in the first constitution adopted by the nascent republic in 1945. The constitution was composed between June and August of 1945, under Japanese direction, and “adopted” one day subsequent to the declaration of Independence (but not ratified by a legislature until February of the following year, see Ricklef’s *A History*, 249). Repeatedly in post-Independence Indonesia successive political regimes have returned to the terms of the 1945 constitution, and the bulk of it remains in effect today. The constitution begins with a global rebuke of colonialism: “That in truth independence is the right of every nation and for that reason colonialism must be wiped from the earth, because humanity and justice cannot abide it.”<sup>47</sup> After a short paragraph describing the joyful opportunities awaiting the nation, the authors of the constitution invoke the divine: “By the blessings and mercy of Allah the All Powerful and propelled by noble desires, in

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<sup>46</sup> Two “originals” of the proclamation have been maintained. A handwritten copy reads, “Kami bangsa Indonesia dengan ini menjatakan kemerdekaan Indonesia. Hal<sup>2</sup> jang mengenai pemindahan kekoesaan d.l.l., diselenggarakan dengan tjara seksama dan dalam tempoh jang sesingkat-singkatnja.” In a typed variant, the only difference is that “hal<sup>2</sup>” is written “hal-hal” and the signature line is amended from “wakil<sup>2</sup> bangsa Indonesia” to “atas nama bangsa Indonesia.” (From “representatives of the Indonesian nation” to “in the name of the Indonesian nation”).

<sup>47</sup> In the new orthography, reflected in the current iteration of the constitution, this reads, “Bahwa sesungguhnya kemerdekaan itu ialah hak segala bangsa dan oleh sebab itu, maka penjajahan di atas dunia harus dihapuskan, karena tidak sesuai dengan peri-kemanusiaan dan peri-keadilan.”

order that a nation may live free, with this the people of Indonesia declare their independence.”<sup>48</sup> With this third paragraph of the preamble, then, Indonesia re-declares independence, this time enveloping it within the bounds of Divine mercy. Muslims are exhorted to commence almost any endeavor with an invocation of the Divine, and the presence of this paragraph reflects the delicate compromise between the different parties of the independence movement, including Muslim, Christian and leftist-humanist groups. Independence has now been multiply enunciated, within the world-view idioms of the various independence constituencies.<sup>49</sup>

The compromises that make up the preamble to the constitution reach their apogee in the *Pancasila*, or “Five Bases.” A positive description of state ideology, Pancasila were drafted in late May 1945 at a Japanese orchestrated pre-Independence convention. Their first articulation in the authoritative list of five (although not the final order) was by soon-to-be President Soekarno on June 1, 1945, in a speech now known as *Lahirnya Pancasila* (The Birth of Pancasila). This speech closed the convention. The text of Pancasila, as it was appended to the founding constitution, follows in the paragraph below. Pancasila was later accorded a transcendental force during the New Order, enforced both legally and pedagogically through mandatory trainings on its meaning, begun in primary school and continuing throughout one’s adult life.<sup>50</sup> Following this, the New Order declared in the early 1980s that the official ideology would be the “sole basis” (*asas tunggal*) of all organizations and collectivities in Indonesia. The unintended consequences of this decision form the basis of the next section of this chapter. For now, it is

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<sup>48</sup> Reading, again in the new orthography, “Atas berkat rahmat Allah Yang Maha Kuasa dan dengan didorongkan oleh keinginan luhur, supaya berkehidupan kebangsaan yang bebas, maka rakyat Indonesia menyatakan dengan ini kemerdekaan.”

<sup>49</sup> This multiple enunciation prefigures a model of pluralism that allows for difference without recourse to exchangeability or other corollaries of the ostensible neutrality at the heart of secularity. This manner of negotiating amongst difference will be taken up in greater detail within IofC and Kahfi practices.

<sup>50</sup> See Morfit’s “Pancasila: the Indonesian State Ideology” for a basic introduction to Pancasila pedagogy during the New Order.

sufficient to remark that only during the brief presidency of B.J. Habibie, following the resignation of Suharto, were the regulations dictating the “sole basis” rescinded (Azra *Indonesia, Islam and Democracy*, 14). I review the seventy-year path of Pancasila to suggest that an inordinate amount of the attention given to questions of religion and state in Indonesia has circulated around this text, a conceptual crutch that this project will also be unable to avoid.

The Pancasila are articulated in the fourth paragraph of the preamble and have been the subject of enduring, intense and still unresolved debate.<sup>51</sup> The relevant paragraph of the August 18<sup>th</sup> 1945 Constitution reads,

Then in order to form a Government of the State of Indonesia that protects the entire Indonesian nation and all of the Children of the Motherland [*tumpah darah*], and in order to advance the general welfare, educate the life of the nation, and participate in the achievement of a world order based on freedom, enduring peace and social justice, so the Freedom of the Indonesian Nation is arranged within the Constitution of the State of Indonesia formed by the State of the Republic of Indonesia with sovereignty vested in the people on the basis of [1] Absolutely Unitary Divinity [*Ketuhanan yang maha esa*],<sup>52</sup> [2] Human-ness that is just and rightly related [*beradab*], [3] Unified Indonesia, [4] popular sovereignty led by wise governance within representative council,<sup>53</sup> with a bringing into being of [5] Social Justice for all the people of Indonesia.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> For an account that looks at the post-New Order constitutional revisions, see Nadirsyah Hosen’s “Religion and the Indonesian Constitution.” See also the already cited work of Arskal Salim, *Challenging the Secular State*. For a Christian perspective, see Eka Darmaputera’s *Pancasila and the Search for Identity and Modernity*.

<sup>52</sup> *Ketoeahan Jang Maha Esa*, in the old orthography, is an exceedingly strange construction. The “ke-an” form of Toehan (God/Lord) makes it akin to the English “divinity,” while the “maha esa” asserts a radical unicity typified by the normative Islamic understandings of God. Far more typical would be “*maha kuasa*,” all powerful, omnipotent, as indeed the preceding paragraph of the preamble employs. Furthermore, the authors’ insistence on capitalizing “yang/jang” (a relative pronoun meaning who/which/that) draws even more attention to the construction. Toehan/Tuhan, selected to include Christian and Hindu communities alienated by the word “Allah,” is partnered with a relative clause that uses Old Javanese “Maha Esa” to make an exceedingly Islamic theological claim. Tuhan entered Malay, from *tuan*, Lord or Master, in the hands of early bible translators (according to Susanne Schröter in *Christianity in Indonesia*, a Dutch translator named Melchior Leijdekker may have added the “h” infix to *tuan* in an effort to make it more courtly). The Arabic *rabb* also denotes Lord, and so even though referring to the divine as “Tuhan” has a Christian genealogy, there is a ready Islamic parallel.

<sup>53</sup> Again there is a doubling that takes place between Islamic/Arabic terminology and Sanskrit/Javanese – “*hikmat kebijaksanaan*” is largely redundant. Hikmat is wisdom, conventionally understood with reference to the Divine. *Kebijaksanaan*, too, could be glossed as wisdom, another “ke-an” construction enwrapping *bijaksana*, or wise, even if in this case *kebijaksanaan* denotes something more like governance. The seeming redundancy allows the multiple audiences of the document to give greater weight to the term with greater sectarian salience.

<sup>54</sup> Kemudian daripada itu untuk membentuk suatu Pemerintah Negara Indonesia yang melindungi segenap bangsa Indonesia dan seluruh tumpah darah Indonesia dan untuk memajukan kesejahteraan umum, mencerdaskan kehidupan bangsa, dan ikut melaksanakan ketertiban dunia yang berdasarkan kemerdekaan, perdamaian abadi dan keadilan sosial, maka disusunlah Kemerdekaan Kebangsaan Indonesia itu dalam suatu Undang Undang Dasar



The history of the Pancasila reflects the enduring tensions between religious frameworks – chiefly those supplied by normative Sunni Islam – and alternative models of political organization and legitimacy. Even the order of the above five points contains these struggles: in Soekarno’s famous “Birth of Pancasila” speech, *Ketuhanan yang maha esa* (Absolute Unitary Divinity) was the final principle. When Muslim nationalist leaders failed to enshrine the obligation of *shariah* upon all Muslims (the so called Jakarta Charter, or *piagam Jakarta*), *Ketuhanan yang maha esa* was moved to the front of the list as a compromise (*Anshari Piagam Jakarta*, 4-5).

Discussions of Pancasila have been largely devoted to the neologism that anchors the state in radical, if idiosyncratic, monotheism. However Soekarno’s theological dexterity extends beyond the much remarked “Absolute Unitary Divinity.” Soekarno also employs an Islamic idiom in articulating the democratic constitution of the idealized state. The fourth basis reflects this in its positing of “popular sovereignty led by wise governance within representative council” (*Kerakyatan yang dipimpin oleh hikmat kebijaksanaan dalam Permusyawaratan*). Key to this is the “representative council” or *permusyawaratan*. This latter term derives from the Arabic *shura* (consultation). As many members of the Pancasila’s audience were well-aware, the *Quran* directs the Prophet to consult his companions when making decisions affecting the community, and also directs the community to use the same deliberative process (3:159; 42:38).<sup>55</sup>

Soekarno’s Islamic triangulation is even more visible in the “Birth of Pancasila” speech, where *permusyawaratan* is repeatedly interpreted in light of *mufakat* (unanimity). Soekarno elevates these Islamic concepts to a transcendental position even as he disavows *Allah* as the

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Negara Indonesia yang terbentuk dalam suatu susunan Negara Republik Indonesia yang berkedaulatan rakyat dengan berdasarkan kepada Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa, Kemanusiaan yang adil dan beradab, Persatuan Indonesia dan Kerakyatan yang dipimpin oleh hikmat kebijaksanaan dalam Permusyawaratan/Perwakilan serta dengan mewujudkan suatu Keadilan Sosial bagi seluruh rakyat Indonesia.

<sup>55</sup> For more on *shura*, see Shafiq’s “The Role and Place of Shura in the Islamic Polity.”

signifier under which to organize the “godly” state of Indonesia. *Mufakat* and *permusyawaratan* readily reveal their Arab-Islamic genealogy. The former derives from the Arabic radical *wafiq* (Ar. to be right or fitting, in this form, to be in accord or unanimity), just as *shura* arrives from “consultation.” In the speech, however, Soekarno casts both as the “traditional” deliberative strategy of Indonesian village-level governance. Sukarno mobilizes these terms to name something quintessentially *Indonesian*, but the terms themselves harken to an idealized time in Islamic history, when the community organized around the Prophet also used these principles to guide decision making. In articulating *mufakat* and *permusyawaratan* as pillars of the Indonesian state, Sukarno mobilizes Islamic transcendental values in the service of the new nation. Something traditionally Indonesian appears as also already fundamentally Islamic – or the inverse, foundational Islamic practices are imagined as eternally Indonesian.<sup>56</sup> This posture recalls precisely the “adat” and “Islam” marriage evinced so strongly by Diponegoro. However Soekarno arrives at this position not only through his Islamic grounding, but also through his liberal nationalist education, imagined in secular scientific terms – he is an engineer, after all, as Rudolf Mrazek would insist we acknowledge. A brave soul might argue that Snouck Hurgronje’s ethical policy gave rise to a new Diponegoro, a more strident version of the now-accepted prospect that changes in Dutch colonial policy hastened its end.

In Indonesian historiography, there has long been a splintered account of the early nationalist movement. Islamic nationalists point to the establishment of *Sarekat Dagang Islam* (Islamic Traders Union) while the official state history refers to *Boedi Oetomo* (Noble Endeavour; Paramount Philosophy) as the nationalist progenitor. While the first was a Muslim organization, the second was peopled by the striving aristocrats Snouck Hurgronje sought to

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<sup>56</sup> Indeed, this kind of rhetorical maneuver was highlighted by Shiraishi in his analysis of the proto-nationalist movement *Sarekat Islam* conducted in *An Age in Motion*.

cultivate in the context of the Association Theory. Pancasila as initially formulated by Soekarno was an attempt to reconcile these competing trajectories as much as to describe a positive political philosophy. The state ideology of Pancasila underwent substantial revisions in the crucible of the Independence movement and was subsequently subject to frequent re-interpretation – a considerable body of scholarship charts this history. Of interest here is how this fraught relationship between competing nationalist actors allows for the later misrecognition of secularity within the putative core of the state. This misrecognition is part of the legitimating rhetoric that supports the continued state management of religion.<sup>57</sup>

That Indonesia is a secular democracy has become a commonplace assertion, despite the flimsiness of the ascription. This is built on reading Pancasila as non-Islamic, as if Islamic theocracy and secular liberalism were the only institutional alternatives (Jeremy Menchik, in “Productive Intolerance” complicates this picture, suggesting a “third way,” what he calls “godly nationalism”). Careful political observers still frequently publish accounts that posit a secular state as a historical achievement rather than a contested political aspiration (for example, Luthfi Assyauckanie’s *Islam and the Secular State*; or Greg Barton’s “Indonesia: Legitimacy, Secular Democracy and Islam”).<sup>58</sup> The popular secular reading of Indonesia’s political institutions continues, in part, because it is so effective a vehicle for a variety of allied interests. This is true both inside and outside the country. Consider a fairly representative example. I do not introduce

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<sup>57</sup> For more on this line of argument, see Seung-Won Song’s 2008 dissertation, “Back to Basics in Indonesia.”

<sup>58</sup> Conventional accounts of secularity fit uneasily with these ascriptions. I turn first to the conservative philosopher and professional contrarian Remi Brague. Brague, in an interview published as “Secularity vs Secularism,” provides a definition that seems to cover some of the main features of “the secular” in common scholarly usage: “Secularity qualifies a certain realm of things on which unaided human reason can, in principle at least, reach an agreement that enables cooperation towards the common good.” Nor, I think, do political scientists intend what Charles Taylor announces at the outset of *A Secular Age*: “the change I want to define and trace is one which takes us from a society in which it was virtually impossible not to believe in God, to one in which faith, even for the staunchest believer, is one human possibility among others” (3). Taylor’s is ultimately a very personal quest, whereas the “secularism” of Indonesia is a conceptual short-hand for “non-Islamic state.”

this passage to vilify political science, but to better understand the how “Islam-secular” replaced “Islam-adat” (after a brief triangular spell) as the framework for analyzing Indonesian realities.

This account, written by Greg Barton, considers why radical “Islamists” have failed to gain electoral office in significant numbers:

This is a very significant outcome [that radical “Islamists” weren’t voted into office] because the secular character of the state remained the central unresolved issue regarding political legitimacy in the nationalist movement and during the period of parliamentary democracy in the 1950s. This issue reemerged in the wake of the collapse of the Suharto regime in 1998. It was unclear whether secular democracy had sufficiently broad support in the world’s largest Muslim majority country to ensure the legitimacy of both the secular state and the elected government or whether Western style secular democracy needed to evolve into a more uniquely Islamic form of democracy to achieve enduring legitimacy (“Indonesia: Legitimacy, secular democracy, and Islam,” 475).

My intention here is not to castigate unwitting political scientists, to unfairly challenge their uncomplicated enlistment of reductive categories. Rather the point of this exercise to make the hopefully commonplace observation that “secular” carries a lot of different waters for a lot of different actors. In the hands of Barton, “secular democracy” means something like an elected, representative government capable of negotiating between different interested parties without *prima facie* deciding in favor of a particular faith tradition. This limited notion of secular democracy, focused on the operation of the government rather than its rhetorical constitution (the sources of its legitimacy, the conceptual logics that rest beneath its efforts) doesn’t require the secularity of Taylor in the above footnote. The existence of Islamic pluralism attests to this, as I will argue in the case of President Abdurrahman Wahid’s relaxation of the regulations governing Indonesian organizational life, taken up below. And Snouck Hurgronje’s vision of enlightened elites rested on cultivating Barton’s manner of secularism, imagined to be particularly amenable to continued Dutch rule. This is to say, a “technology” of secularism partially freed from secularity – a way of arbitrating disputes that insists on its own formal neutrality. This

impoverished vision of the secular retains tremendous currency – it's a great way to *do* things, an efficacious epistemological stance to adopt.

From Arvind-Pal Mandair in *Religion and the Specter of the West*, there is the call to divert our attentions from the religious or secular towards the discursive constitution of subjects and articulations as religious or secular. Following this logic, it becomes possible to rethink the ways in which the Indonesian state enunciated secular and Islamic attributes, embedded within the institutions conceived and promoted by the state or its agents. These operations were also about managing change – about controlling access to the public and channeling demands made of the state. This logic of enunciation returns in the strange history of the Ministry of Religion (*Kementerian Agama*) that closes this chapter. The Ministry, as a bureaucratic state organ, contains so many of the contradictions produced in the competition between different visions of religious life in Indonesia. Before discussing the Ministry's enduring fantasy of docile nationalist religiosity, however, we should follow the imposition of the state ideology, Pancasila, to its zenith during the New Order.

### **Pancasila and its Discontents**

The New Order, seventeen years after its official passing, has remained at the center of Indonesian historiography. Only in its wake, however, were the bloody origins of the regime allowed to return from the margins of public memory. Since its collapse in 1998, renewed attention has been directed at its operating myths and foundational deceptions (see Zurbuchen's "History, Memory and the '1965 incident;'" see also Asvi Warman Adam's *Pelurusan Sejarah*, especially the latter half which consolidates various counter-historical accounts). This is not the place to recapitulate that history. Instead I will introduce one small piece of the New Order's legitimizing practices: its sacralization of Pancasila and how that figured in the efforts of the

state to manage religion and maintain a singular vector of change. The New Order's promise of economic development demanded that the masses remain static – only their material prospects were to change. It marshaled a fantasy of the nation's past as an ideological supplement to its repressive apparatuses (see Pemberton's *On the Subject of "Java,"* for what is still the best critique of this strategy). In *Rifle Reports*, Mary Margaret Steedly characterizes the articulation of this ideology: "Mass citizenship was thus ideally figured in terms of collective responsibility, docile support for the actions and guidance of others, and acceptance of a hierarchy of political authority explicitly derived from a particular (Javanese, colonial, elite) notion of patricentric domesticity" (204). Almost from the inception of the regime, Pancasila was imagined as the ideal vehicle for the transmission of these values to its subjects.

On October 1 1965, the assassination of six generals and a first lieutenant, part of a coup-counter-coup cycle of still obscured origins, signaled the end of Soekarno's Old Order. In the months that followed, hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of communists, leftists, and other unlucky folk were murdered in mostly intimate neighborhood settings. The sometimes military-led purges were carried out in plain sight, while a fierce struggle for the levers of powers unfolded outside of public view. By early 1966, if not sooner, General Suharto had consolidated power, although he would not formally assume the presidency until March 12, 1967 (although on March 11, 1966, Soekarno was forced to delegate complete authority to Suharto in a humiliating public spectacle of the transfer of power). And so, on the first anniversary of the military dead (the public dead were not, and have not been, openly remembered), Suharto elected to organize solemn observances under the sign of Pancasila: on October 1, 1966, "Hari Kesaktian Pancasila" (Miracle of Pancasila Day) was born. A counter-coup leading to a military dictatorship became memorialized as the miraculous survival of the founding ideology of the Indonesian state. In

time, Pancasila would assume ever-greater significance, a project of sacralization that sought to assign all possible social, political and cultural legitimacy to the state.

There was another important dimension to the first recognition of “Hari Kesaktian Pancasila.” Katharine McGregor describes how the New Order sought to erase the marks of Soekarno that still adhered to the Pancasila. By memorializing the slain generals, and formally recognizing the counter-coup against those alleged to have killed them, as a miracle of Pancasila, the regime hoped to “ensure that Pancasila would be more closely associated with its savior, the New Order, than with its creator, Sukarno” (“Commemoration of 1 October,” 45). The rhetorical removal of all possible sources of dissent was part and parcel of the mythic self-fashioning of Suharto’s regime, a logic of monuments and memorials unwound so adeptly in John Pemberton’s *On the Subject of “Java.”* However I don’t revisit these moments to skewer the corpse of the authoritarian order from a safe historical distance. Instead my interest lies in how Suharto imagined a reconfiguration of Islam, adat and science, identified with the state and centered in his person.

Suharto’s speech that first Miraculous Pancasila Day was also printed in the weekly political journal, *Majalah Mimbar*. Amidst the paeans to what would soon be the New Order, Suharto employed several compelling locutions. A third of the way through the speech, he shares two lessons learned from the events of the prior year:

- a) The positive aspect, that is that Pancasila as a life philosophy [*falsafah hidup*], as an ideology comprises an inexhaustible [*jang tidak kering2nja*] source of moral, spiritual and physical strength [*kekuatan2 moril, spiritual dan fisik*], ceaselessly emerging as the vastly superior ideology during the struggles and conflicts of the past, and as a result it is always preserved [*diselamatkan*] by God [*Tuhan*] from the efforts of any-and-all ideologies that would destroy it.

- b) The negative aspect, that is that the penetration [*penetrasi*] and infiltration [*infiltrasi*] of foreign ideologies that succeed in sowing division as well as material [*materil*] and spiritual [*spiritual*] losses in their attempts to undermine Pancasila, and were enabled by our collective negligence [*kelengahan*], incaution [*ketidakwaspadaan*], and because of the wiliness [*lihai*] and slipperiness [*litjinnya*] of the P.K.I [Communist Party of Indonesia] in tricking some of the Indonesian people [*rakjat Indonesia*].  
(4).<sup>59</sup>

My first thought, reading the speech, is that the bluster of the rhetoric rightly belongs in a school yard (my ideology can beat up your ideology), if only it weren't delivered as the capstone on a year-long project of brutal ideological purification. My next observation is that Suharto is speaking English. He characterizes Pancasila as a reservoir of "moral, spiritual and physical" (*moral, spiritual, dan fisik*) strength, using transliterated English for each of these categories. Discussing the nefarious consequences of the communist party's opposition to Pancasila, he describes a portion of the people as suffering from "material and spiritual" (*materil maupun spiritual*) losses or deficits, resulting from the penetration and infiltration (*penetrasi dan infiltrasi*) of foreign ideologies. This reliance on English suggests that although Suharto (like Soekarno before him) locates the roots of Pancasila in an eternal Indonesian past, he conceives of the political project organized under its sign as a fundamentally modern operation. Suharto closes the speech with a supplication, imagined as a collective entreaty: "On this memorial evening let us request strength [*kekuatan*] and patience [*kesabaran*] from *Tuhan Jang Maha Esa*, may we preserve [*mengamankan*] and carry out [*mengamalkan*] the revolutionary teachings and

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- a) Aspek positifnya, ialah bahwa Pancasila sebagai falsafah hidup, sebagai ideology merupakan sumber kekuatan2 moral, spiritual dan fisik yang tidak kering2nya, senantiasa keluar sebagai ideologi yang jauh lebih unggul dalam perjuangan dan pertentangan dimasa lampau itu, oleh karena itu selalu diselamatkan Tuhan dari usaha2 ideologi manapun yang hendak menghajurnya
- b) Aspek negatifnya, ialah bahwa penetrasi dan infiltrasi ideologi asing yang berhasil menimbulkan petjah-belah dan kerugian2 materil maupun spiritual dalam usaha perongrongannya terhadap Pancasila, telah dimungkinkan oleh karena kelengahan, ketidak waspadaan kita sendiri dan karena lihai dan litjinnja P.K.I menipu sebageian rakjat Indonesia



aspirations along the lines that He has blessed [*jang diridhoiNja*]” (6).<sup>60</sup> Co-opting even the language of the revolution, here it becomes subservient to the deconfessionalized unitary divinity of Pancasila discourse.

In 1978 the New Order launched an ambitious program of mandatory education for civil servants. These trainings were called the *Pedoman Penghayatan dan Pengalaman Pancasila* (or P4 for short), a cumbersome title Morfit translates as “Upgrading Course on the Directives for the Realization and Implementation of Pancasila” (“Pancasila: The Indonesian State Ideology,” 838).<sup>61</sup> This program, begun for senior civil servants, was then spread progressively down the Indonesian socio-political hierarchy, arriving eventually in the simple classrooms of primary schools. In concert with this effort, other governmental agencies rededicated themselves to Pancasila. In a 2002 Master’s Thesis written at Jakarta Theological Seminar (STT Jakarta), Beril Huliselan analyzes the changing place of religion in the New Order during this period. Employing a Marxist framework that emphasizes the economic motivations of government policy, Huliselan works largely from the Departemen Agama’s (the predecessor to today’s *Kementerian Agama* – Ministry of Religion) history of itself. He writes, “At this time, compared with the previous situation, the effort to employ all the elements of religion in shoring up [*menopang*] national development was increasingly concentrated [*kental*]” (“Manusia, Agama dan Keterasingan.” This pressure was especially pronounced given the tasks set for the agency by Suharto. The first of these was to, “stabilize [*menetapkan*] the ideology and philosophy of Pancasila within the lives of religious communities [*ummat beragama*]” (ibid.). Here, however, the Department of Religion was forced to confront what would soon become a major source of

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<sup>60</sup> “Marilah kita pada malam peringatan ini memohon kekuatan dan kesabaran kepada Tuhan Jang Maha Esa, semoga kita dapat mengamankan dan mengamalkan ajaran dan tjita2 revolusi sesuai dengan garis jang diridhoiNja” (6).

<sup>61</sup> We might just as easily gloss P4 as “Guidance for Appreciating and Carrying Out Pancasila.”

conflict in Indonesia – the New Order’s overreach in inscribing Pancasila at the heart of everything.

Along with Noorhaidi Hasan (*Laskar Jihad*), van Bruinessen (“Genealogies of Radicalism in Post-Suharto Indonesia”) persuasively traces the shifting fortunes of Islamic political aspirations to a period of tremendous ferment in 1980s Indonesia. Galvanized by Saudi money, the Iranian revolution, and small-scale study groups (the so-called *tarbiyah* movement), re-politicized Muslim activists set forth on a quiet revolution. Both of these scholarly accounts emphasize changes in the late New Order, although van Bruinessen, like Chiara Formichi after him (*Islam and the Making of the Nation*), follows these threads back in time to the late colonial period, and especially the years of Japanese Occupation (1942-45). However there was another more immediate precipitating factor: the New Order’s cumbersome advocacy of Pancasila. It was the doctrine of *asas tunggal* (singular basis), first launched in 1978 that set the immediate stage for the Tanjung Priok massacre.<sup>62</sup> The Tanjung Priok incident, in turn, has loomed large in the political imagination of Muslim activists in Indonesia ever since. These activists were quiet in the face of the military annexation of East Timor and relatively untroubled by the “anti-crime” assassination of the “mysterious shooter” incidents.<sup>63</sup> But young Muslim activists were traumatized when the guns of the state turned on their brethren in north Jakarta.

The sudden insistence on the part of the New Order that Pancasila, alone, must provide the basis for all collective activities provoked confusion and resistance. In Dhofier’s excellent institutional history of “traditional” Islam in modern Indonesia, *The Pesantren Tradition*, there is

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<sup>62</sup> See Prawiranegara “Pancasila as the Sole Foundation” for a brief history of this policy.

<sup>63</sup> Freek Colombijn looks at these two examples in conjunction with one another in “Explaining the Violent Situation in Indonesia,” see especially p. 52-54. Justus van der Kroef has written about the “mysterious shooter” (*petrus = penembak misterius*) assassinations of suspected gang members in “Petrus: Patterns of Prophylactic Murder.”

a minor anecdote to this effect. Dhofier reports on his attendance at a monthly meeting organized by Nahdlatul Ulama in Jombang in 1978, to address matters of jurisprudence. He lists some of the questions posed by the public, including this exchange: “Q) There have been frequent requests from the public that the *ulama* should explain clearly the meaning of the first principle of the Pancasila. Does the belief in Oneness of God fit the Islamic belief in Allah? A) The question was not answered in the meeting or in the two following meetings that I attended” (162). In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Pancasila was ubiquitous, but directly reconciling its arcane language with normative religious belief was more fraught than ever.

The Tanjung Priok sub-district [*kecamatan*], located adjacent the ports of north Jakarta, played host to one more incident in Indonesia’s troubled legacy of state violence. In September 1984, vocal Muslim activists, contesting the state’s intransigence on the doctrine of *asas tunggal* (singular basis), attracted attention to one of their venues. A sub-district military liaison [*koramil*] entered Mushala as-Sa’adah, a prayer hall in the neighborhood, on September 8, 1984. He allegedly removed some fliers advertising an anti-Pancasila speech. He was, additionally, known to be Catholic, rumored to have left his shoes on, and said to have insulted the Quran. In an ensuing scuffle, the *koramil* was beaten and his motorcycle burned. Four members of the *Mushala* community were arrested over the next several days, and soon an angry cohort approached the military complex where the four men were being held. Listening to a preacher inveigh against *asas tunggal*, as well as against the military’s interference in their religious practice, the burgeoning mob attacked and killed a Chinese family (who happened to be Muslim) en route to the military base. Arriving at the complex they demanded the release of their compatriots. Instead the protesters were met with live bullets, officially killing twenty-four, but more likely accounting for hundreds of casualties. The dead and dying were bundled off to mass

graves and fire-trucks sprayed the blood from the streets. Initially, it seemed like there would be no repercussions, but the long-term consequences dramatically re-organized the New Order regime.

In the aftermath of the massacre, a number of Muslim activists were rounded up and put on trial for incitement. One of the key preachers amongst the protesters was killed the night of the massacre, but the authorities managed to find associates or at least people articulating similar critical messages towards the doctrine of *asas tunggal*. The eventual demise of the New Order brought the details of the Tanjung Priok Massacre back into the public domain. With renewed discussion came the publication of historical documents pertaining to the events, including the fascinating volume *Pancasila, de-Islamisasi dan Politik Provokasi* (“Pancasila, de-Islamization, and Political Provocation”). Written by Syarifin Maloko, one of those tried in the wake of the shootings, it is a strong contributor to the post-New Order genre of *pledoi* (“pleas,” or “defenses”), published testimony from politically motivated trials. In his introduction to the text, Abdul Munir Mul Khan provides some context for the re-printing of this particular plea. Abdul Munir Mul Khan writes, “the riots and violence that spread with the fall of the New Order government on May 21, 1998, have roots in two related problems, national citizenship on one hand and religious citizenship on the other, that since Independence haven’t been unified/reconciled, except in artificial forms serving transient political interests” (xxi). Interpreting the sectarian violence that stalked the New Order as a problem of “religious citizenship,” (*kewargaan keagamaan*) replicates the rhetorical strategy Syarifin Maloko adopts in the plea itself, as we shall see shortly.

Late in his trial, having reviewed the history of independent Indonesia, the role of Muslim activists in defending the state (read slaughtering leftists), and the course of the New

Order, Syarifin Maloko issues a damning indictment of New Order policies, borrowing the mantle of Pancasila:

The idea of “the Singular Basis of Pancasila” is a deviation from [*penyimpangan*] and betrayal of [*pengkhianatan*] the founders of the state, and a further betrayal [*pengkhianatan*] of Pancasila and UUD 1945 [the founding constitution]. Secondly, the idea of “the Singular Basis of Pancasila” carries the sense [*membawa arti*] that the Basis of Islam is narrower, even though Islam is a heavenly religion whose truth values are absolute and universal.

Thirdly, the idea of “the Singular Basis of Pancasila” represents a repudiation [*pengingkaran*] of the contributions of the Muslim community in the liberation of Indonesia and the rise of the New Order. Fourthly, the idea of “the Singular Basis of Pancasila” is a violation [*pemeriksaan; rape*] of the true values [*nilai-nilai hakiki*] of democracy. Fifthly, the idea of “the Singular Basis of Pancasila” is the slaughter [*pembantaian*] of civil and social rights [*hak-hak warga dan masyarakat*]. (171).<sup>64</sup>

This speech, nominally delivered to the judges hearing the trial, demonstrates a mastery of the Pancasila rhetorical forms. By accusing the state of betrayal (*pengkhianatan*), Syarifin Maloko invokes the potent language of the New Order’s own origins, the “pengkhianatan” of the Indonesian Communist Party. Employing the sexualized idiom of New Order domesticity, the authentic tradition of democracy is “raped” (*pemeriksaan*). And the rights asserted by the accused are “slaughtered,” recalling the New Order’s founding slaughter. Instead of disputing the terms of the New Order, Syarifin Maloko occupies them, marshaling their legitimizing features, endlessly reproduced in state ritual. Here Islam has swallowed up the state and is outdoing it in its democratic commitments.

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Ide Asas Tunggal Pancasila adalah sebuah penyimpangan dan pengkhianatan terhadap para pendiri Negara dan pengkhianatan pula terhadap Pancasila dan UUD 1945. Kedua, ide Asas Tunggal Pancasila membawa arti bahwa Asas Islam lebih sempit, walau Islam adalah agama samawi yang nilai kebenarannya mutlak dan universal.

Ketiga, ide Asas Tunggal Pancasila merupakan pengingkaran terhadap andil umat Islam dalam “Indonesia Merdeka” dan kebangkitan Orde Baru. Keempat, ide Asas Tunggal Pancasila adalah pemeriksaan akan nilai-nilai hakiki demonkrasi. Kelima, ide Asas Tunggal Pancasila adalah pembantaian terhadap hak-hak warga dan masyarakat. (171).

The Tanjung Priok massacre wouldn't simply go away. Eventually Suharto hung responsibility around the neck of the senior General Leonardus Benjamin (Benny) Moerdani, a Catholic. And Suharto himself tried to bolster his Islamic credentials, undertaking a much-remarked Hajj in 1991, allowing the formation of new Muslim organizations, and reaching out to Muslim political constituencies in the search for enduring popular legitimacy. On the activist front, however, the sudden violence of the state encouraged greater caution (and a wave of retaliatory bombings in Jakarta and at the temple Borobudur). The low profiles of the *tarbiyah* movement and the creeping spread of underground organizations bore the traumatic mark of the Tanjung Priok massacre. In assuming sole possession of change – the *asas tunggal* of Pancasila – the state had finally provoked a response it could not contain. The shifts in the internal composition of the New Order, accomplished throughout the 1990s, demonstrated either the victory of Islam in occupying the state, or the successful appropriation of Islamic authority by state actors. What was clear, after Tanjung Priok, is that the state and Islam could no longer remain apart.

### **Old Order, New Order, Moral Order**

The long-term consequences of the Tanjung Priok affair include the organizational legacy left by emboldened Muslim activists contesting the New Order's ideological monopoly on Pancasila.<sup>65</sup> Changes in the New Order government, responding to this building pressure, also contributed to its eventual downfall – although the immediate causes were its sudden exposure as a hollow paragon of economic development, an unveiling wrought in the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997. In this section we bracket off the New Order, exploring a slice of the executive history

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<sup>65</sup> Of course, their efforts did not end with the challenge to the New Order. Multiple observers have traced the Reformasi era emergence of highly mobilized Islam to the turmoil of 1980s Indonesia. See, for example, Noorhaidi Hasan's *Laskar Jihad*; and van Bruinessen's "Genealogies of Islamic Radicalism." For a much longer historical trajectory of reformist impulses, see Michael Laffan's "The Tangled Roots of Islamist Activism in Southeast Asia."

of President Soekarno that preceded it, and then returning to this thread in the *Reformasi* period that followed in the New Order's wake. I chart the changing legal prospects of an organization known first as the Moral Re-Armament Movement and today as Initiatives of Change Indonesia (IofC). Its current iteration is a creature that could only exist in the much-changed legal landscape of the *Reformasi* era. The practices of IofC put much larger social phenomena from this period into relief, a prospect that will be explored in Chapter Two below. Here, however, I want to focus on how the state has negotiated perceived challenges expressed in moral idioms. Before Reformasi, IofC was forbidden.<sup>66</sup> More accurately, the Moral Re-Armament Movement (MRA) was banned, but that is only because the international Initiatives of Change movement didn't yet exist – it rose from the ashes of MRA in 2001.

Initiatives of Change is the direct descendent of the now-defunct MRA, a history explored in far greater detail in Chapter Two. The story of Initiatives of Change Indonesia, or how an evangelical Christian group became a Muslim network for social and spiritual self-improvement, is also the story of the changing relationship between the State and Islam in independent Indonesia. Put another way, the recent history of IofC sheds light on an evolving idea of the secular forged within Indonesian social and political institutions. This is the purported secularism that characterizes the Pancasila state – an always uncertain prospect, as we have

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<sup>66</sup> In this sense, it shared a fate with other groups that flourished during Reformasi – prohibited during the New Order, triumphant in its wake. For example, Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), a local iteration of a global movement calling for the re-establishment of unified Islamic political sovereignty (although formally eschewing violent means towards this end) seemingly exploded onto the scene in 2000, but its roots extend at least to the same moment in which the *tarbiyah* (Islamic education – “self education” in small study groups) movement of the 1980s emerged. In this respect HTI is like *Partai Keadilan Sejahtera* (Prosperous Justice Party – an Indonesian Muslim Brotherhood affiliate), part of a global resurgence in interest in Muslim politics (Daminak *Fenomena Partai Keadilan*; Munabari “Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia,” see also Rachel Rinaldo’ “Muslim Women, Middle Class Habitus, and Modernity in Indonesia” for an ethnography set amongst PKS supporters). IofC, while voicing very different politics than PKS or HTI, deserves to be understood as part of the same organizational efflorescence.

demonstrated. The institutional history behind the expulsion of MRA from Indonesia has everything to do with how the state arrogated the task of managing change to itself.

Because the Moral Re-Armament Movement had been outlawed by President Soekarno in 1962, Initiatives of Change Indonesia only became a possibility with Presidential Edict 69 (henceforth PE 69-2000) signed by President Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) on May 23, 2000. This decree reversed President Soekarno's Presidential Edict 264 of 1962 (PE 264-1962). PE 264-1962 had consolidated a number of presidential decrees issued over the preceding three years that sought to legislate against the perceived influence of foreign organizations, particularly those associated with or imagined to be associated with the Freemasons. Included in this list were: the Vrijmetselaren Loge (Freemason Lodge); the Rotary Club; the Moral Re-Armament Movement; the Divine Life Society; the Ancient Mystical Organization of Rucen Cruisers (sic Rosae Crucis or Rosicrucian, AMORC); the Democracy League (*Liga Demokrasi*); the Baha'i Faith; and the Raden Saleh Foundation.<sup>67</sup> In addition to stemming the influence of Western conspirators, represented by the Freemasons, the decree also served to block the proselytizing efforts of new mystical-religious movements, like AMORC and the Divine Life Society, the latter springing from the teachings of Swami Sivananda Saraswati in India. A purely domestic enemy was seen in the Liga Demokrasi, the consortium of religious and non-communist parties opposing the expanded influence of the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI)

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<sup>67</sup> The Freemasons Lodge and the Rotary Club probably require no introduction. The Divine Life Society is yoga-centered tradition founded in 1930s India that assertively promotes its model of spiritual attainment. AMORC is an early twentieth century organization, although it locates its own origins in ancient Egypt, which is dedicated to "humanistic" spiritual exploration. The Democracy League was a consortium of religious and right-leaning organizations and political parties that opposed the expanded influence of the Indonesian Communist Party during the "Guided Democracy" period of Soekarno's rule that began with the suspension of the legislature in 1957. The Baha'I were presumptively suspect according to both the Muslim members of Soekarno's constituency and to the communists, who had little patience for yet another groups proclaiming salvation through moral work, rather than structural equality. Yayasan Raden Saleh, or the Raden Saleh Foundation, took its name from the painter discussed above in the context of Diponegoro's capture. The historical Raden Saleh had been inducted into a Freemason lodge in the Netherlands, and this organization was the Indonesian iteration of the Theosophical Society, a sometimes Masonic-allied "spiritual" movement that had enormous traction in late colonial Dutch East Indies.



and advocating for a return to parliamentary democracy. The inclusion of the Moral Re-Armament Movement is linked to the broader MRA organization's avid anti-communist activities as much as it is connected to the fear of (not wholly unrelated) masonic conspiracies.

The organizations prohibited through PE 264-1962 were a diverse collection, and Soekarno articulated several overlapping reasons to account for this grouping in the consolidated edict Peraturan Penguasa Perang Tertinggi Republik Indonesia Nomor 9 Tahun 1962 (Regulation of the Supreme War Commander of the Republic of Indonesia Number 9 Year 1962; henceforth PP 9-1962). Firstly and damningly, they were held to be “unwilling to accept and sustain the Political Manifesto” (*yang tidak mau menerima dan mempertahankan Manifesto Politik*), which is to say they opposed the official governing principles enshrined by Soekarno under the auspices of Guided Democracy, the regime inaugurated in 1957 establishing executive supremacy as the political order. In the preamble to PP 9-1962, the document refers to the “prohibition against organizations that aren't consistent with the Indonesian identity, obstruct the fulfillment of the revolution or oppose the socialist Aspirations [caps original] of Indonesia” (*Larangan adanya organisasi yang tidak sesuai dengan kepribadian Indonesia, menghambat penyelesaian revolusi atau bertentangan dengan Cita-cita sosialisme Indonesia...*). The language here is instructive, since it demonstrates the moral force of the nationalist project. Soekarno is advocating revolutionary prospects that flow exclusively through the organs of the state. The mere presence of possible sources of change outside of the state constitutes an obstruction. All organizational life in the archipelago must accede to this logic – although leftist-internationalist organizations were still tolerated in the Republic.

Both the revolutionary boilerplate and the strange construction of “Indonesian identity” (*kepribadian Indonesia*; also Indonesian character) add to these rhetorical effects. Far more

typical in post-Independence Indonesia is the formulation “*kepribadian bangsa Indonesia*,” or the “Indonesian national character,” a phrase usually connected to the governing ideology of Pancasila, discussed at length above. The elision of *bangsa*, in this edict, ascribes to the state qualities typically linked with the nation or with individuals: Indonesia has an identity, rather than “Indonesians.” This introduces an ambivalence to the construction – it means at once the character of (the state of) Indonesia and Indonesian identity, an implicit idealized set of attributes possessed by some imaginary exemplary citizen. MRA, with its emphasis on individual moral uplift (the explicit aim of the organization) and its propagation by cells (along with its anti-communist advocacy), probably “obstructed the fulfillment of the revolution and opposed the socialist aspirations of Indonesia.” It also might not have been consistent with the character of Indonesia(ns). Its focus on personal moral efficacy was at odds with the collectivist winds blowing across the Islands; its muddled Christian heritage (see below) obscuring the easy legibility of a known denomination and thus state recognition. And so it was banned.

The expulsion of MRA from Indonesia was related to me on several occasions during the time I spent at IofC, fieldwork at the heart of Chapters Two and Three. In the narratives shared with me, IofC was the anachronistic object of the ban, and the ban was attributed to President Suharto rather than President Soekarno. Given the emancipatory associations (re)imagined with respect to Soekarno post-Reformasi, the prohibition of IofC (MRA) felt more like the repressive handiwork of Suharto. This kind of sleight-of-history was common in my conversations with interlocutors on a variety of subjects. Perhaps most tellingly, *krismon*, the “monetary crisis” that precipitated the fall of Suharto was reimagined to have taken place after said fall, during the Reformasi period. In this way the development rhetoric of Suharto was protected from the ravages of history, and the economic uncertainty that occasioned (and followed) his fall was

given fuller affective weight: Suharto's ouster caused the monetary crisis. The political instability, easily accessed in living memory, that followed Suharto's resignation thus came to max the economic fear that preceded it, as the two became conflated. This defense of the Suharto legacy seemed to reflect the interior depths to which the state's narrative had penetrated rather than any volitional assent to its propaganda. Even when I pressed on these points, most people could provide the "correct" chronology, but also quickly reverted to the more "felt" relationship between events. The narrative die so cast, seldom broken.

By the time of Gus Dur's presidency (1999-2001), the socialist aspirations of Indonesia had long since been entombed in unmarked graves, littered across the archipelago. The revolution had been concluded (the revolutionaries lost), and so its obstruction no longer represented a compelling state interest. Only the idea of an Indonesian Identity remained from Soekarno's Regulation as Supreme War Commander, PP 9-1962. This final concern had been, however, subject to considerable revision during the intervening years of the New Order. The characteristics rejected as inconsistent with an Indonesian identity in 1962 may not have felt so threatening in the year 2000. Even though in repealing PE 264-1962 Gus Dur articulated an altogether different set of interests, he echoed the language of the original edict in one important respect – that of "not fitting," or "inconsistent" (*tidak sesuai*). The logic of the repeal was laid out in four points in the preamble:

- a) that the establishment of civic and religious social organizations, in its essence, comprises a fundamental right of every Indonesian citizen
- b) that the prohibition of the organizations intended by Presidential Decision Nomor 264 Tahun 1962 [PE 264-1962], is considered to be no longer consistent with democratic principles
- c) that although in reality [PE 264-1962] is no longer in effect, for the purpose of providing greater legal certainty it is necessary to unequivocally repeal said decree

- d) that on the basis of the assessment undertaken in points a, b and c above, it is considered necessary to repeal [PE 264-1962].<sup>68</sup>

Whereas Soekarno warned against organizations that were “not consistent with Indonesian identity,” Gus Dur rues prohibitions that are “*no longer* consistent with democratic principles” (emphasis mine). The first deals with timeless essences – be it state or individual – the second is time-limited and contingent. Gus Dur’s is a historical argument about state exigencies, rather than a transcendent ontological claim. The text suggests an expanded understanding of “democratic principles,” or perhaps a more imperative application of the same. The revolution, the aspirations, and indeed the Indonesian identity are no longer invoked. In subtle shifts like this, President Gus Dur attempted to dictate a vision of Islamic pluralism. Foregrounding the historical (human) nature of state law set up an implicit contrast with the eternal injunctions of a divine order. This becomes clearer with a closer look at some of the language of the edict.

The word I have glossed as “essence” in point (a) is *hakekat*, a loan word from Arabic that appears frequently in contemporary Indonesian discourse. An Indonesian transliteration of *haqiqa*, the radical, *haqqa*, means “to be true,” but also “to be imperative or necessary.”<sup>69</sup> One of the Divine names, al-Haqq, or The Truth/Real/Reality is another variant on this root. There are a variety of synonyms that could have been employed in the decree here to mean, “in essence; at its core, in reality.” Instead the specific valences of *hakekat* smuggle in a variety of associations

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- a. <sup>68</sup> bahwa pembentukan organisasi social kemasyarakatan dan keagamaan pada hakekatnya merupakan hak asasi setiap warganegara Indonesia;
- b. bahwa larangan terhadap organisasi-organisasi sebagaimana dimaksud dalam Keputausan Presiden Nomor 264 Tahun 1962, dipandang sudah tidak sesuai lagi dengan prinsip-prinsip demokrasi;
- c. bahwa meskipun dalam kenyataannya [PE 264-1962] sudah tidak efektif lagi, namun untuk lebih memberikan kepastian hukum perlu secara tegas mencabut Keputusan Presiden tersebut
- d. bahwa berdasarkan pertimbangan sebagaimana dimaksud huruf a, b, dan huruc c di atas, maka dipandang perlu untuk mencabut [PE 264-1962]

<sup>69</sup> Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, 191.

that belie a seemingly affirmative declaration of (democratic, secular) rights. In normative Sufi discourse, *hakekat/haqiqa* is the third stage of the seeker's progress, following *shariah* (the road/the law/the manifest way), *tarekat/tariqa* (the path/the initiated order/the internal way) and preceding *makrifat/ma'rifa* (unified knowledge/gnosis). Gus Dur, with his background as the leader (and grandson of the founder) of the traditionalist organization Nahdlatul Ulama is intimately familiar with this trajectory. Through his word selection, Gus Dur appears to be recognizing universal democratic principles, while simultaneously casting them as divine in origin through reference to Ultimate Reality. Again, *hakekat* is the stage at which the seeker sees things *as they really are*, *makrifat* being the level at which the distinction between the seeker seeing and the things seen is annihilated. The fundamental right to association, in Gus Dur's telling, is nothing less than part of the nature of Reality. And so, in addition to the organizations listed above, Gus Dur lifted the ban on the Baha'i enacted in PE 264-1962 since the rights of this religious community to congregate are also ultimately divine.

In this decree, Gus Dur was asserting a vision of the state that allowed for the existence of previously threatening organizations – that acknowledged sources of change beyond the ambit of the state and out of reach of its regulations. In PE 264-1962 Soekarno was striving to protect several constituencies – established religious organizations that resented new ethico-mystical proselytizers; the Communist Party; and a national project threatened by foreign intervention. Anti-communist advocacy is still state dogma (Gus Dur's efforts to repeal the legislation outlawing Communist ideology met stiff resistance in 2000), and the fear of foreign intervention and new spiritual movements remain pertinent for core constituencies of the post-New Order political spectrum. Gus Dur rejected these fears with the language of rights (*hak*), and the procedural force of law. If one could simply disregard the esoteric baggage of *hakekat* above,

Gus Dur could be interpreted here as acceding to a secularizing impulse. In this telling, transcendent democratic values, fundamental rights and the attendant assumptions of a certain genealogy of political philosophy triumph. But Gus Dur's position is altogether more complicated than that. Rather than the recursive re-inscription of the secular (the neutral base always located at the foot of public discourse), Gus Dur's move aspires to a pluralist ideology that relies on an acknowledgement of the divine. This ideology was articulated in the language of the Pancasila, re-investing this foundational contract with renewed legitimacy and undermining the official interpretation of the ideology inculcated during the latter two decades of the New Order government. Gus Dur's bold pluralism restored the central philosophical document of the independent state to its status as a primary site for the contest of public meanings, precisely by re-enfolding it within a divine embrace. Gus Dur's heroism notwithstanding, the Indonesian state project has continued to trundle along in pursuit of managing change, evincing the long shadow of the colonial encounter with Islam.

### **The Autobiography of the Ministry of Religion**

The current Ministry of Religion, heir to the colonial Office of Arab and Native Affairs, is still tasked with defining the boundaries of religion in the archipelago. This means that the state, along with ensuring the smooth operation of religious projects, still has a vested interest in the soulcraft of individual moral attainment. Managing change is a key feature of the bureaucracy's operation – changes within the educational institutions it oversees, but also changes in theology and practice as they are instantiated throughout the populace. How the state anticipates change emanating from religion can be seen in how it curates its own past: the history of the state management of religion, as imagined by the state. Conveniently, the Ministry commissioned precisely such a history. Different regional branches of the Ministry of Religion

maintain this text on their websites, as does the central website for the national office of the Ministry, where it sits right next to the “Mission and Vision” of the bureaucracy. It is a kaleidoscopic account, worth exploring in detail. If individual political actors like President Abdurrahman Wahid imagined a pluralist society anchored in the Islamic tradition, the Ministry suggests some of the barriers to that vision: a narrow vision of Islam obsessed with its own boundaries.

The author of “Sejarah Kementerian Agama” (the History of the Ministry of Religion), starts by writing,

The Indonesian nation [*bangsa*] is a religious [*religious*] nation. That fact is well reflected in social life [*kehidupan bermasyarakat*] as well as in political life [*kehidupan bernegara*; the life of statehood]. In community settings the ever increasing radiance and solemnity of religious activities [*kegiatan keagamaan*] are visible, both in the form of rituals and in the form of religious sociality [*sosial keagamaan*].<sup>70</sup>

Here the character of the nation, its inhabitants, and the life within the actual state (*kehidupan bernegara*) are all characterized as religious. The fact, then, is enhanced by state policy, in particular by the realization of the official ideology of Pancasila: “In carrying out national development the aforementioned religious ardor [*semangat keagamaan*] was strengthened by the formal articulation [*ditetapkan*] of the bases [*asas*] of faith [*keimanan*] and God-consciousness [*ketaqwaan*] towards *Tuhan yang Maha Esa* [Absolutely Unitary Divinity] as one of the foundations [*asas*] of development.”<sup>71</sup> The density of this ideological formulation is breathtaking. The New Order and post-New Order mantra of development is linked to the deconfessionalized (Islamic) divinity of *Tuhan yang Maha Esa*, which is simultaneously re-

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<sup>70</sup> Bangsa Indonesia adalah bangsa yang religius. Hal tersebut tercermin baik dalam kehidupan bermasyarakat maupun dalam kehidupan bernegara. Di lingkungan masyarakat-terlihat terus meningkat kesemarakan dan kekhidmatan kegiatan keagamaan baik dalam bentuk ritual, maupun dalam bentuk sosial keagamaan.

<sup>71</sup> Dalam pelaksanaan pembangunan nasional semangat keagamaan tersebut menjadi lebih kuat dengan ditetapkannya asas keimanan dan ketaqwaan terhadap Tuhan yang Maha Esa sebagai salah satu asas pembangunan.

Islamized by the ascription of *iman* and *taqwa*, faith and God-consciousness, respectively, core Islamic values concerning the relation between the worshipper and the divine. The proliferation of meanings allows the reader to “get off the train of signification” at the right spot – national development, for those so-inclined; *Tuhan yang Maha Esa* for the non-Muslims; and *iman* and *taqwa* for the majority of the (Muslim) audience.

The document continues its Muslim-not-Muslim dance, providing a synopsis of Indonesian history that almost fully elides the involvement of non-Muslim actors. After speeding through a one-sentence history of Hindu kingdoms, the author pays tribute to the Buddhist empires in the archipelago, pausing to brag that even Chinese students of the tradition ventured there to study. Then Islam arrives, and shortly thereafter, the Dutch. The author first writes, “In the history of the national struggle against Dutch colonialism, many kings [*raja*] and nobles [*kalangan bangsawan*] rose against the colonists,” followed by a list of such figures. All are Muslim, and the Acehnese are particularly well represented (Teuku Umar, his spouse Cut Nyak Dien, Panglima Polim, Iskandar Muda [who fought not the Dutch, but the Portuguese], and Teuku Cik Ditiro). Conveniently, this is a list of recognized “national heroes,” who here become advocates of the not-yet existing Indonesian nation, defended on the basis of Islam. The author then describes what unites the diverse figures of his list, employing the titular formulations used in the Islamic kingdoms of Central Java.

All of these national heroes, according to the author, occupied positions in their respective governments (a somewhat spurious claim, given that many were Acehnese guerillas opposing the Dutch after the fall of Banda Aceh, sacked in January 1874 during the Second Aceh Expedition). These governments, in turn, are imagined to share certain features. The Ministry’s



history reads, “the systems of governance of the above kingdoms, in general, always contained and conducted the following functions:”<sup>72</sup>

1. A general governmental role, a fact reflected in the title “His Royal Highness the King” [*Sampean Dalem Hingkang Sinuhun*]<sup>73</sup> as the executor of general governmental roles
2. A religious leadership role reflected in the title “Master of Religion, Vice-Regent of God” [*Sayidin Panatagama Kalifatulah*]<sup>74</sup>
3. A security and defense role, reflected in the kingly title “Commander on the Battlefield” [*Senopati Hing Ngalogo*].<sup>75</sup>

The ascription of these very particular Central Javanese royal titles to all sorts of figures who opposed the Dutch is strangely ahistorical for a document headed by *sejarah* (history). These titles, used by Central Javanese Islamic kings, become instrumental descriptions of idealized governance that apply even to Acehnese guerillas fighting an invading Dutch army. In this way, Islam gets read back into the core of a nationalist historiography while the whole nationalist constellation becomes subsumed under the signs of Javanese kingship (Benedict Anderson would be proud!).

The idiosyncratic blending of highly particular historical forms with broad nationalist conceits continues throughout the document. Immediately following the description of the shared

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<sup>72</sup> Pola pemerintahan kerajaan-kerajaan tersebut diatas pada umumnya selalu memiliki dan melaksanakan fungsi sebagai berikut:

<sup>73</sup> The full phrase, *Sampean dalem Hingkang Sinuhun Kangjeng Susuhunan*, could be rendered “Beneath the Royal Foot of the Exalted Revered/Worshipped One,” according to Nancy Florida. This phrase, used by the Surakarta Court in Central Java, denotes something like political sovereignty, and thus the author of the Ministry history uses it as the exemplar of a particular function.

<sup>74</sup> Nancy Florida suggests “The blessed upholder of the faith, Caliph of God” for *Sayidin Panatagama Kalifatulah* in an effort to reflect the richer sense of this Arabic-Javanese formulation.

<sup>75</sup>

1. Fungsi pemerintahan umum, hal ini tercermin pada gelar “Sampean Dalem Hingkang Sinuhun” sebagai pelaksana fungsi pemerintahan umum.
2. Fungsi pemimpin keagamaan tercermin pada gelar “Sayidin Panatagama Kalifatulah.”
3. Fungsi keamanan dan pertahanan, tercermin dalam gelar raja “Senopati Hing Ngalogo.”

roles of nationalist religious heroes, the author introduces the following historical aside, which warrants being excerpted in its entirety:

During the Dutch colonial era, from the 16<sup>th</sup> century until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Netherlands East Indies government also “managed” [*mengatur*, scare quotes original] services for religious life [*kehidupan beragama*]. Of course, said religious “services” [*pelayanan*, quotes original] weren’t free from the strategic interests of Dutch colonialism. Dr. C. Snuck Hurgronye [sic], a Netherlands East Indies government advisor, in his book “Nederland en de Islam” (Brill, Leiden 1911), suggested the following: “In all truth the right principle holds that the interference of the government in religious domains is wrong; however one shouldn’t forget that within the Islamic system (of state forms) are found many issues that cannot be separated from their relations with religion, so an effective government cannot be at all hesitant to administer them.”<sup>76</sup>

The latter half of this claim, the citation of Snouck Hurgronje, precedes a brief institutional history: the document next introduces the administrative divisions responsible for religion in the colony followed by their successor units during the Japanese Occupation. However the inclusion of Snouck is unstable: the quote asserts that, although the general principle of non-interference is sound, because Muslims are insufficiently secular they must be closely governed. Is this an example of the misadministration practiced by the Dutch, or is Snouck imagined as a neutral authority legitimizing the continued state management of religion? Given the purview of the Ministry of Religion, I suspect it is the latter. By invoking the figure that did as much as anyone to shape Islamic political horizons in Indonesia, the Ministry of Religion adopts the mantle of colonial religious administration.

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<sup>76</sup> Pada masa penjajahan Belanda sejak abad XVI sampai pertengahan abad XX pemerintahan Hindia Belanda juga “mengatur” pelayanan kehidupan beragama. Tentu saja “pelayanan” keagamaan tersebut tak terlepas dari kepentingan strategi kolonialisme Belanda. Dr.C. Snuck Hurgronye, seorang penasehat pemerintah Hindia Belanda dalam bukunya “Nederland en de Islam” (Brill, Leiden 1911) menyarankan sebagai berikut: “Sesungguhnya menurut prinsip yang tepat, campur tangan pemerintah dalam bidang agama adalah salah, namun jangan dilupakan bahwa dalam sistem (tata negara) Islam terdapat sejumlah permasalahan yang tidak dapat dipisahkan hubungannya dengan agama yang bagi suatu pemerintahan yang baik, sama sekali tidak boleh lalai untuk mengaturnya.”

After sourcing its legitimacy to the late colonial order, this history finally delivers the reader towards the Independence of the Indonesian nation promised throughout the document: “Philosophically, socio-politically and historically, religion to the Indonesian nation is something in the sinews and roots of its life as a nation. This is the reason why religious leaders and figures always appear in the vanguard of the movement and the struggle for independence, whether through political parties or other methods.”<sup>77</sup> Thus the nationalist enterprise is re-conceived as a religious project, riddled with Islamic markers but expressed in the deconfessionalized idiom of “agama.” Then the Ministry finally dates its own birth: “The establishment of the Department of Religion [precursor to the Ministry] on January 3, 1946, roughly five months after the proclamation of Independence, is rooted in the aforementioned foundational attributes [*sifat dasar*] and characteristics [*karakteristik*] of the Indonesian Nation, while also realizing and instantiating the ideology of the Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution.”<sup>78</sup> Thus from its founding, the Ministry of Religion is imagined to be a manifestation of the timeless universal ideology expressed in the Pancasila, and simultaneously a bureaucratic form capable of guaranteeing the rights enumerated in the founding Constitution. The document ends with a citation of that constitution, specifically Article 29 as it relates to the grounding of the nation in *Tuhan yang Maha Esa*, coupled with the right of free exercise of religion accorded to the inhabitants of Indonesia.

I introduce this particular document, at such length, because of its unique perspective as a bureaucratic autobiography. The elements arranged within this history, varying from the

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<sup>77</sup> Secara filosofis, sosio politis dan historis agama bagi bangsa Indonesia sudah berurat dan berakar dalam kehidupan bangsa. Itulah sebabnya para tokoh dan pemuka agama selalu tampil sebagai pelopor pergerakan dan perjuangan kemerdekaan baik melalui partai politik maupun sarana lainnya.

<sup>78</sup> Berdirinya Departemen Agama pada 3 Januari 1946, sekitar lima bulan setelah proklamasi kemerdekaan kecuali berakar dari sifat dasar dan karakteristik bangsa Indonesia tersebut di atas juga sekaligus sebagai realisasi dan penjabaran ideologi Pancasila dan UUD 1945

nationalist general to the ethnic and Islamic particular, are highly suggestive of how the postcolonial state understands its role in regulating religion. Islam becomes a potent source of dynamism, but it is directed exclusively towards the ends of the Nation. Incredibly diverse Muslim actors are recast as the secular liberal Muslims of Snouck's imagination. Imam Bonjol, one of the listed heroes of the Ministry's history, is no longer fighting for Islamic reform in the Minang heartland. He is now a harbinger of the united Indonesian state, a paragon of the transhistorical governing logics of sovereignty, religion and security. Whereas the colonial state fantasized about recruiting Islam into a project of docile modernity, the postcolonial state sees in religion only the advocates of the nation. The all/nothing hypothesis survives into the present. Projects of moral transformation remain constrained by this legacy: with structural intervention foreclosed, the changes promised by diverse discourses remain resolutely located in the hearts of individuals.

### **The Possibilities of Change**

Understanding how "change" came to be marshaled – constrained and produced, moderated by the efforts of a state – demands that we return to the history of the state management of religion. Islam has been imagined as a potent reservoir of change by colonial and postcolonial powers alike. In essence, the first concerted effort by the Dutch to manage the social, political and moral force of Islam was repression. By abstracting Islam from the life of the Indies subjects, its transformative potential was imagined to be neutralized. This process was greatly accelerated and consolidated by the Dutch trauma resulting from the Diponegoro War. After the attempt to “interpret out” Islam became untenable, a recognition galvanized by the Aceh War, the next approach to managing change saw Islam as a source of personal import, but expressly forbade its social and political potentials. The effort to interiorize Islam can be

understood as an attempt to secularize the tradition. This new development did not overturn the hard distinction between “native” tradition and “foreign” Islam, so much as it imagined a third, mediating pole. Thus the purified category of Islam, ostensibly opposed to local custom, was enlisted as a moral vehicle for a vision of modernity that denied religion broader social implications: they would do it to themselves, organically, once the seed of western modernity had been planted within their hearts.

The Japanese, arriving in the archipelago on their own imperial project, sought to restore the political aspirations of Islam, although bending them to the Japanese vision of pan-Asian dominance. Once loosed, of course, these aspirations were not easily marshaled. The returning Dutch, fresh from liberation from their own Nazi occupiers, came back to highly mobilized Islam, a core column in the incredibly diverse anti-colonial Independence forces. Unable to recognize a thing as itself – too invested in a hundred year history that either denied Islam or relegated it to moral inferiority – they interpreted these movements as symptoms, evidence of other "real," base motivations. Thus Islamic political activism became read as variously, continued Japanese machinations, or (however implausibly) as a front for communist agitation. Newly independent Indonesia re-calibrated the governance of religion once more. Islam was no longer (just) a foreign tradition, but its entrance into political domains still required careful state management, a process complicated by the state’s uneasy compromise of deconfessionalized religion.

Successive regimes responded differently to this impulse, ultimately yielding circumstances where the transformative potential of the Islamic tradition resided principally in its personal moral effects. Islam and the possibilities of change became more fraught. Internal to the tradition, the sources of change are imagined as the conformance of an individual to the

exemplary character of the Prophet and the explicit obligations of the scripture. The revelation is the revelation because of its unchanging character and authenticated *ahadith* are a finite resource – change, then, must often come from without, but only insofar as it does not corrupt or alter either the revelation or the recorded traditions. Islam is thus imagined as an unchanging vehicle for change. Meanwhile, the vast exterior of the tradition (not cognized as such in prior epochs), became its own reservoir of change for Muslim actors accessing it in the present. Borrowing from "non-Muslim" tradition, provided it remained marked as such, became one more means of attaining desired changes.

Muslims acting in Indonesia today, envisioning a change in their subjectivity, relationality or society, are thus encouraged to look beyond their borders. Outside of the national territory of Indonesia and beyond the theological domain of Islam. The cosmopolitanism of the nationalist tradition ensures that whatever is found can be made meaningfully Indonesian, while the flexibility of the Islamic approaches to knowledge promise, similarly, that providing the knowledge is not misrepresented as Islam, it too can be incorporated into the repertoire of the believers. The inheritors of this legacy interact with its discursive effects – interiorized religion and objectified tradition as real and natural categories. That is not to say, however, that they merely replicate their structures. At Initiatives of Change Indonesia and Kahfi Motivator School, religion, tradition and science are reassembled into novel configurations. The product of their hybridizing discourse deserves serious attention as something new, with new features and new arcs, while maintaining the frame of its historical antecedents. The following chapters set out to pursue the “newness” of the phenomenon alongside an abiding interest in the “strangeness” of the seemingly familiar.

## Chapter 2

### Changing Hearts and Lives at Initiatives of Change Indonesia

Moral Re-Armament has the tremendous uniting power that comes from change in both East and West. It gives the full dimension of change. Economic change. Social change. National change. International change. All based on personal change. It creates a personal opinion that can change the fate of nations. It presents a force adequate to remake the world. It shows how to unite nation and nation, and creates inspired democracy in families, industries, cabinets and nations. It is the inspired living that makes nations think and live. It has God's mind.

-Frank Buchman, addressing the World Assembly for Moral Re-Armament.

Caux, Switzerland June 4, 1949

The genuineness of religion is thus indissolubly bound up with the question whether the prayerful consciousness be or be not deceitful. The conviction that something is genuinely transacted in this consciousness is the very core of living religion. As to what is transacted, great differences of opinion have prevailed. The unseen powers have been supposed, and are yet supposed, to do things which no enlightened man can nowadays believe in. It may well prove that the sphere of influence in prayer is subjective exclusively, and that what is immediately changed is only the mind of the praying person. But however our opinion of prayer's effects may come to be limited by criticism, religion, in the vital sense in which these lectures study it, must stand or fall by the persuasion that effects of some sort genuinely do occur. Through prayer, religion insists, things which cannot be realized in any other manner come about: energy which but for prayer would be bound is by prayer set free and operates in some part, be it objective or subjective, of the world of facts.

-William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 466

I went to Indonesia, in no small part, to better understand how history and historical narratives were employed by young people as they voiced political and moral aspirations. This required access not only to young people, but to young people waging (acknowledged as well as

naturalistically observable) moral and historical arguments.<sup>79</sup> Given my formal institutional sponsorship at the State Islamic University Syarif Hidayatullah (UIN), it made sense to first look for this in the vicinity of the campus. So it was particularly serendipitous when, having just arrived in Jakarta, I was invited to participate in the Initiatives of Change Indonesia community (IofC).<sup>80</sup> Here was a collective intensely concerned with broad social interventions predicated on personal moral transformations. Of course at the time I had no idea (a) who they were; (b) what they wanted; or (c) from where their organization came. Answers to these questions emerged only piecemeal through my interactions with IofC. As I gained a greater understanding of IofC I was also alerted to other, ultimately more compelling, questions: what was meant by change, what kind of subjectivity was conceived in change and who was the agent who could accomplish change?

In this chapter I introduce two arguments central to the larger project. The first is an ethnographic and rhetorical analysis of the processes by which knowledge and practices become meaningfully localized. This enterprise departs from the organizational history and operations of Initiatives of Change Indonesia. I argue that discrete practices of translation augment inventive framing to allow something of acknowledged “foreign” and “non-Islamic” provenance to become recognizably Indonesian and Islamic. By examining what is, and what is not, translated within IofC we can witness the unfolding of these practices as well as the presumed epistemic neutrality of English as a (non-sacred) language of science and commerce. In a sense, this is a

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<sup>79</sup> That is to say, I was interested both in arguments that I elicited and those that I observed, overheard or were related secondhand to me.

<sup>80</sup> Throughout this chapter I distinguish between “Initiatives of Change” and “Initiatives of Change Indonesia” (IofC). Although the international parent organization also frequently refers to itself and its membership as “IofC,” it is useful to preserve a distinction between the primarily English-language doctrines, practices and spaces of “Initiatives of Change” and the primarily Indonesian-language iterations of this movement here referred to as IofC. Thus the abbreviated form should always be taken to denote the Ciputat, Indonesia-based chapter of the larger organization.



study of how a knowledge or a technology is “changed” to enable “change.” This delivers us to the second, related argument: that the subjective changes envisioned within these procedures reflect deceptively complicated models of agency and efficacy. The idea that, because of its genealogical evangelical linkages, IofC is already known to us must be attacked along two fronts: a) that the “original” tradition is not as familiar to us as we might think; b) that novelty and hybridity inhere to the processes of localization and adaptation and demand a fuller account. The novel synthesis at IofC draws on the categories of ostensibly morally-neutral science and objectified Islam familiar to us from our historical discussion in the previous chapter. However the results of this synthesis exceed the sum of its constituent elements, demonstrating an enduring vitality in defiance of colonial and postcolonial projects of carefully managed change.

### **Joining Initiatives of Change**

My first introduction to IofC came from one of their members. This young man was also a volunteer at the International Office in the Rectorate (central administration) of UIN. The International Office at UIN handles the administrative needs of both the growing number of foreign students attending the institution and the foreign travels of students, faculty and staff from the university. The IofC member had only recently started volunteering in the office when I stopped by for advice on securing near-campus housing. An administrator suggested that he help me find a *kos* (rented room) near campus, and so the two of us departed on his motorbike. As we toured different rental units, he mentioned that he was part of an organization – IofC, although I didn’t catch the name at the time – and that I was welcome to attend their weekly gathering, to be held two days later on Saturday. In keeping with my overarching methodology (the anthropology of “sure”), I assented with the promise to text message him for a lift come Saturday. Shortly

thereafter we found a fitting unit, just northeast of the UIN campus, in the neighborhood of Kampung Utan. And so I had a friend, somewhere to live, and a meeting to attend.

My new friend picked me up just after *Ashr*, afternoon worship, on Saturday.<sup>81</sup> We traveled the short distance to the organizational headquarters of IofC (via text message, I now knew at least the contraction of its name). We crossed the main north-south artery that divides UIN's primary campus from its graduate and medical schools and traveled through a residential neighborhood arriving at an unassuming pale green house. Midway down a street just wide enough for a single car, the single-story dwelling already had several motorbikes parked on the tile verandah within its gates. I was led first into a small anteroom. The walls were adorned with framed photographs of previous events with names like "Youth Leadership Conference" and "Asia-Pacific Youth Conference." A small wicker love seat and two wicker chairs completed the furnishings. A heavy-set man of about my age greeted me, introduced himself, and welcomed me to the "Secretariat of Initiatives of Change Indonesia."

The Secretariat, in addition to the anteroom, comprised a large meeting room devoid of furniture, a kitchen, three bedrooms, a bathroom, and a small loft. An adjoining structure added two more bedrooms and an additional bathroom. Senior members of the organization occupied the various bedrooms, although other people often stayed over. That day's gathering began, however, before I could fully orient myself to the space – my grand tour came later. Six or seven women, seven or eight men including myself were seated around the perimeter of the large meeting room. A banner (*spanduk*) hung on the wall, announcing in English, "Initiatives of

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<sup>81</sup> Throughout this project I default to Indonesian Islamic terminology. Thus *Ashr* is written, in lieu of *Asr*, and *Subuh* refers to morning worship instead of *Fajr*. Additionally, throughout I identify obligatory worship cycles (*salat*, *sholat* or *shalat* in Indonesian, *ṣalāt* or *ṣalāh* in Arabic) as such, which is to say, not as "prayer." To avoid confusion, *doa* is glossed as prayer or supplication. *Doa* can be performed by anyone, anywhere. Performance of *salat* is obligated at set times, forbidden at others, and has ritual requirements that distinguish it from free-form entreaties directed to God.

Change Indonesia: Change Begins with Me” (and this is the “change,” *perubahan*, that need not take an object). More photographs ringed the room, along with several framed quotes. One quote, in English, attributed to William Arthur Ward stood out: “God gave you a gift of 86,400 seconds today. Have you used one to say ‘thank you’?”<sup>82</sup> My thoughts on the matter were interrupted as the man who had greeted me at the door opened the meeting.

The gathering began with a generic greeting (*selamat sore, assalamu’alaikum*) followed by a specific welcome for the visitor from the United States (me). Then the leader directed all of us to do several minutes of “quiet time,” to be followed by “check-in” (both quoted phrases were spoken in English, although the other directions used Indonesian). Quiet time made intuitive sense, and so I missed the genealogy of the practice at first introduction. Its centrality within the gathering only became clear much later, once I had been exposed to the larger organizational history. At the time, I was most struck by relaxed, confessional atmosphere of post-quiet time IofC. Broad American traditions valorize unilateral self-disclosure and the public embrace of emotion-driven narrative. However I wasn’t familiar with these modes of interaction appearing quite so prominently in Indonesia. Participants in the gathering spoke with candor about personal challenges they were currently facing, using direct emotional language. Reserved comportment, elliptical speech, and delicate euphemism typify Indonesian intersubjective norms – or do so at least if you ask an Indonesian to essentialize Indonesian character in keeping with national ideologies. The intimacy of the struggles revealed during “check-in,” coupled with the level of disclosure, made this unlike other group interactions in Indonesia in which I had participated.

The check-in was followed by updates on several different ongoing projects, the details of which

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<sup>82</sup> The name seemed familiar. Perhaps I had seen this popular 20<sup>th</sup> century Christian-aphorist’s work before? Or might I have even then vaguely recalled his namesake, so central to what Arvind-Pal Mandair refers to as, “the Anglicist construction of Hinduism” in *Religion and the Specter of the West* (64-66; 182). That William Ward, a “proto-ethnographer,” observed religion as adherents practiced it. William Arthur Ward, here, supplied a different kind of prompt: the exhortation to gratitude.

eluded me. Then, as the *Maghrib*, sunset, call to prayer sounded, the gathering was closed with a brief supplication (*doa*). Most of the participants readied themselves for prayer. I occupied myself with the careful study of the William Arthur Ward quote. Following the observance of *Maghrib*, I accompanied several members of IofC to a nearby establishment for dinner. From there, back to my *kos*, its creaking internet, and an initial survey into the background of IofC.

### **Frank Buchman and the Seeds of Change**

“Change begins with me,” the *spanduk* at the Secretariat proclaimed. And individual-oriented moral transformations, it turns out, are the heart and soul of the Initiatives of Change program. Vast aspirations for social, political, and economic reform are imagined to follow in the wake of personal moral improvements. I picked up these two insights by an initial visit to the organizational website: “Initiatives of Change International (IofC International) is a non-governmental organization (NGO) working to **inspire, equip and connect people to address world needs, starting with themselves**” (“IofC International,” emphasis original). Although the group I had attended was not an official charter of the international Initiatives of Change movement (nor are most national groups), it had sought and received formal affiliation with the organization, headquartered in Caux, Switzerland. This international organization was itself the latest iteration of an evangelical movement begun almost a century ago by an American Lutheran Minister, Dr. Frank Nathan Daniel Buchman. In the previous chapter parts of this history received glancing coverage insofar as it was reflected through the Indonesian state management of religion. IofC, prior to 2002, was known as the Moral Re-Armament movement (MRA), and was prohibited during President Soekarno’s “Old Order” government in 1962. This ban was only lifted during the administration of President Abdurrahman Wahid in 2000. The recent history of IofC in Indonesia dates to shortly after the ban was rescinded. The longer history stretches back

to early twentieth century Pennsylvania. Before re-arriving on the shores of Indonesia in 2002, IofC had been on a long journey, accumulating and spending spiritual and material capital as it morphed from a Christian mission to a global organization dedicated to fostering moral awakenings. Along the way it had developed an ecumenical spirit that, joined to linguistic ideologies that stressed moral neutrality, paved the way for its relatively easy embrace by State Islamic University Students in Jakarta.

Frank Buchman, founder of the movement that would become Initiatives of Change, has been the subject of multiple biographies. The verdict on his life has been far from unanimous. Some of these treatments, like Garth Lean's 1985 *Frank Buchman – A Life* and Peter Howard's 1962 *Frank Buchman's Secret*, might reasonably be considered hagiographies. Howard, a trusted confidant of Buchman, rushed his book to print in the immediate aftermath of Buchman's 1961 death. His (lack of) critical distance to his subject should be understood, in part, by the fact that he was Buchman's chosen successor at the helm of Moral Re-Armament. Lean, also a trusted disciple, goes to greater lengths to convey a sense of the controversies that dogged Buchman's work, while repeatedly re-asserting the clarity of the guiding figure's moral vision. These posthumous biographies follow works published during Buchman's life, like Robert Case Mowat's 1951 *The Message of Frank Buchman*. Mowat, an ardent proponent of Buchman's projects as well as an academic historian, was eager to establish Buchman within a lineage of moral reformers – a project that continued at least until his 1994 volume *Modern Prophetic Voices: From Kierkegaard to Buchman*.

Against these glowing tributes, stand sharply contrasting accounts. Tom Driberg—a British Member of Parliament, one-time Chairman of the Labour Party and avowed communist—wrote an absolutely blistering history, published in 1965: *The Mystery of Moral Re-*

*Armament – a Study of Frank Buchman and his Movement*. Driberg began his career as a journalist in the 1920s by publishing reports on the excess of the then “Oxford Group” movement. In this regard, Driberg had many allies, from early religious detractors (appearing especially frequently in the Dominican Order’s British magazine *New Blackfriars*, see below) to sharp denunciations in the popular press from various quarters.<sup>83</sup> Frank Buchman came in for criticism as emotionally manipulative,<sup>84</sup> a political naïf,<sup>85</sup> obsessed with sexuality,<sup>86</sup> and as a purveyor of purely derivative and lightweight theology.<sup>87</sup> Renewed scholarly attention,

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<sup>83</sup> These calls became especially strident during the World War II era as Buchman’s ambiguous relationship to fascism rose to the fore. For instance, A.P Herbert, a British MP representing Oxford University tried to ban Buchman from England during WWII, for Buchman’s insufficient renunciation of fascism, (“A.P. Herbert Urges Commons Place Ban on Buchmanites,” 1).

<sup>84</sup> Describing a Buchman House Party in the pages of the *New Blackfriars*, a British journal of the Dominican Order, a former Oxford Group member denounces the methods of moral transformation advocated within the movement. These methods, derived from Buchman’s personal ministry, are derided as demagoguery: “The appeal is a purely emotional one, in suggestibility, in imaginative emphasis, in narrowed consciousness. Much of this is achieved by imitation, which is the strongest impulse governing any crowd. Perfectly normal people are made to act impulsively, the leader suggests, the initial steps are taken by those having the least inhibitory control over nerves and emotions” (Post, J. Schrady. “What Happens at a Buchman House-Party?”, 721).

<sup>85</sup> In Hadley Cantril’s 1941 *The Psychology of Social Movements*, an entire chapter is devoted to the Oxford Groups. Cantril summarizes the 1930s politics of the movement, citing Buchman’s (now infamous) remark that Hitler is a godsend in the battle against communism and that dictators represent the swiftest means through which a population can be brought into submission to God: “If one could only get the leaders, particularly the dictators, to listen to God the millennium would appear. This would obviously be the most efficient procedure. Instead of changing millions of citizens, the only requisite would be to change the relatively few people who run governments” (152).

<sup>86</sup> Writing in the newly merged *The Forum and Century*, Ernest Mandeville characterizes “Buchmanism” as having “done much that is good, as well as a great deal that is harmful to spiritual, mental, and physical health.” He continues, claiming that, “It has introduced thousands of frivolous adults and thoughtless adolescents to a religion of transforming power. But by its intolerance, its overemotionalism, its morbid and hyper-sensitive interests in sex and sexual problems, it has worked many abuses in the name of religion” (289). These relatively early criticisms (1931) would reverberate through other accounts of the movement over the next three decades. Alva Johnston profiles Frank Buchman in the April 23, 1932 issue of the *New Yorker*, writing, “Eighty-five or ninety per cent, Buchman computes, of all sins are sex sins. He finds that it affords spiritual relief to the sinner to confide his missteps to a select group of listeners” (22). Johnston’s piece reflects awe at Buchman’s efficacy coupled with sneering disdain for his supposed simplicity, ostentatious piety and awkwardness.

<sup>87</sup> The eminent theologian Reinhold Niebuhr weighs in, editorializing in *The Observer* in the aftermath of a report issued by the Church of England that sharply castigated MRA. Niebuhr champions the report, in that, “The section on theology is superb because it does not criticize the movement for straying from the niceties of Christian doctrine, but for failing to understand or emphasise parts of the Christian truth which are necessary to understand the nature of man and society, and the realities of the redemptive process which makes the renewal of life possible” (“Buchmanism Under Scrutiny,” 10). Publishing a synopsis of the same Church report, *The Glasgow Herald* quotes extensively from the document: “In their introduction the council [the Social and Industrial Council of the Church Assembly] state:--‘we have at times been haunted by a picture of the movement, with its hectic heartiness, its mass gaiety, and its reiterated slogans, as a colossal drive of escapism from the full force of the difficulty in detail of responsible living in the world’” (“Church Report On Moral Re-Armament: ‘Psychologically Dangerous,’” 6). Not

meanwhile, has resulted over the last decade in both critical reassessments of Buchman (Boobbyer, *The Spiritual Vision of Frank Buchman*) and the movement most associated with the figure (Sack, *Moral Re-Armament: The Reinventions of an American Religious Tradition*). From these myriad and often irreconcilable accounts, certain composite features of Frank Buchman's life are almost uniformly attested.

Frank Buchman was born in Pennsburg, Pennsylvania on June 4, 1878. Buchman's Swiss-German parents, in keeping with the "Pennsylvania Dutch" community in which he was raised, introduced him to an austere Protestant tradition. However his father was far from a model Lutheran, operating first a restaurant and saloon and then a liquor distributor once the family had moved to Allentown (Lean, 5-6). Buchman's ancestors had lived in Pennsylvania for more than a century, but according to Garth Lean, Swabian German was still spoken at home (3-4). Graduating from Muhlenberg College and then Mount Airy Seminary (in the comparatively cosmopolitan setting of Philadelphia), Buchman was ordained as a Lutheran Minister in 1902. His first posting was in a Philadelphia suburb, Overbrook. When a congregation failed to coalesce, Buchman set sail for Europe, probably through the generosity of his parents (Lean, 19). Returning to Overbrook, Buchman attempted to establish a "hospice," administered by the Overbrook Lutheran Church. (Hospice, here, was understood as a group home for troubled men). Failing to secure adequate funding (Buchman blamed the six members of the board), Buchman set out for the Keswick Convention in Keswick, England in 1908. He left behind, in his recollection, several aggrieved parties to the failed enterprise in Overbrook – although the board members, in their letters, attest to a failure of the hospice to make up a budget deficit, rather than an unwillingness to fund it (Driberg *The Mystery*, 30-32).

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only was the theology of the MRA found to be lacking, but its emotional atmospherics suggested a dangerous gullibility and lack of serious concern for the perils of the modern world: it was at once plastic and pre-modern.

The Keswick Convention is an evangelical conference started in 1875 by an ordained Anglican, T.D. Harford-Battersby and a Quaker, Robert Wilson. This conference aspired to fulfill the prospect laid out by the American pastor William Boardman in his 1858 work, *The Higher Christian Life*. Boardman envisioned a life purified of sin as the worshipper sanctified his or her profane existence. The goal was live in a state of constant grace, not only cleansed of sin but protected from future sin. Harford-Battersby, in a piece of writing excerpted in a memoir published in 1890, describes the convention Boardman inspired: “In one respect there was no difference between these meetings and others of a religious character which are commonly attended by Evangelical Christians, in that no new and peculiar doctrines were enforced, and that the Word of God and prayer...were the sole instruments employed for securing the desired end” (154). However, into this conventional evangelical setting, Harford-Battersby introduced a new moral urgency. Beyond the normal acts of worship and study, “there was a definiteness of purpose at these meetings, and a directness of aim in the speakers, which were very remarkable. That purpose was...the promotion of Scriptural holiness...The promises of a condition of abiding holiness; examples of the manner in which it had been sought and attained” within the lives of some attendees (ibid). This prospect held tremendous appeal for the young Frank Buchman, and replicating its promise became the guiding aspiration of his life’s mission. By the time Buchman visited the Keswick Convention in 1908, it had assumed immense stature in the evangelical world. In a volume published one year prior to Buchman’s visit, Rev. Evan Hopkins details the history of the Keswick convention and its transformative potential: “The spiritual uplifting that so many experienced as the result of a clear and definite setting forth of the believer’s present privileges, and the possibility of faith, produced a profound impression” (in Harford, Ed.,



*The Keswick Convention*, 25). Buchman went to Keswick to discover the possibility of faith, a way to realize divinely guided living on a this-worldly plane. And he found it.

Frank Buchman had a transformative spiritual experience in a small chapel on the margins of the Keswick Convention on a Sunday in July, 1908. Buchman, in an often-cited characterization (Driberg, 36; Lean, 31; Boobbyer, 12; Kee, 98),<sup>88</sup> described his experience as “a dazed sense of a great spiritual shaking-up.” In Lean’s account (attributed to personal conversation with Buchman), Buchman continues, “There was no longer this feeling of a divided will, no sense of a calculation and argument, of oppression and helplessness; a wave of strong emotion, following the will to surrender, rose up within me...and seemed to lift my soul from its anchorage of selfishness, bearing it across that great sundering abyss to the foot of the Cross” (31). This intense affective experience of salvation became the centerpiece of Buchman’s later efforts. In the immediate aftermath of his stunning vision, Buchman reached out to the individuals associated with his failed hospice venture back in Overbrook. He sought to make restitution and restore moral order, the better to live in this world enveloped in his new personal notion of grace. Buchman had felt a divine solution to his interpersonal and subjective woes. Over the course of the next five decades, Frank Buchman would start multiple groups and organizations dedicated to realizing the lived testimony of his personal vision of Divine agency. The initial mission Buchman launched was known as the First Century Christian Fellowship (FCCF). As his appeals from within this group targeted up-and-comers (university students at prestigious institutions), one such mission to South Africa became characterized as “the Oxford Group,” referencing the university from whence the mission volunteers had come. By most

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<sup>88</sup> It seems likely that Buchman developed a relatively stable narrative of this event, given the consistency of the accounts and the verbatim text that appears in these various authors (despite the fact that Lean’s seemingly authoritative account is seldom included as the source for this particular version).

accounts Buchman delighted in this characterization, and to many at Oxford University's enduring frustration, "the Oxford Groups" were born as a movement from the only just-founded FCCF. Here was a force for re-shaping the moral life of moderns, one saved person at a time.<sup>89</sup>

As the Oxford Groups proliferated, chiefly in England, the United States and Canada, but also in South Africa, China and India, Frank Buchman achieved greater and greater public attention.<sup>90</sup> The sneering rebukes published in the *New Yorker* and *The Forum and the Century* (cited above) were balanced by earnest appraisals and endorsements from sundry ministers, canons, university presidents and politicians. In addition to spawning the Oxford Groups, re-imagined as the "Moral Re-Armament Movement" in 1938 (as Europe prepared for war, Buchman declared his movement a salve to the spiritual ills precipitating war), Buchman's ministry gave rise to the popular self-help modality for the treatment of alcoholism known as Alcoholics Anonymous. Thus a disproportionate volume of the materials addressed to Frank Buchman address his legacy from this perspective – whether defenses of "twelve-step spirituality" or criticisms of its "crypto-religiosity."<sup>91</sup> So effectively were the core principles and practices of Buchman's ministry communicated, however, that fawning tributes and dismissive

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<sup>89</sup> In Harford-Battersby's *Memoir*, we learn that the first Keswick Convention had, in fact, been held in Oxford. Thus there is a certain added historical validity to the "Oxford Groups" given the genesis of their evangelical tradition. The Oxford Groups here should be distinguished from the many unrelated enterprises sharing the name, from the contemporaneous Oxford Inklings writers to the Ohio-based Oxford Society.

<sup>90</sup> Rapidly characterizing the shifts from Buchman's first vision to the present, Daniel Sack writes, [Buchman] turned the Oxford Group into an increasingly secular and political organization called moral Re-Armament (MRA)...MRA's official histories claim many accomplishments in the years after World War II, including settling labour battles in England, reconciling Germany and France, and ending racial strife in the American South, but it increasingly became an anti-Communist crusade. Under the name "Initiatives of Change," the movement now focuses on reconciliation among individuals and nations, working from headquarters in Switzerland and offices in Washington, D.C. ("Men Want Something Real," 274).

The evolution of MRA into "anti-Communist" crusaders, along with its muddled theological origins, probably goes some distance in explaining the Soekarno regime's antipathy to the movement.

<sup>91</sup> See B, *The Oxford Group and Alcoholics Anonymous*; O'Halloran *Talking Oneself Sober*; Bufe, *Alcoholics Anonymous: Cult or Cure?*.

takedowns alike agree on its key features. The “Buchmanite” program, as its detractors typically referred to it, consisted of:

1) both public and private confessions of sin, especially sexual sin; 2) reception of divine “guidance” during “quiet times”; 3) complete surrender to this “guidance”; 4) the living of a “guided” life...; 5) the practice of the Buchmanite “four absolutes”—purity, honesty, love, unselfishness; 6) making restitution to those one has harmed; and 7) carrying “the message” to those still “defeated.” (Bufe, 40).

In important respects, these features of Buchman’s Oxford Groups remain alive in the practices of Initiatives of Change today. However the program has not been immune to local inflection, shifting emphases and the development of an ecumenical spirit that exports these impulses far beyond their initially Christian sites of articulation. IofC, as I interacted with it, contained sophisticated re-imaginings of Buchman’s vision.

Buchman’s was a movement dedicated to changing hearts and lives. Its message resonated on affective registers. Participants sought dizzying experiences of possibility. They wished to *be changed*, as much they yearned to affect change in the world. The emphasis on moral restitution was understood as transactional: by clearing away the detritus of moral failing, the grace of divine agency could be hosted by the practitioner. Perhaps the suspicion of contemporary critics reflected this re-investment in self (and material) efficacy. Insofar as individuals could “activate” divine grace, this was not “purified” religion as we have been taught to recognize it – the re-location of agency wholly outside of human and material domains. Of course, perhaps no one is surprised that Protestants, too, have been insufficiently “protestantized.” Paul Johnson, writing about a contest between “traditional” ritual performers and new evangelicals in *Diaspora Conversions*, highlights some of the appeal of the evangelicals in terms that resonate with Buchman group practices. Having established similarities in Garifuna ritual performers work and that of evangelical pastors, Johnson writes, “though both paradigms address the needs of everyday life, evangelicals focus their sermons and songs on radical

transformation and systemic change. Significantly, conversion for cristianos must be manifested not only in person piety but also in public, institutional shifts” (118). For Buchman, as well as for Johnson’s cristianos, it is less a novel form of agency and more the demand for a public instantiation, for legible institutional transformations, that distinguishes their practices. These public performances were anchored to individual moral attainment – but personal piety was never the sole object. Still, moral absolutes notwithstanding, Oxford Groups and Moral Re-Armament were far from an ascetic ideal. Instead of meticulous self-cultivation, the presence of the divine was sudden and overwhelming. This fact, too, probably contributes to its appeal for contemporary Indonesian participants in the movements Buchman has left behind.

Central to Charles Bufe’s summation of Oxford Group practice, cited above, is the notion of “moral absolutes” structuring a divinely guided life. Although Charles Bufe attributes the “four absolutes” to Buchman, Buchman himself was quite clear in tracing them to the 1902 publication of Robert E Speer’s *The Principles of Jesus Applied to Some Problems of Today*. In Chapter Six of this latter work, Speer traces out the moral principles that he ascribes to Jesus, understood as guidance in the place of law (if the Jews were given the Mosaic law, the Christians were given orienting principles). These were Speer’s distillation of the Sermon on the Mount, providing the practical and theological guide rails for a divinely inspired life. Over the course of the sixth chapter, Speer introduces twelve points or principles. Speer’s 6<sup>th</sup> through 9<sup>th</sup> principles are the absolute moral demands of truth, unselfishness, purity and love.<sup>92</sup> For instance, on purity

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<sup>92</sup> In the relevant passage, Speer offers the first point as: “Jesus did not attempt to issue a code of laws to guide human conduct. He put men in possession of great moral principles which they would have to apply themselves” (33). Speer’s second principle is a reaffirmation of the first: “It might seem from Jesus’ teaching that He was not doing this, but rather dealing with points of application of principle to practice,” however this view is false, a victim of the quality of Jesus’ illustrative examples (ibid). The third principle establishes their absolute character: “these standards were absolute, the more boldly absolute because Jesus intentionally framed His teaching in direct opposition to the casuistical method of the scribes” (ibid). The fuller elaboration of these principles continues for another two pages.

Speer interprets Mark 7:15 as establishing that, “Jesus set up an absolute standard of purity. He tolerated no uncleanness whatsoever. The inner chambers of imagery and desire must be pure” (35). For Buchman’s Oxford Groups, and the later work of Moral Re-Armament, these absolute principles provided not just guidance but an evaluative metric – was any given decision in accord with their moral dictates? Speer’s selection of purity provided the theological rationale for Buchman’s emphasis on sexual sin as a core spiritual deficit requiring remedy. Sexual sin extended to the “inner chambers of imagery and desire.” Sin was not simply matters of the flesh: the moral reckoning must extend to the imagination. As we have mentioned, this feature of the moral program was a frequent target of detractors, who ridiculed the open disclosure of sexual fantasy and imagery. Nevertheless, it was maintained throughout Buchman’s time at the helm of MRA.

By the time IofC returned to Indonesia, in 2002, the four moral absolutes had been largely shorn of their Christian heritage. This process began in the aftermath of World War II when Buchman deliberately tried to internationalize his movement, moving it away from the anglosphere into the newly independent states of the third world. The post-war MRA was interested, above all, in thwarting the anti-spiritual machinations of communism. MRA promotional materials published in the 1950s stressed the universality of the moral appeals, rather than their Christian authenticity. Filtered through time and space and re-imagined in the Indonesian setting, these four moral absolutes became subject to a suggestive process of translation. As Speer’s distillation of the Sermon on the Mount was de-confessionalized and re-universalized, it became rhetorically available to the principally Muslim members of IofC. There were multiple stages to this operation – altering the genealogy of the four moral absolutes was the first step, followed by localized translations across not just linguistic but theological

domains. The existence of the four moral absolutes in English, too, was significant for how they were received, communicated and interpreted.

## **The Purity of Translation**

Initiatives of Change, the current iteration of the Moral Re-Armament Movement, retains its emphasis on person-to-person transmission. Although Buchman's "House Parties" are no longer the chief means of disseminating moral awakenings, the procedures that have emerged in their stead maintain many of the features of Buchman's original small-group work.<sup>93</sup> In concert with the broader popularity of "training" and "human resource development" (see Chapter 5 below), Initiatives of Change (globally) now employs workshops and youth leadership camps as the means for inviting new members into the fold and enhancing the moral commitment of those already involved. In Indonesia, these camps provide a space for those interested in joining to learn about the history of IofC, the guiding principles of the larger movement, and the practices of its members. Just as at the house parties of old, participants in youth camps are exposed to both lectures and small group discussions. These small discussions are referred to as "family groups," where a facilitator assumes the role as "head" of the family and solicits moral confessions and moral commitments. IofC's (roughly) annual Youth Camps have become central to the organization's operation and recruitment efforts. These camps also provide a venue for the localization of Initiatives of Change materials and oftentimes highly idiosyncratic translations of the larger movement's mission.

From December 3, 2010 until December 5, I took part in the 7<sup>th</sup> IofC Youth Camp. Despite pushing the margins of youth, I was welcomed as a participant. In a brochure sent to prospective attendees, the youth camp and its goals were described, in English:

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<sup>93</sup> Drawing on then-current YMCA methods of proselytization, early Buchman groups relied on both "person-to-person" transmission and "House Parties." The latter method were pretty much what they sounded like – a Tupperware party for the soul, where someone already active in the movement invited friends and acquaintances imagined to be receptive to the appeal. The sharing of testimony, in the intimate setting of a house (instead of the institutional setting of a church) was intended to stress the affective immediacy of the moral awakenings presented to those in attendance.

Youth Camp is an annual camp organized by Initiatives of Change Indonesia. This camp invites young people from various background [sic] to share and learn together in order to empower the self-capacity to be the agent of change. This camp is part of IofC Indonesia activity to promote mutual understanding among young people and prepare the youth to be the future leader and dare to make a change that start from ourselves. “Change starts with Me” is the main principles of this camp. The camp is conducted for three days and the participant will learn, share and experience the power of inner listening and life’s universal values, therefore they deserve to be a better person to contribute for the world betterment.

Core elements of IofC continue to reflect their genesis in, first, MRA, then, Oxford Groups, and ultimately, Frank Buchman’s First Century Christian Fellowship. Whereas FCCF highlighted the Divine speaker of “quiet time,” in current Initiatives of Change material “inner listening” emphasizes the subjective practitioner. I will return to the actual practice of quiet time shortly – here only the “de-confessionalizing” is noted. While Buchman’s four moral absolutes were barely removed from Speer’s summation of Jesus’s teachings, they have now been re-framed as “life’s universal values.” The logical order mentioned in this brochure: social (and world) change predicated on personal transformation, however, remains pragmatically unchanged. In part, these adaptations reflect an ecumenical spirit that Buchman embraced in the aftermath of World War II.

The newly acknowledged global specter of communism, MRA’s imagined post-war opponent, motivated Buchman to build on his prior relationships with figures including Gandhi and Tagore and reach new audiences in the third world. Buchman made overtures to President Magsaysay in the Philippines (“President of Philippines Backs Moral Re-Armament”), and established a personal connection with the King of Morocco just as formal independence was navigated in Morocco and Tunisia (Boobbyer, 125; Lean, 454). In the late 1950s, MRA promotional material reported that Indonesians, too, were getting in on the possibilities of moral



uplift.<sup>94</sup> The attempt to reach “new and different” audiences also excited the frequent critics of MRA, who saw in the abandonment of Christian missionizing further hypocrisy on the organization’s part. As Tom Driberg acidly characterizes this shift, “we find that in MRA propaganda designed for the oriental market there is practically no mention of Christianity: Christ, if named at all, is sandwiched unobtrusively between Gautama the Buddha and Mahatma Gandhi” (163). By the 1950s, at least, MRA no longer felt the need to declare the specific bases of the moral awakening it promised – a universalization that continues in present-day Initiatives of Change.<sup>95</sup> IofC reflects the parent organization’s re-imagining of its own history, at the same time as it extends this revisionist license in pursuit of localization.

MRA, the earlier iteration of Initiatives of Change, was banned by President Soekarno in 1962. Possibly motivated by a desire to shield the Muslim community from a Christian

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<sup>94</sup> In a story that ran in the *Milwaukee Sentinel* on June 16, 1958, with the headline “MRA eyes Dutch, Indo Unity,” the MRA vision for Indonesia is clear:

Albert Sillem, a member of the committee of the Amsterdam Stock Exchange, apologized for “superiority and selfishness of the Dutch towards Indonesia.” He said selfishness has divided his nation but “MRA will mean unity in Holland.” Sillem said: “A united Holland will Help Indonesia to unite. A divided Indonesia will go behind the Iron Curtain and a divided Holland will do the same. And this is the strategy of communism.” A response to Sillem’s remarks was given by Mohammed Saleh Mattjik, treasurer of the Coordinating Body of Moslem Organizations in Indonesia. (39).

In another story that ran in the *Milwaukee Sentinel*, an Indonesian Christian leader attending an annual MRA conference at Mackinac island is quoted as attesting to the tremendous impact of the organization:

Darius Merpaung, president of the Indonesian Christian Trade Union Association, Sunday credited moral re-armament for opening doors between Holland and Indonesia once thought forever shut. He told the Assembly of Moral Rearmament that the change came about in just a year. “All was deadlocked,” he said, “but today there is an open door. Out of the impossible Moral Re-armament has created the possible.” Diplomatic relations between the two countries were severed last year after 350 years of Dutch colonial rule. (“Moral Re-Arm Move Praised,” 2).

Dutch-Indonesian unity, then, is imagined as part of a bulwark against communism. Thus in the first article we have a Dutch stock-broker joining forces with an Indonesian Muslim organizational head, allied in their belief that only forgiveness for the (personal, psychological) failings of Dutch colonialism can prevent the spread of communism. In this pursuit, the moral possibilities offered by MRA are emphasized (as in the second citation).

<sup>95</sup> In *The Bougainville Land Crisis of 1969*, Nigel Cooper assesses the role of the Moral Re-Armament movement in negotiation the Papuan crisis of the title. In some ways, MRA’s involvement in this dispute was a mark of how far the organization had fallen by the late 1960s. In the aftermath of WWII, MRA tried to facilitate *détente* between France and Germany. In the 1950s it was active on the side of anti-communist forces in assisting newly independent states. By the late 1960s, however, its straightforward moral appeals, imagined as political tools, struggled to capture first world audiences. Instead it had to seek ever smaller venues in the hopes of gaining traction – although in Cooper’s assessment, it was a significant force in preventing bloodshed on Bougainville Island.

missionizing organization (as Soekarno's support from religious parties evaporated in the lead-up to his overthrow), Soekarno was certainly interested in blocking the activities of a group that now defined itself principally in terms of its moral opposition to communism. Already by 1957, a former Indonesian diplomat was being recruited by MRA in its quest to make inroads into the country ("Indonesian Sees MRA Producing World Unity.") The threat to Soekarno's backers in the communist party was even clearer two years later, when the *Washington Post and Times Herald* ran an article announcing, "Moral Re-Armament to Train Indonesians," which reported that "Fifty Indonesian leaders are scheduled to arrive here [Mackinac Island, at an MRA retreat center] soon for training in the ideology of Moral Re-Armament. They will study principles of the MRA movement designed to promote unity among Asians" (18). What was meant by "unity among Asians" is made clearer in a contemporaneous address by Frank Buchman, delivered to those fifty Indonesians (and other attendees) and printed in *The Observer*. After describing MRA's role in finding forgiveness for the Japanese in the Philippines, Buchman claims, echoing a Japanese politician, "in the last two years Moral Re-Armament wrested control of the largest single political organization in Japan from Communist hands, established new relations with Indonesia and Viet Nam, ended a dispute between South Korea and his country [Japan]" (9). It was the "wresting of control" that alarmed Soekarno, no doubt, and added legitimacy to his fears that Western organizations aimed to infiltrate Indonesia. The unity of Asia was imagined in terms of stopping the contagion of communism.

MRA remained a forbidden organization until, as discussed in Chapter 1, President Abdurrahman Wahid rescinded the ban. Nevertheless, Suharto's New Order government looked the other way when an Indonesian student organization invited MRA back into the country, shortly into the consolidation of New Order rule. A newspaper article from 1967 describes the

event: “Djakarta, Indonesia – The Moral Re-Armament Asian Sing-Out force, which includes nine young Americans, was greeted at their first performance here by 10,000 persons in the Olympic Sports Arena as thousands more were turned away. The Moral Re-Armament force has been invited to Indonesia by KAMI...” (29). KAMI, *Kesatuan Aski Mahasiswa Indonesia* (Unified Action of Indonesian Students) was the umbrella student organization uniting disparate Islamic, Catholic and “Socialist” (in the fascist sense) student associations, formed in the aftermath of the October 1<sup>st</sup> 1965 coup that launched the widespread slaughter of leftists in the country. The newspaper article authors helpfully provide some of this history, mentioning elliptically that, “[MRA] are the first large foreign student groups to be invited to this country in ten years, and the presence of the Americans in the party is especially significant,” (ibid) without actually delimiting the significance. KAMI are then defined as, “this is the group that has been in the forefront of the political upheaval smashing the recent attempted Communist coup to take over the government” (ibid). Thus without acknowledging the ban, or providing its context, this newspaper article manages to justify Soekarno’s decision to outlaw the organization. Despite its anti-communist ardor, however, Suharto never saw the point in opening to the gates to MRA in a more comprehensive fashion, and so the ban remained. This very brief historical detour is necessary to suggest that just as Initiatives of Change was able to deconfessionalize its Christian origins, the organization was also able to shed its previously defining political sensibility (indeed, today Initiatives of Change has a thriving chapter in “Communist” Vietnam). Christ receded from the language of universal moral values and communism disappeared from the calls from moral re-engagement with politics: both conspicuously absent in the organizational autobiography I was provided at Youth Camp.

The Youth Camp I attended was held at one of the ubiquitous conference and retreat centers that dot the hills to Jakarta's east and south. The gender breakdown was roughly even and participants ranged in age from 17 to 29. All but four of the forty participants were Muslim – one Hindu student from Indonesia's premier technical university, Institut Teknologi Bandung, and three Christians from the Jakarta area. UIN and Ciputat were heavily represented, but there was one participant from South Kalimantan, several from Central Java and two from East Java. Not all of the participants were university students – one was a journalist, one a travel agent, and several worked or owned small businesses. The vast majority were, however, current students. In addition to my own status as a foreigner, one of the Jakarta-based Christians had grown up within the Indonesian diaspora in Australia and had attained citizenship there. For a Youth Camp assembled entirely by volunteers and charging 135,000 Rupiah (roughly USD 10.30 at time of writing), it was a plausibly diverse group. The overwhelming majority of students (myself, the Indo-Australian, possibly several others excepted) belonged to Indonesia's narrow middle-class: typified by university students whose own parents had pursued formal education. There were almost twenty organizers and facilitators in addition to the forty attendees, and the camp was imagined as a comprehensive introduction to both IofC and Initiatives of Change. At least theoretically, English was the language of Youth Camp, which occasioned near constant acts of translation across the camp activities. These translations reveal, in part, how Initiatives of Change becomes IofC.

IofC has worked diligently to render core Initiatives of Change materials legible to Indonesian audiences. These translations, however, have been neither officially authorized by the parent movement nor standardized by the various translators. Even key concepts like the four moral absolutes have been rendered in a variety of forms. The current version of the IofC

website (and there have been many across the last decade) provides a frequently asked question section, the tenth item of which reads (in Indonesian):

Why does Initiatives of Change advocate moral values?

Buchman was divinely graced [*dianugerahi*] a special capacity [*kelebihan*] to express spiritual truths [*kebeneran rohani*] in non-religious language [*bahasa non-agama*]. His experiences meeting and speaking with people from every religion and varied cultural backgrounds, demonstrated to him that from one community to another, one culture to another, that the principles of honesty [*kejujuran*], purity [*kemurnian*], unselfishness [*tidak egois*] and love [*cinta*] are universal values that must be advocated [*diperjuangkan*, advanced; struggled for] (“FAQs”).

In this telling, not only is the Christian lineage of the four moral absolutes erased, but the actual order of Buchman’s moral mission is reversed. Although Buchman is marked as a special recipient of “divine grace” (*dianugerahi*), the Christian imprimatur under which he operated is rendered invisible. Instead of a Divine push to inculcate the four moral absolutes within the hearts of people, here Buchman discerns these universal values only through his extensive intercultural dialogues. Thus a Divine mandate is replaced by an ethical injunction of indeterminate origin. These values must be advocated because they contain transcultural spiritual truths, but they belong to no one. My point here is not that IofC are stealthily obscuring their Christian origins. Rather, in this particular translation the website author adopts a framing of the four moral absolutes most amenable to the currently deconfessionalized character of the larger organization. Different sorts of mediation governed other instances of translation.

A much earlier version of the IofC website listed the four moral absolutes as, *kejujuran* (honesty); *ketulusan* (sincerity); *kepedulian* (other-oriented care); and *kasih sayang* (non-romantic love). In this iteration, without any term denoting “absolute,” the four moral absolutes are stripped of their absolute stature, becoming instead moral qualities. Furthermore, “purity” here is glossed as *ketulusan* (sincerity). *Tulus* is a quality attached to hearts (*tulus hati*), to love (*cinta tulus*) and even to *ikhlas* in the construction *tulus ikhlas* (wholeheartedly sincere) – and

*ikhlas* itself becomes the preferred gloss at a different site of translation discussed below. In none of these instances is the “purity” of *tulus* immediately associated with the sexual discipline and chastity imagined by Buchman in the use of “absolute purity.” Buchman’s notion of purity was closely related to the one promulgated by the Yale Divinity School theologian Henry Wright, whose 1924 text *The Will of God* characterized purity as the abstention from sex outside of marriage, uncleanness and evil desires – the same uncleanness of mind and imagery condemned by Speer. *Tulus* invites reflection on intentionality rather than sexuality.<sup>96</sup>

The proliferation of divergent translations is reflected not only across time (on different iterations of the organization’s website) but between translators or instances of translation as well. Elsewhere on the current IofC website, for instance, *tidak egois* (unselfish) is written as an abstract noun *ketidakegoisan* (unselfishness) and *cinta* (love) is written as *cinta/kasih sayang* (romantic/familial love), emphasizing both the romantic and the filial-maternal dimensions of different concepts of love (“Pendekatan”). These minor nuances suggest a flexibility and interpretive openness that distinguishes IofC materials from the relative fixity of scripture. There are few efforts to stabilize meaning in the IofC context. Even more suggestive of the importance of translation in the adoption of Initiatives of Change materials are the local and shifting translations that emerged within one youth camp workshop.

On Saturday December 4, 2010, the first full day of the youth camp, a young facilitator addressed the assembled participants in the *aula* (auditorium). He briefly recapped how Initiatives of Change used to be known as Moral Re-Armament. Next he identified, in English, the four moral absolutes core to the MRA’s and now Initiatives of Change’s mission. Then he

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<sup>96</sup> Interestingly, *suci* (pure) was never used as a gloss for purity. *Suci* has both a technical meaning in Indonesian Islam – ritually pure, as in the border of a mosque or the water used to perform ablutions, and a generalized Indonesian sense of “free from sin or corruption,” this latter sense also obtaining in Islamic contexts.

translated these into Indonesian and explained their centrality: *kejujuran yang absolut* (absolute honesty); *ketidakegoisan yang absolut* (absolute absence of selfishness); *kasih sayang yang absolut* (absolute non-romantic love); and, most interestingly, *keikhlasan yang absolut* (absolute *ikhlas*). Unlike many of the Indonesian translations of the four moral absolutes to which I was exposed, here the speaker retained the absolute character of these moral values – instead of just abstract nouns denoted by the *ke-an* construction, this speaker used the relative clause *yang absolut* (that [are] absolute).<sup>97</sup> Furthermore, in selecting *keikhlasan* to replace the English “purity,” the facilitator opened his explanation to a range of theologically significant concepts associated with the Indonesian root *ikhlas*.

### **Absolute Ikhlas**

On its face, *ikhlas* might seem an apt gloss for “purity,” at least given its Arabic etymology. Derived from the radical *kh-l-ṣ*, *khalāṣa* is usually translated as the past tense of “to purify.” However the movement of this term into Indonesian is freighted with theological implications. *Ikhlas* is much more than “purity” in contemporary Indonesian. It is very seldom the “sexual purity” to which Buchman’s emphasis on chastity demanded. Instead it is typically rendered “sincerity” when translating out from Indonesian. The “purity” of *ikhlas* relies on the purity of intentions of an actor rather than on the sinlessness of a sexual being. To be free from ulterior motives is to be sincere.<sup>98</sup> Even beyond “sincerity,” different dictionaries suggest “whole-hearted;” “heartfelt;” and “whole-souled” as acceptable translations. In normative Indonesian Muslim discourse, *ikhlas* is a central concept. Popular entertainers sometimes enjoin

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<sup>97</sup> And as noted with *suci*, I never heard *mutlak* (total, unlimited, necessary) as a gloss for *absolut*, despite the strong Islamic valences of *mutlak*.

<sup>98</sup> Alexander Knysh, in *Islamic Mysticism: A Short History*, likens *ikhlas* to integrity in its common usage: “the pair *sidq/ikhlas*, which many Sufi authors defined as a complete agreement of one’s inner convictions with one’s outward acts, was held to be an indispensable condition of true worship of God and a hallmark of the genuine Sufi” (307).

an audience to *tepuk tangan dengan ikhlas* (give a heartfelt round of applause).<sup>99</sup> When a donation or a “loan” is offered without the expectation of its return, “ikhlas” is often the word accompanying the gestural display of open palms. Insisting on paying a dinner tab, too, is demonstrated through a clear pronunciation of “ikhlas.” Ikhlas suggests an absence of personal motive – in some senses, it resembles more the “absolute unselfishness” of Speer than the “absolute purity” of Buchman.

Dr. Ahmad Sadiq, a professor of Sufism at UIN Jakarta and a local shaykh in the *tarekat Qadiriyya wa Naqsyabandiyya* (a popular Indonesian Sufi order, merging two otherwise distinct lineages, the *Qadiriyya* and the *Naqshabandi*), explained to me in greater depth the primacy of ikhlas.<sup>100</sup> According to Dr. Sadiq, ikhlas was the highest motivation for human beings, the purest (self-erasing) impulse to which the worshiper could aspire. In its fully realized form, ikhlas meant the utter absence of motivation besides God. In the examples he provided for me, contributing charity to help others was laudable, but not ikhlas. Contributing charity for the sole purpose of pleasing God, of fulfilling God’s injunction, without a thought of the worldly consequences or the after-worldly benefits... this was ikhlas (*baru ikhlas nih*). If one were to fast on a Monday, with the aim of emulating the Prophet and bringing to life the Prophetic tradition, this was worthy of esteem. But not yet ikhlas. To fast with the sole object of God, this was ikhlas. At higher levels of reality, absolute ikhlas requires the dissolution of the subject, the self-abnegation of the worshiper leaving only the single Independent Cause, God acting, for God.

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<sup>99</sup> Dik Doank, the stage name for the actor, singer and entertainer Raden Rizki Mulyawan Kartanegara Hayang Denada Kusuma, frequently used this formulation in events held at his “natural school” (*sekolah alam*) in South Tangerang. The “natural school” is a free facility for area youths teaching music and creative arts within an atmosphere of familiarity and piety. Dik Doank frequently peppered his speeches to the students with Islamic exhortations and endorsed a view of *ikhlas* as a high aspirational value. I am grateful to Ismail Alatas for reminding me of a coercive dimension of *ikhlas*. In Joshua Oppenheimer’s *The Act of Killing*, a local tough walks through a shopping center, extorting the shopkeepers for protection money. As the Chinese store owner hands over a thin envelop of bills, the gangster prods him: *ikhlas, ya*. Here, of course, *ikhlas* denotes the absence of a quid pro quo, although it inverted the typical emphasis on something given with a threatening focus on something taken.

<sup>100</sup> Personal communication April 2011.



What Dr. Sadiq explained corresponds closely to other observations in the literature. In a careful and insightful ethnography focusing on moral personhood and social cohesion in Bukittinggi West Sumatra, *Caged in on the Outside*, Gregory Simon devotes a final chapter to *shalat* or *ṣalat*, the obligatory worship cycles marking the rhythms of Muslims' daily devotional activities. Simon, discussing the mutually constitutive nature of conviction and practice, notes that "the practices of submission strengthen a person's disposition to continue carrying out those commands and cultivate the *ikhlas* (sincerity or wholeheartedness) with which a person performs them" (195). This is a telling gloss, reflecting the theological baggage of the term in contemporary Indonesian. Whereas other words from this same radical pervade contemporary Arabic speech – *khalas* (done; empty; colloquial, stop!), in Indonesian *ikhlas* almost always invites consideration of the divine. Mark Woodward discusses the normative status of this understanding of *ikhlas* in his article, "Textual Exegesis as Social Commentary." Addressed to the pragmatic usage of *hadith* in Indonesian religious, social and political argumentation, Woodward writes, "while Indonesian Muslims of all theological orientations stress the importance of *ikhlas* and *niyah* [intention], conservative scholars [those associated with *Nahdlatul Ulama*] and *kejawen* mystics understand them as elements of the mystical path leading to direct experience of Allah" (570). Woodward goes on to clarify both the Quranic usage of *ikhlas* ("absolute devotion to Allah") and the specific inflections it assumes in Sufi practice: "an effort to approach Allah which demands selflessness even in ritual acts. Conservative scholars and Javanese mystics explain that one who is truly *ikhlas* does not seek Allah's blessing, but worships and loves him for his own sake, eventually losing awareness even of *ikhlas* itself" (ibid.) Contrast this account with Clifford Geertz's in *The Religion of Java*: "Ikhlas I have already discussed, in connection with death, as meaning detachments from the

contingencies of the external world so as not to be disturbed when things go awry in it or if something unexpected occurs. It is ‘not caring,’ on the premise that if one does not care about worldly things they cannot hurt or upset one” (240-1). Whereas Geertz emphasizes the impulse to hold the world at a distance, an understanding of *ikhlas* as a further buffering of the self, Dr. Sadiq and the traditionalists discussed by Woodward conceive of *ikhlas* as the self-effacement of human subjectivity: not self-preservation, but self-surrender. Neither of these semantic ranges would seem to correspond closely to the sexual modesty prized by Speer and Buchman.

When the IofC facilitator selected “*ikhlas*” to stand for “purity” he was not making an argument about their equivalence. Prescriptive sexual ethics are already a baseline assumption in the Indonesian context (however extensively they might also be transgressed). Searching for the salience of purity, this IofC translator latched onto a key theological concept within Islam – not only the ultimate unreality of human agency, but the absolute unicity of God (*tauhid*).<sup>101</sup> With this one translation the IofC facilitator invokes both a human aspiration (to act with *ikhlas*) and a transcendent truth of God (the absolute purity of the divinity). Yet this is a contingent universal: recall that there are no agreed upon translations of Initiatives of Change material and that the same speaker would employ different glosses at other moments. The translation calls attention to itself through its instability – which reasserts the *safety* of the target language *as much as* it reifies the stability of the source. The English original of purity is stabilized, by its repeated invocation. But the spiritual significance of Indonesian is protected from the meanings of English by the refusal to coalesce around a one-for-one substitution. Indonesian, itself imagined not as a

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<sup>101</sup> The theological insistence on unicity is located, among other places, in the 112<sup>th</sup> *surat*, conventionally referred to as *Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ* or by its first *ayat*, *qul huwa*. This is a radically important place in the Qur’an: where the absolute “purity” of God from all other elements is established.

language of interiority, is held aloof from the potential moral corruption of English through the multiple-translations of a key term.

In *Provincializing Europe*, Dipesh Chakrabarty sets himself the task, among others, of figuring out how to “handle this problem of the presence of the divine or the supernatural in the history of labor as we render this enchanted world into our disenchanted prose” (77). A partial solution proposed within the text are translations that “take for their model of exchange barter rather than the generalized exchange of commodities, which always needs the mediation of a universal, homogenizing middle term” (85). Chakrabarty further characterizes these bartered exchanges as “based on very local, particular, one-for-one exchanges” (ibid.). While aspiring to a similar impulse as Chakrabarty – the need to take seriously others accounts of themselves and the agents they (we) recognize in their (our) lives – the notion of barter and exchange may not get us there. The translations I identify at IofC are not one-for-one exchanges: part of the ingenuity of their operation is their denial of the very possibility of exchange. Rather than a failure to coalesce around stable and agreed upon translations, the proliferation of “four moral absolutes” in Indonesian reflects an interest in contingent universals – transcendental values reflective of potentially differing local and immediate concerns. This cuts against the long running project of linguistic stability associated with the former regime in Indonesia,<sup>102</sup> but also a rejection of the “religious” grounds of the broader Initiatives of Change movement. Whereas Chakrabarty’s examples suggest a mutual hedging, a reciprocal contingency, the suggestion of

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<sup>102</sup> The language politics of the New Order have been subject to frequent scrutiny (See Errington’s *Shifting Languages*, especially Chapter 4; See Anderson’s “Cartoons and Monuments” in *Language and Power*; see also . One memorable characterization comes from James Siegel’s *Solo in the New Order*. Here Siegel writes about the apogee of the quest to fix and secure meaning in reproducible language:

During the ceremony [commemoration of 30<sup>th</sup> of September murder of the six generals] the President said very little, and what he said was entirely formal. Like the Indonesian schoolteacher, he made his voice into a reflection of established texts as though he spoke only in quotations. He was not Suharto the locus of unique feelings and idiosyncrasies, but Suharto the embodiment of texts, the one whose acknowledgements made the event into a ceremony, something formal and repeatable (279).

“ikhlas” for “purity” serves to protect the former from the latter (while ascribing denotational transparency to the English original). By refusing to stabilize Initiatives of Change terms with scriptural corollaries, IofC participants are able to maintain the more ultimately real epistemic foundations of Islam. Initiatives of Change practices and teachings are thus not threatening because they are not fixed in language – the fluidity of the translations enabling the fluidity of the interested appropriations. The four moral absolutes remain in English, demonstrated by the rejection of a unified translation. And here a particular kind of language ideology, the subject of the next section of this argument, rears its head.

I have argued that acts of translation enabled the transformation of “Initiatives of Change” into “IofC,” that is to say, made possible the meaningfully local iteration of a global movement. That this movement is focused on change, variously conceived, is not accidental. The contemporary global appetite for “change” is voracious, and IofC promises to provide the tools for its accomplishment in its Indonesian particulars. This is part of an abiding faith in the efficacy of technology linked to projects of global scientific modernity – that these words, these actions, properly organized, *do* things. My attention has been on the contingent translations of Initiatives of Change doctrine—the negotiations between deconfessionalized Christian discourse and Muslim theological norms. However there is a further element that makes these formerly Christian discourses available to begin with: their articulation in English. English is both the language of desire – associated with global movement and consumption – and the medium for the dissemination of scientific and “scientistic” truth. English is understood and imagined to be morally neutral.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> I need to thank Stuart Strange and Ismail Fajrie Alatas for bringing the longer genealogy of this phenomenon to my attention. As they were quick to remind me, this particular language ideology was once a story English tried to tell about itself, or at least, attempted to do so in the hands of Fancis Bacon and John Locke. For this argument about

The status of English as presumptively neutral is key to the performance of what I call the “making safe” of IofC discourse. IofC materials, since they are directed at souls and speak to morals, must be both presented and understood in ways that close the possibility of their rejection vis-à-vis Islam. This is accomplished through the relationships between vernacular languages, Arabic, English, and Indonesian. As Webb Keane has cogently argued in “Public Speaking,” Indonesian is perhaps more like Swahili or Filipino than it is like Gaelic, Hebrew or Tamil. By this he intends to highlight the self-conscious instrumentality and cosmopolitanism of the language. Instead of pure origins, Indonesian is imagined to be a creature of communicative convenience, one result of which is the “pattern of glossing backward that seemingly views the language from the position of a hypothetical English-speaker” (504).<sup>104</sup> The transparency of Indonesian, coupled with the fact that a huge number of archipelagic inhabitants encounter it first from the perspective of a regional vernacular, makes it, too, morally neutral. These are the two axes that Keane, following James Siegel and Joseph Errington, identifies: “One is biographical: for most of its speakers Indonesian was acquired as a second language... The second is cognitive. In contrast to... even to such second languages as are picked up say, in playgrounds, plantations or marketplaces, Indonesian is encountered as relatively objectified, something one learns by

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linguistic purification, cogently expressed, see Chapter 2 of Richard Bauman and Charles Brigg’s *Voices of Modernity*. It is somehow fitting that Francis Bacon’s attack on the poetic potential of language (ibid 22-24) would become part of the poetic appropriation of evangelical discourse by contemporary Muslims hoping to occasion personal moral transformation in Indonesia.

<sup>104</sup> I am grateful to Paul Johnson for pointing out the sometimes Baudrillardian effect of this relationship to English. Between 2006 when legislation was introduced and October 30, 2008 when a *much amended* draft was passed, Indonesia’s parliament played host to sharp debates concerning RUAPP (*Rancangan Undang-Undang Anti-Pornografi dan Pornoaksi*, or “Draft Statutes on Anti-Pornography and Pornoaction”). This debate spilled out onto the streets in sometimes violent clashes between Muslim organizations supporting the bill and cultural and political constituencies that feared its overly broad language (it potentially criminalized “traditional” dance). The original statutory definition of the latter category, pornoaksi, was “efforts to profit from pornography, whether through trading in it or displaying [causing it to be performed] it” (*upaya mengambil keuntungan, baik dengan memperdagangkan atau mempertontonkan pornografi*). Pornoaksi, was a neologism masquerading as English – a compound formed from “porno,” which means roughly in Indonesian what it does in English (although “porno” in Indonesian is also an adjective, meaning pornographic) and aksi, which enters Indonesian simultaneously from the English action and the Dutch *actie*. Thus the simulacrum precedes the real – where the real is both the real of English and the real of pornography.

way of explicit rules” (505). Indonesian is thus not imagined as a language of interiority, as a dimension or locus of the self that needs protection.<sup>105</sup> Even as this is ever less the case – as more Indonesians grow up and speak Indonesian in their family of origin – Indonesian is still imagined to be a transparent language relative the “subjective” depth of vernaculars. This latter observation is attested by the deep insecurity repeatedly voiced by individuals who can no longer access their ancestral vernacular, or, as a product of mixed marriages, are unsure even what that vernacular might be.

In Indonesia as elsewhere, Arabic is the language of Islam. However for most of my Indonesian interlocutors – as has been often observed – Arabic was not a language of reference.<sup>106</sup> Nor, for many of them, was Indonesian a primary language of Islam. Instead, for traditionally educated Muslims, Islam was studied in Arabic by way of their vernacular. Thus *pesantren* (non-State Islamic school) graduates from West Java learned in Sundanese, while those who attended institutions in Madura studied classical Islamic texts (the yellow-books or *kitab kuning*) in Arabic with line-by-line Madurese commentary. Thus a mediation of a spiritual practice that takes place between English and Indonesian (IofC teachings) is at least one, if not two, orders of remove away from internalized Islamic subjectivity. This does not need to be the historical case (as it wouldn’t be for a person fluent in English, educated about Islam in Indonesian) to still be pragmatically operational. This is because Islam doesn’t need to be

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<sup>105</sup> James Siegel, talking about *Melayu*, the predecessor to Indonesian, remarks on the ways that, “the weightlessness of a language that is severed from culture makes it less intimidating. One can chance speaking it without the fear that it is the tongue of Racine, Shakespeare, Doestoyevsky, or the Gouverneur Generaal of the Dutch East Indies. It offers one the opportunity for a certain excursion if not into a new identity, at least away from an old one” (*Fetish*, 15). If the terrible weight of matching Doestoyevsky did not seem to weigh heavily on the minds of my friends, the distance from “an old identity” offered by Indonesian certainly seemed salient.

<sup>106</sup> Anxieties about one’s uneasy grasp of Arabic pervade Indonesian Muslim society (although, in truth, a similar anxiety is present even in Arabic-speaking parts of the world, from the vantage of traditionalist scholars). There are numerous jokes to this effect, from those that focus on phonic imperfections (“Who says Sundanese can’t say “f?” That’s *pitnah!* [*fitna* – dissension]) to those that emphasize lack of referential facility (the many versions dramatizing this fear revolve around some poor rube who responds to Arabic ad-copy or the like with earnest *aamin*, *aamin* [amen, the appropriate response to any entreaty directed towards God]).

defended from outside influence – instead the prevailing Muslim logic concerning the integrity of the tradition is about protecting Islam from misattribution and misrecognition. *Bidah*, or unlawful innovation, isn't forbidden because it is foreign. It is forbidden because it takes something emerging from the creation (something with human authorship) and accords it to the tradition of Islam (something with divine authorship). Where the authorship is not in question – as indeed, it isn't in an English-to-Indonesian context (which is clearly human), this fear is not nearly as substantive. Thus the policing of the proper boundaries of Islam in Indonesia is often much more excited by a novel praise poem in Arabic than it is by adoption of a foreign practice that explains itself in Indonesian. As long as the foreign practice isn't suggested to be fundamentally Islamic, it is unlikely to provoke sharp criticism. Where “Islam” itself is negotiated, the debate tends to be more strident.<sup>107</sup>

The adoption of the foreign traditions of IofC in Indonesia looks plausibly like the inverse of the process described by Paul Johnson in *Diaspora Conversions*. Johnson is charting the movement of Black Caribbean Garifuna ritual performers and their ritual performances to a new diasporic context in New York City. The maintenance of ritual is differently enunciated as it

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<sup>107</sup> Precisely this tension played out in the Indonesian press as this chapter was being revised. Habib Rizieq, the leader of *Front Pembela Islam* (Islamic Defenders Front, see Jajang Jahroni's *Defending the Majesty of Islam*) lashed out at the Chairman of *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU, the largest “traditionalist” Muslim organization in Indonesia) after the latter, in an event marking the beginning of Ramadan at Masjid Istiqlal (the largest mosque in Jakarta), stated that NU “would continue to advocate [*mempertahankan*] and shepherd [*mengawal*] the archipelagic model of Islam [*model Islam Nusantara*]. Habib Rizieq responded in writing, posting a piece entitled “Jemaat Islam Nusantara (JIN) Paham Sesat Menyebabkan.” (The Archipelagic Islam Group (JIN)'s Understanding is Misguided and Misguidance). Besides a minor victory in a war of words (achieved anytime you can name your opponent “Jin”), Rizieq's argument concerns the “Islam-ness” of “archipelagic Islam” (*Islam Nusantara*). Insofar as the category “archipelagic Islam” considered Islam to be an immigrant (*pendatang*) tradition, instead of the original (*asli*) religion, it refuted the tenet of Islam that holds Islam to be the original human relationship to the divine. When archipelagic Islam historicizes the tradition, Habib Rizieq argues, it subjects it to a foreign epistemology that is tacitly supposed to be more fundamental than Islamic epistemologies – it suggests an outside of the tradition that is an effect of secularity, rather than a celebration of local particularity, as its advocates might maintain. Both sides of this argument, despite the easy caricatures of their position, enjoy widespread currency in contemporary Indonesia. Even within an organization like IofC, some members explicitly endorse Habib Rizieq's argument here, although the leadership of the organization tends to echo the NU position. See “Habib Rizieq: Inilah Kesesatan Jemaat Islam Nusantara (JIN)” for an eight-point refutation of the archipelagic Islam position.

undergoes the objectification necessary to be carried to new shores: “In diasporic Garifuna ritual, then, representations of the ancestral past are more mediated by symbolism, stereotypy, and the language of authenticity, of culture and diaspora” (238). For committed members of IofC, the rituals they receive from Initiatives of Change are already steeped in the language of authenticity, symbolism and stereotypy. Thus for proponents of Quiet Time, for instance, the concern is how to take an objectified ritual and give it the living status of local tradition – how to make it allowably Indonesian and Muslim, without representing any constituent element as (illegitimately) Islamic. As I have contended, the special features of English, in conjunction with innovate logics of translation, figure prominently in the achievement of this possibility. In the hands of IofC members, core Initiatives of Change practices come to feel meaningfully possessed by their new practitioners. In this way, a prospect of *berubah* (having change) delivers the IofC participants to the possibility of *mengubah*, making change.

### **English is the Language of IofC**

When I asked current IofC members why they take part in the organization, there was a remarkable uniformity of response. More so than any other explanation, IofC members shared with me that they were motivated by a desire to improve their English language capabilities. Closely followed by the opportunity for foreign travel (itself imagined to require facility in English), English language competency was a key inducement to participation in the Initiatives of Change movement. Embedded in the desire for English are class and status aspirations in addition to access to privileged materials that are assumed to circulate within the ever-more-international anglosphere. Indonesian language ideologies allow for the epistemic neutrality of English. One key difference between “traditional” and “modern,” religious schools, for instance, is the use of vernacular and Arabic languages at the former and Arabic and English at the latter.



Since English is understood as a technical capacity, in keeping with the overriding understandings of technical capacities as divorced from ideological or spiritual commitments, English proficiency alone tells us little about the spiritual character of another human – other than their classed access to foreign knowledge and opportunity. The spiritual status of the English speaker is presumptively unchanged. What matters is what is done with this technical ability.

Frank Buchman directed his early mission activities towards elites, with an eye towards leveraging their status into greater influence. According to Daniel Sack, this was modeled on contemporaneous YMCA evangelism (among Buchman's first postings was a Philadelphia YMCA). Sack describes this method: "YMCA evangelism approached men both as individuals – through intense personal work – and in large groups – in rallies and revival meetings. To attract as many men as possible, its evangelists often began by reaching 'key men,' prominent leaders of a community whose involvement might attract others" ("Men Want Something Real," 262). In contemporary Indonesia, Initiatives of Change does not have access to many "key men." What it does promise, however, is access to foreigners, foreign travel, and the English language abilities that make it all possible. It does so even as IofC appeals to less instrumental motivations such as moral enhancement – and this personal emphasis can be explained, in part, by the historical context in which IofC was re-founded in 2002.

A pervasive sense of disappointment lingered in the aftermath of the Abdurrahman Wahid presidency, brought down by machinations in the legislature in July 2001. Amongst the former students I spoke with in Ciputat, the early post-Reformasi era is recalled as a time of political disenchantment, economic constraint and pernicious social instability. For students of an activist bent, these were trying times. They were barely too young to have participated in the

euphoric overthrow of the old regime, and after years of sectarian violence and elite-manipulated protest, political prospects seemed bleak. As the promise of collective efficacy waned, there was fertile soil for the individual-oriented practices of Initiatives of Change. IofC dates its founding to the attendance of several UIN Jakarta students at the 2002 Asia Pacific Youth Conference in Kuala Lumpur, organized under the auspices of Initiatives of Change. Their participation in the conference followed a presentation made by an “action team,” comprising mostly Malaysian volunteers, which re-introduced the Initiatives of Change message to Indonesia in 2001. From these first members enduring leadership of the organization emerged, passed on to a new generation of leaders only in 2011-2012. Inaugurated with travel and foreign exchange, IofC promised something new to the broader Ciputat and Jakarta student communities.

Time and again in interviews and conversations my interlocutors stated the importance of these twinned appeals in accounting for their initial attraction to the organization. One of the leaders of IofC during my research explained his rationale for joining in 2003: “Firstly I wanted to learn English [*pingin belajar Bahasa Inggris*], maybe similarly with the majority of my friends, secondly, and this was equally important, there was an opportunity to travel outside the country, with the assistance of friends.”<sup>108</sup> Another IofC member, who started participating in 2008, explained how a classmate who was active in IofC convinced him to start attending its events. It was the lure of the foreign and the promise of travel that did it:

I met with someone, a woman, and she introduced me to her ability to travel outside the country, to see something new outside of the country and that became something like a focus for me, because I had never gone outside of West Java and Jakarta, I had never left that area, I had never gone to Central Java, East Java, never mind Sumatra, Kalimantan, Papua, I never had, not even once. So I wanted to see something new, something far from

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<sup>108</sup> June 4<sup>th</sup> 2011 Interview with Nur. [P]ertama saya pingin belajar Bahasa Inggris, mungkin sama dengan teman-teman yang kebanyakan, dan yang kedua, ini yang paling penting juga, ada kesempatan bisa ke luar negeri juga, dengan dibantu teman-teman.

what I knew. [*suatu hal yang jauh di fikiran saya*] [...]. And she gave us photos from her time in the Philippines.<sup>109</sup>

Yet another senior member of the group during my fieldwork explained how he came to be affiliated with IofC five years earlier after a leader in the organization told him, “if you want to talk English, just come to IofC and you will see the real foreigner, and you can improve your English. At the beginning I just want to learn English and I want to go abroad.”<sup>110</sup> The promise of English was very real. But once the participation shifted from the lure of the exotic to the embrace of moral transformation, the arrival of those moral prompts was still in English.

English is not only the language of travel and foreign commerce. It is the language of science and thus also the language of scientific truth. One of the other ways IofC was localized was through its use of this scientific language of truth. English, by the early 2000s, represented not just privileged access to global culture, but also epistemic neutrality.<sup>111</sup> This latter achievement, in part, allowed for the one-time Christian evangelical movement of the FCCF to be adopted, in deconfessionalized form, as Initiatives of Change. IofC was available to its Indonesian audience because it promised English language fluency and denied any specific "religious" content in its moral mission. In Indonesia, English is not a sacred language. As Robert Hefner points out in *Civil Islam*, "since independence, most of the clergy in the Christian

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<sup>109</sup> May 28<sup>th</sup> 2011 Interview with Abdul Fatah. Saya bertemu dengan seseorang, perempuan, dia memperkenalkan saya dengan kemampuan dia yang bisa pergi ke luar negeri, bisa melihat suatu hal yang baru di luar negeri dan itu menjadi satu hal yang mungkin bagi fokus saya karena saya sama sekali nggak pernah ke luar dari Jawa Barat dan Jakarta, saya nggak pernah keluar dari situ, saya nggak pernah ke Jawa tengah, Jawa Timur, apalagi ke Sumatera, Kalimantan, Papua, saya nggak pernah, nggak pernah sama sekali. Jadi saya inggin melihat suatu hal yang baru, suatu hal yang jauh di fikiran saya. [...]. Dia kasih kita foto-foto ketika di Filipina.

<sup>110</sup> June 4<sup>th</sup> 2011 Interview with Burhanuddin. English original.

<sup>111</sup> Of course, an added dimension to English use, as per Joseph Errington's argument in "Continuity and Change" is precisely its opacity: "other recently borrowed words do not contribute in any obvious way to standard Indonesian's communicative efficiency. Taken from sources little known within the community of Indonesian speaker at large...their use may, on the contrary, render speech more obscure, limit the audience that may understand messages in which the words are used, and so impede communication" (341). This use, however, conforms with "traditional indigenous conceptions of elite speech and speakers" (ibid), that is to say, the inaccessibility of elite speech. By mastering the idiom of IofC, the membership gains access to a certain kind of presumed English elite.

churches had been indigenized, diminishing the identification of Christianity with European identity" (107). Long before European identity ceased to map onto Christianity, Christianity had already shed much of its association with European languages (with the obvious, and important, exception of pre-Vatican II Catholicism). Where religious boundaries collided in Indonesia, they did so chiefly in indigenous languages.

Early in the Suharto regime, proselytizing amongst recognized religious practitioners was officially banned by the consensual agreement of religious leaders. Muslim exceptions, however, proliferated under the sign of *dakwah*, or “calling,” a missionizing-impulse that has become an ever-more important feature of global Muslim discourse. The Protestant contingent also later rejected these new rules, explaining that, “they could not accept the declaration because it is the duty of all Christians to evangelize” (Hefner, 109). When renewed fears of *Kristianisasi* (Christianization) swept Indonesia in the 1990s (continuing through today),<sup>112</sup> theories of large-scale conspiracies to accomplish this maneuver resonated in elite Muslim circles (Hefner, 140). However, these alleged conspiracies relied on local knowledge and regional languages: on things hidden, by the resemblance of the Christian missionaries to their target population. IofC, with its clear embrace of English and internationalism, didn’t fit the acknowledged template of Christian activity. Core IofC practices were maintained in English: Quiet time (QT) and “check-in.” Since these activities were left untranslated, they remained safe from the suspicion of Christianization

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<sup>112</sup> See, for instance, Robigusta Suryanto’s report in *Hidayatullah.com* on the “viral video” of a woman in a headscarf being allegedly proselytized by a Christian: “Heboh “Video Kristenisasi”: “Kenapa Ibu Pakai Kerudung Disuruh Percaya Tuhan Yesus?” Or consider the recent article published online in *Republika*, “Kaligrafi Doa Non-Muslim Memiliki Tujuan Pemurtadan?” In this latter instance, the existence of Arab lettered (calligraphy) “Our Father” prayers is being cast as an effort to encourage apostasy. To the obvious fact that Arab Christians (and Jews) use Arabic as a liturgical language, the critic (the local chairman of *Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia*) quoted in the piece would argue, “That writing says *Abana* (our father), there is no term “our father” in Islam. We say God (*tuhan*) not that term.” Of course, *tuhan* has its own unremarked lineage, stretching back to early Christian missionaries translation of “Lord” as *Tu(h)an*.

– despite their very clear Christian genealogy. A poignant internal concern of Islam, still vital and dating at least to the debates between the Hellenistic rationalist *mu'tazilah* and the *ahlul hadith* who opposed them, isn't with the foreign or the different; it is with the potential to (mis)recognize in the foreign or the different divine authorization. This explains the stakes behind debates, in Indonesia, about “Indonesian Islam” or “*Islam Nusantara*” (Archipelagic Islam). These fierce discussions are very much alive and reflect different understandings of what is meant by “Indonesian” (is it local color or authorizing tradition) as much as what is meant by “Islam.”

Quiet time (QT), as I was inducted into it, consists of silent meditation. Before beginning, one may pose a question to the divine, but for the duration utter external and internal silence must be maintained. This is “inner listening,” or the “divine guidance” of the early Buchman movements. A soul that has been successfully purified of sin is fit to receive direct admonitions from God. The process of clearing away the moral blockage between an individual and god relies on an exteriorization of internal dispositions (out-loud acknowledgement of failings), thus QT has a social element as well. It is not sufficient to redress material and interpersonal wrongs within oneself alone. For the most avid Oxford Group, MRA and Initiatives of Change practitioners, the self must be held externally to account for all its potential perversions. Here the Oxford Group was part of a twentieth century Euro-American (and now global) shift from the language of “sin” to one of deconfessionalized psychological maladies, a movement long since accomplished by the time IofC returned to Indonesia. Alison Falby, in “The Modern Confessional,” writes about the role Oxford groups played in the transition towards the currently dominant idiom of the therapeutic in middle and upper class Euro-American capitalist cultures and those they heavily influence globally. Falby describes the emergence of QT as a practice:

“the smaller groups met for ‘Quiet Time,’ or periods of meditation that were intended to open the members’ minds to God’s will. The more public testimonials usually took place at Group house parties” (259). QT and House parties were the twinned institutions anchoring the early Oxford Group. The collective nature of these pursuits was very important to Buchman. Falby relates, “Buchman emphasized the importance of individual surrender to the spirit of the group as well as the ‘confession of sins either in public or in private,’ a process it called ‘sharing for witness’” (259). Sharing for witness, transformed into the institution of “check-in” at IofC, allowed what was once confession to instead become therapy, to move from the moral to the psycho-spiritual (much as it has for twelve-step groups, who share a similar lineage).

At IofC “check-ins” fulfilled a valuable role genealogically linked to confession but conceptually divorced from the Christianity of the institution. Check-ins allowed the practitioner the opportunity to assess their internal and manifest compliance with the dictates of the four moral absolutes. Less austere practitioners, of course, use QT to relax, to reflect or just to zone out. And sometimes check-ins were just a venue for sharing information – developments in an ongoing project or personally salient events from one’s life. But in the transformed practice of House parties, now called “family group,” check-ins were used to full and devastating moral effect. At Youth Camp I was part of a family group of five individuals. The parental role was played by a long-standing member of the organization, while four of us “children” comprised the rest of the group. Our “parent” prompted us to reflect on grave moral failings – particularly in our family of origin. And then he modeled IofC appropriate disclosure of that past: he spoke frankly about deceit, substance abuse and adolescent irresponsibility. None of us children were prepared to pierce our own reservoir of error so candidly, but the pattern was clear. At subsequent family groups, I (and I imagine the others) came ready to disclose tightly-held or

distressing secrets, lapses and weaknesses. Pursuing this model of moral disclosure required serious sensitivity, given the very Christian genealogy of the sacrament of confession, and of particular silent meditative practices. Maintaining the practices in English (even where their contents were expressed in Indonesian) was an initial step in making them theologically safe for a predominantly Muslim audience.

The four moral absolutes became local by the instability of their translation – by shifting, contingent glosses that reflected immediate concerns – while “quiet time” and “check-in” remained viable precisely by being named in English. There are myriad available glosses for quiet time, but to suggest, say, *zikir* (Ar. *dhikr*. remembrance [of God]) would be to substantively alter the practice in ways that drew attention to the alteration. Similarly, the practice of “check-in” invites doctrinal dispute. In a flowing and highly accessible intellectual history of Islamic jurisprudence, Sadakat Kadri discusses, in several places, the open/hidden or public/private distinction.<sup>113</sup> Writing in a footnote, Kadri explains, “Discretion in the wake of wrongdoing is explicitly sanctioned in several hadiths: see, for example, al-Bukhari, 8.73.95, which has the Prophet declaring that every sinner is forgivable ‘except those who commit a sin openly or disclose their sins to people [*mujahirin*]’” (295). The hadith cited by Kadri came up several times in my discussions with IofC members, who were quick to characterize IofC activities as *not* constituting a membership within the *mujahirin*, the group designated within the hadith and conventionally described as open sinners or those who discuss openly their sins. In part, this took the notion of IofC spaces and accorded them a “private” character. The prohibition against

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<sup>113</sup> Kadri characterizes this element of the tradition as a “don’t ask don’t tell policy,” writing, “the sense that wrongdoers compound transgressions against God by talking about them is ancient. Ever since the Prophet reportedly discouraged confessions for adultery, jurists have warned that flagrant sinning can corrode the social fabric and produce copycat crimes” (230). Thus part of the prohibition against disclosure is the social ramification of sin, the possibility of contagion. IofC members would argue that their disclosures are oppositely motivated, and thus not subject to the same restrictions.

“open” disclosure, I was told, mean disclosures “in the public eye.” The intimate spaces of IofC were private; among family.

The injunction to speak only good extends even further than the prohibition against disclosing sin. Speech is understood as a morally perilous act, requiring conscious regulation by the worshipper. There are numerous hadith attesting to the importance of remaining silent. *Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia*, a long-standing organization typically held to be theologically austere and politically conservative (Hefner, 109-112; Hasan, 39), publishes a weekly pamphlet for distribution at Friday congregational worship observances. The *Buletin Dakwah* thrust into my hand outside the main UIN mosque on March 25, 2011 was entitled “Guard Your Tongue” (“Jagalah Lisanmu”). The author, Abdul Hafidz, collected a variety of Quranic verses and hadith attesting to the importance of this principle. Amidst the exhortations to not speak ill of others was a proverb attesting to the moral peril of speech: “some scholars say, ‘If you were the one buying the pages on which the angels record your deeds, you would undoubtedly spend more time in silence than speech’” (2).<sup>114</sup> Excessive speech, independent of its content, is already suspect. Policing language barriers lowered the stakes of individual utterances – the moral neutrality of English suggested, at a minimum, that one’s speech in that register wouldn’t count against one. Insofar as Quiet Time stayed quiet time, there was little risk that it might constitute unlawful innovation (*bidah*). Check-ins, similarly, pre-empted criticism by their presumed distance (English) from moral selfhood, coupled with their “private” (family-style) practice.

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<sup>114</sup> Sebagian ulama berkata “Seandainya kalian yang membelikan kertas untuk para malaikat yang mencatat amal kalian, niscaya kalian akan lebih banyak diam daripada berbicara.”



Just as English was very important for the internal operations of IofC, the lure of travel remained a potent source of inspiration structuring individual's involvement in the organization. On its face travel represented a prohibitively expensive prospect for most of the membership. Global Initiatives of Change events, however, facilitated individual's participation in yet more future events. Through participation in Initiatives of Change gatherings abroad, IofC members gained access to fund-raising apparatus, partial foreign sponsorship, and coveted letters of invitation that helped smooth the often difficult acquisition of travel documents. (Travel within Southeast Asia was greatly eased by ASEAN treaties, but travel to Australia, Switzerland, the United States and elsewhere often presented significant barriers in terms of visas, even after the costs of travel and lodging was accounted for). I return to this fact to acknowledge that the individuals who became members in IofC were also motivated by various considerations well outside the group's emphasis on personal moral transformation. Once involved, however, most came to espouse the values and practices taught within the larger organization. This, too, is part of the Buchman legacy. The initial inducement is deemphasized in favor of the ultimate moral end – they don't care what gets you through the door, as long as you stay to change. Coming to be inhabited by the moral transformations promised by Initiatives of Change often entailed a narrative dimension. Crafting a story that described an individual's awakening into deeper moral consciousness was both a proof of that transformation and a technology towards its fuller realization. The structure of the narratives at IofC hewed closely to the "transformation" narrative of Frank Buchman himself.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> I am strenuously avoiding the language of "conversion" in keeping with IofC's own emphasis on deconfessionalized moral enhancement. Coupled with the Islamic insistence that all souls originally entered into a covenant with God, it makes more sense to reflect the language of transformation (*transformasi*) and awakening (*pembangkitan*) – to better maintain the notion that individual subjects already contain within them essential moral ingredients that are activated by themselves or outside agents with divine approval.

## **Narratives of Moral Awakenings: From Great Shakes to Shared Seats**

Moral transformation of the sort advocated by Initiatives of Change can also be understood as a narrative project. To the extent that a practitioner can assume the narrative role of the penitent seeker, within whom the divine intercedes, she is eligible for a life of divine guidance. Unsurprisingly, the archetypal narrative is provided by Frank Buchman himself. Above Buchman's "dazed sense of a great shaking up" was cited. Throughout his life Buchman described the sudden awakening that overcame him at the Keswick convention as the key moment of spiritual insight galvanizing his missionary work. Having met with only middling success in his efforts to establish a hospice mission house in Philadelphia, Buchman was feeling disillusioned with his calling. As he listened to the speaker describe the personal nature of Christ's sacrifice, Buchman was struck with the realization that he must first prepare the way for divine intervention. Until he had acknowledged and mitigated his sins, he wasn't eligible for the divine agency of change. And so he wrote to the six board members who were involved in operating the Philadelphia mission house to frankly admit his failing and assure them of his intent to amend his behavior. The moral clarity that resulted from this course of action felt nearly overwhelming to Buchman, and many of the practices that sprang up in the organizations he founded were designed to deliver other seekers to the same "shaking-up" experience. Reviewing the various versions of this story, the Buchman critic Driberg offered this assessment: "Whatever the full explanation of this experience, whether it was a genuinely paranormal manifestation or purely subjective – a return, in a less disagreeable form, of that hysteria latent during the crisis of the previous months—Buchman himself sincerely believed that his whole life had been changed in that moment" (36). Even in the hands of ardent critics, the *sincerity* of Buchman's experiences

is seldom questioned. The markers of sincerity, in turn, are disseminated through authoritative accounts of Buchman's transformation.

The actual moment of change is described in some detail in Lean's account, *Frank Buchman—a Life*, and my brief re-telling above is drawn from a composite of that text and oral versions I heard at IofC: facilitators shared deconfessionalized versions of this story at Youth Camp, where the Christianity of Buchman's realizations was deemphasized and the moral universality asserted. The parent Initiatives of Change organization has published hundreds of personal testimonies that conform to its basic structure. Lean reports Buchman's first person narrative,

I began to see myself as God saw me, which was a very different picture than the one I had of myself. I don't know how you explain it, I can only tell you I sat there and realized how my sin, my pride, my selfishness and my ill-will, had eclipsed me from God in Christ. [...] I saw my resentments against those men standing out like tombstones in my heart. I asked God to change me and He told me to put things right with them (30-31).

In this moment the central moral impulse of the First Century Christian Fellowship, the Oxford Groups, Moral Re-Armament and eventually Initiatives of Change was born: before addressing any other ills in the world, each individual must first amend her or his moral transgressions. The structure of this awakening experience has been re-articulated throughout the various iterations of Buchman's movements. The logical priority has always remained constant – change begins with me.

When Indonesians began participating in Initiatives of Change they, too, began to generate narratives of moral transformation. Here is an excerpt from an account written by a then-leader of Initiatives of Change Indonesia in 2010.<sup>116</sup> The author first describes his

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<sup>116</sup> The shaky digital footprint of IofC means that it has gone through at least six different websites in its 13 years of operation. Some of the contents of those websites are accessible via internet archives, but some of the hosted materials are no longer available on the Internet. All three of the following stories were posted to an earlier iteration

experience riding a train without paying the fare, followed by his eventual acknowledgement doing so constituted a moral transgression. We pick up the story as he tries to amend for this transgression:

Despite already acknowledging my error, I still felt a lingering sense of sin. While conducting quiet time (reflection), I felt a strong impulse within me to apologize and return the ticket price to PT Kereta Api [the National Train Company]. I thought, acknowledging [*menyadari*, being aware of] and regretting aren't enough, there needs to be action to correct the past mistakes.

I abided by that strong impulse by writing a letter addressed to the Pasar Senin Jakarta office of the national train company. The letter contained an apology as a citizen of Indonesia and my regrets that I couldn't be a good citizen. At the end of the letter, I wrote my personal commitment to become a good and disciplined person. And I included sufficient money to cover the cost of a ticket.

I am also aware that the consequence of “free loaders” (*penumpang gelap*, dark passengers) is a decline in annual revenues at PT Kereta Api Indonesia, which indirectly harms (*merugikan*, induces loss) the State. So it's no surprise that the State is unable to enhance the services at public facilities such as hospitals, schools, roadways, because the State doesn't have the money to develop and preserve them because of the ignorance of the citizens who take trains without purchasing tickets or don't pay taxes.

These deep ruminations ushered me to the firm commitment to undergo a change from within myself. To change Indonesia into a place that is peaceful, prosperous and courteous (*beradab*, with manners, right-relations) is unrealizable without individual changes from its citizens. By way of my mailed apology, I am convinced it will deliver an amazing outcome for me and the State. Now my life is more serene, peaceful and full of hope to see Indonesia change for the better.<sup>117</sup>

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of the IofC website. They have been re-posted to the group's Facebook page and I locally archived them on my computer – but they are otherwise no longer available. Digital ephemera persist and disintegrate according to uneven and unknowable logics.

<sup>117</sup> Kendati sudah menyadari kesalahan, saya masih merasa ada perasaan berdosa yang belum hilang. Saat melakukan quiet time (refleksi), terasa ada dorongan kuat dari dalam diri saya untuk meminta maaf dan mengembalikan uang tiket ke PT. Kereta Api. Pikir saya menyadari dan menyesal tidak cukup, butuh tindakan untuk mengoreksi kesalahan di masa lalu.

Dorongan kuat itu saya ikuti dengan menulis surat yang saya alamatkan ke PT. Kereta Api Pasar Senin Jakarta. Surat itu merupakan ungkapan permohonan maaf atas nama warga Indonesia dan penyesalan karena tidak bisa menjadi warga yang baik. Di akhir surat, saya menuliskan komitmen pribadi untuk menjadi orang yang baik dan disiplin. Sejumlah uang seharga tiket kereta saya lampirkan pada surat tersebut.

Saya juga menyadari, dampak penumpang gelap sangat berpengaruh pada menurunnya pemasukan PT. Kereta Api Indonesia tiap tahun yang secara tidak langsung merugikan negara. Hal ini wajar jika negara tidak mampu meningkatkan pelayanan fasilitas umum seperti rumah sakit, sekolah, jalan raya, karena negara tidak memiliki uang

In the first paragraph, the author of this account internally translates “quiet time” as *refleksi*, itself a loan word from Dutch and/or English. In keeping with the discussion above, this suggests that the author is uncomfortable providing a clearer gloss – that the exterior status of quiet time is retained, even as it denotes a process of plumbing interior depths. Whereas Buchman’s perennial concern was stemming the advances of communism, this author conceives of his moral progress in incredibly nationalistic terms. Paeans to the state are an important component of organizational life in many instances in Indonesia. Invocations of the nation that might induce this observer to cringe in the United States are relatively ubiquitous in Indonesia. This author is seizing important rhetorical grounds to legitimate his message: the alliance between moral improvement and national advancement. If this seems an uncomfortable echo of “national development” rhetoric formerly espoused by the New Order regime, we should be quick to note that here it accompanies a frank admission of wrong-doing, hardly a feature of the Suharto government’s civil religion.

Considering the language ideologies that underpin the use of English at IofC, I have argued that the untranslated status of “quiet time” and “check-in” were important to their viability in becoming meaningfully local, and Islamic, practices. Bearing in mind the *hadith* forbidding self-disclosure cited in the course of that argument above, authors of these transformation narratives relied on specific rhetorical framings to make their texts safe for their audiences. The broad suspicion of public disclosure of sin could be effectively preempted by

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yang cukup untuk membangun dan memelihara akibat warganya miskin kesadaran seperti naik kereta tanpa beli tiket atau tidak bayar pajak.

Perenungan yang dalam mengantarkan saya pada tekad kuat untuk melakukan perubahan dari diri sendiri. Perubahan untuk Indonesia yang damai, makmur, dan beradab tidak akan terwujud tanpa ada perubahan individu dari warganya. Melalui permohonan maaf lewat surat, saya yakin akan membawa dampak yang luar biasa bagi saya sendiri dan negara. Kini hidup saya lebih tenang, damai dan penuh harapan melihat perubahan Indonesia yang lebih baik.

these techniques. This framing is clear in the account of another highly active member of IofC. She penned her experiences about a more elemental set of personal failings. Instead of a relatively innocuous stint as a fare-dodger, she related deep interpersonal strife and familial breakdown. She published this essay with a title drawn from a familiar Indonesian gloss of a Prophetic narration: “Surga di Bawah Telapak Kaki Ibu [Heaven is Beneath the Soles of Your Mother’s Feet] (Sunan an-Nasa’i 3104). In the *sahih* hadith, the Prophet grants a dispensation to a young man who comes wishing to join the jihad. Inquiring if the man still has a mother, the Prophet directs him to, “stay with her, for Paradise is beneath her feet.” This invocation of a prophetic saying partially guards against the seeming waywardness of the narrative that follows, considering it openly discloses things that should remain secret.

The author begins by introducing her family, and describing her transformation from a “cheerful girl, full of jokes and smiles” (*gadis periang, penuh senyum dan canda*) into a young woman marked by “sadness, reserve and emotionality” (*kesedihan, diam dan kelabilan*). Describing how business reversals and the death of her father plunged her family into disarray, the author relates the cumulative blow: “As the saying goes, when it rains it pours” (*sudah jatuh tertimpa tangga*, struck by the ladder having already fallen). This leads to a moral collapse: “In short, jealousy (*kecemburuan*), rage (*kemarahan*), and a feeling of loss (*perasaan kehilangan*) drove me to attempt suicide by consuming more than fifty sleeping pills I got from a doctor. It turns out that God (*Allah*) still cares (*sayang*), I awoke after four days in my Islamic academy (*pesantren*) room.” In keeping with IofC norms, the author attaches emotional reasons to her chosen course of action. The explicit emotional labels are then affixed to the confessional account of an attempted suicide – a moving degree of openness and self-disclosure, particularly as articulated by this devout young woman. The emotions themselves, as for Buchman, are

symptoms of a kind of heedlessness. The author characterizes the years following her suicide attempt as time spent as a “girl in rebellion” (*gadis pembangkang*). Resolution, when it comes, is through her involvement in IofC.

The author tells us that she took part in Youth Camp IV in 2008. It was there, that “for the first time I learned about the four values of a moral life that I had never before studied; honesty (*kejujuran*), love (*cinta*), sincerity (*ketulusan*) and unselfishness (*ketidakegoisan*).” The mere study of these four moral absolutes provokes a kind of opening in her. The camp ended with the exhortation that participants write a letter to themselves detailing a moral commitment. And so she took the opportunity to work out an apology to her mother. Once she received the letter in the mail, she approached her mother for a private heart-to-heart (*berbicara empat mata dengan serius*). She describes what happens next: “I looked at her face with its ever increasing wrinkles from reflecting on the lives her children were living. I prostrated myself at her feet (*bersujud di kakinya*) and my mama hugged me with a warm embrace the likes of which I had not received in who knows how long.” And so, the author concludes her story of moral transformation by reflecting that, “it is undeniable (*tidak perlu diragukan lagi*) that heaven is beneath the soles of a mother’s feet.” Thus the narrative arc delivers us back to the title, the authorizing Islamic resonances attempting to place this account of transformation beyond reproach. Despite its explicit emotional disclosure, the story is framed as testimonial endorsement of Prophetic tradition. Simultaneously, internal to the transformation are the pronounced affective experiences, the crushing agony and tearful forgiveness, which authorize the experience of change. The affective weight is the mark of divine intercession. Buchman’s great shaking-up becomes this author’s harrowing tearful prostration.

The first narrative, written for public dissemination by a then-leader of IofC, showcases both the core value of honesty and the necessity of restitution in pursuit of a moral life. The second suggests the depths of pain and discomfort which can be addressed through the application of the moral principles taught at IofC. Both of these are attempts at moral suasion, projected into the digital expanse of the internet in the hopes that they resonate in the hearts of some reader who chances upon them. Less personal is the testimonial of another IofC member that stresses the cultivation of consideration for others, although it is directed at the same undesignated audience. After writing in detail about his morning commute to campus as a student, the author describes the final leg of his journey and closes with an earnest entreaty in keeping with the values he discovered at IofC. However nowhere does the author actually mention IofC or locate his moral commitment within its teachings. Instead, peppering his account with obvious markers of Islamic commitments, this author delivers a generic moral exhortation.

We pick up the account as the author transfers microbuses en route to campus: “While reciting *Bismillah* (in the name of God) my right foot entered KB 510 and *Alhamdulillah* (all praise belongs to God) I could see empty seats. I sat right in the middle of the last seat with the intention of making it easier to disembark.” The sacralization of personal gain (getting a seat on a crowded bus) is implicitly criticized as a lazy or inauthentic spiritual posture. Having marked himself as pious in language, the author concedes that he quickly busied himself with heedlessness: “sitting there peacefully with my heavy bag on my chest. My body reclined, and my eyelids heavy with drowsiness. Pop songs played on a hand phone.” Into this blissful disengagement intrudes the image of suffering in the form of an unseated passenger: “her eyes flashed with illness and fatigue. Periodically she rubbed her sweating brow: overheated.



Everyone knew (*tahu*) she was old, everyone knew she was exhausted, ill and almost spent, but not everyone was aware (*sadar*) enough to stand and give her a place to sit, meaning, exchange her suffering (*menukarkan penderitaan*) for our own.” Here the author contrasts knowledge—what was known (*tahu*)—with awareness (*sadar*). Knowledge, in his account, is insufficient. Moral being requires awareness, which is to say, efficacy. When facts galvanize action, only then do things change. As the author himself relates, “for me this wasn’t the first time I’d seen this sight, I’d seen it tens or maybe even hundreds of times.” What was different was the moral awakening that overtook him in this moment. Sitting on the bus he suddenly remembers that, “there is a culture of mutual assistance (*saling tolong*) for those in need that I want to promote (*biasakan*, normalize).” This recollection, too, is part of a project of moral consciousness-raising.

The author compares his minor awakening with a longer genealogy of altruism. He recalls that, “as recorded in history, if the Prophet Muhammad acted selfishly (*berlaku egois*) then it would have been impossible for him to carry out his mandate as the Messenger in spreading truth (*kebenaran*) to his community, even though lives were at stake (*walau nyawa menjadi taruhannya*).” The author cites the Prophet as a moral exemplar, although he indigenizes the *sirah* (Prophetic biography, Ar. *Al-sīra*), using the generic introduction “as written in history” (*tertulis di sejarah*). This is a telling example for the virtue of unselfishness, since it locates selfishness (*egois*) as a clear obstacle to salvation. Despite the fact that this takes place in explicitly Islamic terms, the structure of the narrative, the dawning awareness relayed within it, closely tracks to Buchman’s own signal contribution to the genre.

The ultimate realization here, for our author, is that “change really happens not because of you or her doing it, but because I begin” (*perubahan itu terjadi bukan karena kamu dan dia yang melakukannya tapi saya yang memulai*). Although this last narrative does not clearly locate

the value of unselfishness within the body of IofC teachings it was originally published on the (now defunct) website of the organization. Personal moral awakening is not simply temporally prior to social transformation – it is where the latter aspiration is first realized. “Change begins with me,” the oft-cited mantra of Initiatives of Change, is here understood as “change *can only* begin with me.” And yet of utmost importance is that the agent of change is not *first* the self. The first to act is the divine.

### **The Subject and Agent of Change**

Frank Buchman was struck in a small chapel on the margins of the Keswick convention, overwhelmed with a vision of the crucifixion and sensory insight of a “great shaking-up.” God changed Frank, once Frank was willing to make some changes himself (the six letters written to the board of the failed Overbrook Pennsylvania hospice house). So who changes the participants of IofC Indonesia? Superficially, the hollowed out theology of of Initiatives of Change defers the answer to the participant. Pragmatically, however, agency is limited to specific actors. Divine will creeps in and around the Secretariat of IofC, embodied in ritual worship, expressed in evocative supplication. Yet the evangelical tools for accessing this will rest in the hands of the membership writ large: the community of IofC as a second-order agent of divine change. The tertiary agent, the self, can only act in circumscribed respects, preparing the grounds of subjectivity for the intervention of the Other. And these processes of agentive change are embedded in the histories – Islamic, archipelagic and local – that construct their specific possibilities.

In *Christian Moderns*, Webb Keane reflects on a process of Latourian purification in the wake of an encounter between Dutch Calvinists and Sumbanese *marapu* traditionalists. As he clarifies in the introduction, “their collective story starts as an encounter between two sides, but

its postcolonial consequences produce a tangle of relations and possible positions that is far more complex” (4). To a considerable extent the subjects of this chapter (and indeed, this dissertation as will be discussed in context of Kahfi Motivator School later), members of Initiatives of Change Indonesia, grew up within a “tangle of relations and possible positions.” As they grapple with moral impulses within frames provided by IofC, they are inheritors of stabilized and reified concepts of religion and culture. IofC members grow up with frequent formulations of “religion.” It is attested to in school, promulgated in national discourse and maintained through social norms that rely on its repeated invocation. *Agama*, religion, is constantly made to say its name. And yet their story is not merely the negotiation of the constraints this legacy entails. My predominantly Muslim interlocutors at IofC re-assemble these ostensibly purified forms: borrowing the assumed epistemic neutrality of English and the technical-spiritual means of Initiatives of Change, they mount moral projects that blend domains of subjectivity and agency. Sharply informed by postcolonial projects of linguistic and religious purification, they nevertheless demonstrate an enduring capacity for novel organization and motivation. In this they are surely not unique. The longer I spent reflecting on IofC, the more obvious this secondary insight became. The evangelical genealogy of IofC, with its promise of familiarity, obscures the continuing presence of Divine agency in other instantiations of Initiatives of Change and theologically allied movements. So comfortable with treating the purifying fantasy of modernity as a fact, we stand at risk of missing notions of linguistic, material and personal efficacy that exceed that particular narrative.

The criticism of IofC as derivative and vacuous has shadowed its parent movements almost from their inception. In a sharp review published in *The Guardian*, Alasdair MacIntyre weighed in on the mid-century phenomenon of MRA. Criticizing the organization’s naivety, he

writes about the individuals drawn to the movement, “Those who felt themselves in a complex and ambiguous universe suddenly find themselves poised between two simplicities: the world needs a new spirit of co-operation to defeat communism; they themselves need a new spirit in their lives to defeat sin. To produce the second it will be to produce the first” (8).<sup>118</sup> This has long been the rebuke: that the emphasis on the affective experience of transformation precludes the possibility of structural interventions in society. Yet this was manifestly not the case at IofC. Although the language of individual moral stature permeated the organization, the commitments of its membership extended to a variety of socially interventionist activities. Some were decidedly small scale (tutoring neighborhood children), others (like the interfaith stands taken in concert with the Nahdlatul Ulama Youth Wing to protect the rights of Christian minorities to worship in Bogor) bear a family resemblance to relatively classical social activist goals. The subject of change at IofC is not satisfied with platitudinous moral pronouncement – rather, these simple rules are imagined as tools to unlock potentials stored within individuals and to access divinely ordained capacities.

IofC constituted new kinds of subjectivity from largely familiar parts. The aspirational character of change, the yearning to be different, better, restored, pervades the organizational activities of IofC. The subject of this desire is produced on an Islamic substrate of submission to divine will, scientific efficacy promised by English, and the religio-nationalist appropriation of

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<sup>118</sup> MacIntyre’s criticism hardly stops there. He goes on to castigate the aesthetic vacuity of the movement: “Moral Re-Armament is quite unlike traditional religion in its disregard of reason and of taste. It will do anything to put across its fundamental message, use films and plays of quite extraordinary banality and so on.” MacIntyre rejects, in part, the crudeness of MRA’s demagoguery – the “extraordinary banality” that characterizes its didactic moralizing. Nothing so blunt and emotionally driven, he seems to argue, could possibly have much value, and its very populism is an indictment of its intellectual merits. His final analysis is even more damning: “This [MRA], then, is to provide democracy with its ideological clothing... And yet in fact, of course, this religion is not a moving force like the Calvinism of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: it is a means of accepting a made world, not a means of change” (ibid). Of course, for contemporary IofC participants, the organization provides a concrete means of egress from the quietism of Indonesian political life.

“cultural” practices. She is endowed with novel possibilities for the future precisely because she has become optimally outfitted to host divine agency. She doesn’t change herself, but she does agentively construct the conditions on which divine change is predicated. The moral force of that change radiates out through her family and social relations, penetrating up through systems of economic and political exclusion. Remaking her heart, she remakes the world. That the tools of this project are prefabricated doesn’t lessen their appeal – it guarantees, through their very reproducibility, their scientific efficacy. This kind of logic might appear foreign and bizarre to disparate Indonesian constituencies, but for the university educated, increasingly well-traveled, middle-class Jakarta residents of IofC, it felt natural and real. Social change really was as simple as individual moral attainment. And as her moral improvement galvanizes moral action, she is forced to contend with a rich array of relational possibilities. Navigating these relations, with precision, comprises part of the response to a very clear ethical injunction, the focus of the subsequent chapter: have *adab*!

### **What Changes, After Me?**

This chapter has detailed how a Christian evangelical movement dedicated to living a divinely inspired life has come to be adopted and appropriated in the shadow of the State Islamic University Syarif Hidayatullah in contemporary Jakarta.<sup>119</sup> Alongside a push to deconfessionalize the larger movement filtering down to its Indonesian instantiation, innovative local translations of organizational materials are an important means through which Initiatives of Change becomes viable to the mostly Muslim-Indonesian membership of IofC. Core Initiatives of Change activities like quiet time and check-in, meanwhile, are left intentionally untranslated. I

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<sup>119</sup> The State Islamic University system, too, is the outgrowth of a particular historical trajectory. As part of the process by which the Indonesian state sought to “capture” Islam, there is something to be said about IofC’s emergence in relation to this institution. If the state sought to “Islamize” the university, some of its students looked outside of both Indonesia and Islam in their efforts to Islamize themselves.

argue that this safely segregates still Christian-seeming elements of the movement from their new Muslim practitioners: that untranslated English, with its presumed epistemic neutrality, remains non-threatening to the spiritual interiors of IofC participants.

IofC is a movement through which young Indonesians explore their own moral impulses and seek novel framing for their personal and social aspirations. The moral but deconfessionalized atmosphere of IofC, carefully cultivated, enables members to safely explore different forms of sociality including fraught gendered intersubjective experiences. Rather than a “liberal” exterior to Islam, I contend that this social flexibility is indicative of ethical mandates that demand sensitive interpersonal compromise. As IofC members seek to change (*berubah*), beginning with themselves, they do so by adjusting to the perceived needs of those surrounding them and opening themselves to the possibility of divine agentive transformation. In the teachings and doings of Initiatives of Change, the young IofC participants seek to access the “energy” that William James delineates in the epigraph opening this chapter. A century after Frank Buchman was thrown to his knees and thrust into his mission by a great moral awakening, new Muslim recruits for this Moral Re-Armament take up the call. The change that begins with them, radiating through economies, societies, and nations, is not *done* by them: only divine mercy is sufficient to intercede. Its locus is hearts. Thus change “had” by IofC members is “done” to them by God.

## Chapter 3

### The Banquet of Change: IofC and Adab

*Adab* is the discipline of body, mind and soul; the discipline that assures the recognition and acknowledgement of one's proper place in relation to one's physical, intellectual and spiritual capacities and potentials; the recognition and acknowledgement of the reality that knowledge and being are ordered hierarchically according to their various levels (*marātib*) and degrees (*darajāt*)...*Adab*, concisely defined, is the *spectacle* (*mashhad*: مشهد) of justice as it is reflected by wisdom.

Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas in *The Concept of Education in Islam*, 11-12

#### The Place of Adab

This chapter asserts that *adab* is usefully understood as “right relations.” As such, it is a key analytic category for exploring contemporary Indonesian Muslim sociality. Of the many available senses discussed below, I translate *adab* as “right relations” to stress the relational and social dimensions of the term. In doing so, I am not translating from Indonesian, or from the Arabic “original.” Instead I appropriate the term as it is used in Arabo-Indonesian discourse, the hybrid linguistic register in which many moral arguments are framed by contemporary Indonesian Muslims. Thus it retains senses drawn from its usage in both languages. Instead of a privileged focus on “piety” or its ostensible glosses (*takwa*; *kesalehan*), I argue that horizontal ethical injunctions (one axis of *adab*, even as it demands recognition of hierarchy) remain a primary and seemingly competing feature of moral relationality. This argument emerges from an investigation of the social mores structuring intersubjective intercourse at Initiatives of Change Indonesia (IofC) and amongst its participants. IofC is not only a site of moral transformation – it also is a space within which different models of sociality are subject to experimentation. These

experiments, part of the suite of procedures implicated in “change,” reveal different commitments to, and negotiations of, Indonesian Islamic norms. These negotiations are especially prominent in terms of cross-gender interaction. Despite the abiding egalitarian ethos at IofC, the micro-politics of sociality insistently demand that participants discern the “right relation,” and attendant hierarchal ordering, of every interaction.

Adab is an important sign under which “change” is imagined and attempted. The authorization for change in the IofC context demands that it be undertaken in the correct manner. Personal and social transformation also, always, involves a recalibration of relationships. Attending to the structures of those relationships allows for a richer understanding of the flexibility of the interactional modes at IofC. Participants in these encounters justified the overlapping and diverging social norms of their interactions by emphasizing the centrality of “right relations,” a mandate they located squarely within the Islamic tradition. As I participated in the organization some of the “rules” enabling IofC social experimentation became apparent. These structures, in turn, alerted me to the metapragmatic role of adab. Adab determines not only the “right” way to relate, but it enables the recognition of the existence of a relation, within which there is a “right.” Both of these features (recognizing relationships, attending to them correctly) are central to the kinds of transformative moral changes attempted within IofC.

### **IofC Members and Their Adab**

I assert that IofC provides a space for experimentation – that within the organization the membership actively explores different models of sociality. This is particularly apparent within the context of Islamic social ethics. In addition to prescriptive norms derived from the canonical sources of the Qur’an and hadith, adab is a key consideration in these processes. Adab encompasses recognition of relations and micro-alignments of social intercourse within those



relations. This latter facet, an orienting of self with respect to the standards of an other, depends on the rights ascribed to those relations (rights of mannered interaction; rights of hospitality; rights of mercy and forbearance; other rights). Negotiation between and among these rights is partially facilitated by the moral rhetoric of the organization. Understood as advocating a broad project of personal and social transformation, IofC affords its members greater flexibility in their social interactions: the loftiness of the overarching goal smooths over discrepancies in individual's conduct. In an effort to move this discussion away from abstract process and into the grounded experience of IofC participants, the following biographical sketches introduce some of the social elements negotiated within the organization.

Differing norms were apparent at the very top of the IofC hierarchy, evidenced in the social commitments of one IofC leader, Nur. The grandson of a renowned Madurese *Kyai* (scholar, Islamic boarding school headmaster), Nur was a central figure in IofC during the period I worked with the organization. Strongly oriented towards populist politics, Nur was well into a decade-long political and religious transformation when I met him. IofC armored him with both a community and a set of minimalist spiritual practices to undertake this transformation. Moving away from normative Indonesian Sunni Islam, Nur was active in interfaith work and frequently endorsed a broad humanist philosophy. Through his years in the organization, Nur had traveled abroad on several occasions, including an extended stay in India and a visit to the world headquarters of the parent Initiatives of Change organization in Caux, Switzerland. He was frank about the initial appeal of IofC: an opportunity to practice English and the means to travel to foreign lands. Over time, those private desires had given way to social aspirations of fairness, equality and pluralism. Along with his IofC activities, Nur was employed as a freelance translator, working just enough to maintain his spare lifestyle.

Nur had fulfilled a variety of leadership posts within IofC, but also struck somewhat of a remote figure from the current generation of IofC members. Nur was almost a decade older – at the time of writing, in his mid-thirties. He was, during my fieldwork, furthermore unmarried, and unmotivated to alter that status. He espoused a different set of aspirations than the normative emphasis on career, family, Islam that predominated amongst the group’s membership. Interpersonally Nur could come off as a little directive – he was used to being in charge. This generated little friction, however, probably because of his stature within the organization and his relative age. Unable to square his humanist commitments with a discrete religious position, Nur used the IofC community as a site to explore a spiritual identity other than Muslim. After the conclusion of my fieldwork, Nur took to social media to characterize himself as no longer Muslim, claiming for himself a universal humanist tradition instead. I never heard another member criticize or even critically comment on this ongoing transformation. Nur policed the pluralist commitments of IofC members, but without recourse to pluralist traditions in Islam (other senior members of the organization shared his pluralist values but traced their genealogy within the Islamic tradition). He often did so by voicing Initiatives of Change arguments, usually cast in a universalist register. There was ample room at IofC for such a figure, even as he worked alongside Muslims advocating for more narrowly Islamic moral renewal.

Abdul Fatah, the individual who first introduced me to IofC and eventually my research assistant, came from a background seemingly at odds with the social activism of IofC. His father had been part of the *tarbiyah* movement in Indonesia,<sup>120</sup> and had participated in the founding of a

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<sup>120</sup> The *tarbiyah* movement dates to the 1970s and 80s, emerging among university students returning from overseas studies at centers of Islamic learning (Rinaldo, “Muslim Women,” 28). Rather than explicit political engagement, members of this movement sought to educate themselves on modernist Islam, often working in small study groups. Borrowing the model (and the theological orientation) of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, these study groups conceived of themselves as setting the stage for future advocacy and religio-political organization. See Damanik’s history of the one outgrowth of this movement, the *Partai Keadilian* (Justice Party), *Fenomena Partai Keadilian*.

*pesantren* (non-state Islamic school) in Bogor.<sup>121</sup> This school dedicated itself to fostering the moral character necessary for future leadership, while encouraging its students to refrain from political engagement until they had sufficient moral stature. When Abdul Fatah enrolled at the State Islamic University, his father told him, “go and study, but don’t join any organizations!” Abdul Fatah wasn’t sure if this was because of these organization’s corrupting influence or just because they presented a distraction from the swift conclusion of his studies. In any event, the advice went unheeded. After his father passed away in his sophomore year, Abdul Fatah became active in *Pergerakan Mahasiswa Islam Indonesia* (The Indonesian Muslim Students Movement, a campus Muslim organization).<sup>122</sup> It was there that Abdul Fatah met a young woman who painted an attractive portrait of IofC. And so he violated his father’s prohibition for a second time. One of his first involvements with IofC was representing it at a Youth Congress in Malaysia, an experience that nurtured a fervent desire for more travel. While participating in IofC, Abdul Fatah was completing his university degree in the English Language Education program at UIN.

Abdul Fatah had grown up in an austere and sheltered community – he attended the school his father helped found and lived in a neighborhood dominated by people affiliated with

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Also van Bruinessen’s “Genealogies” covers, in brief, the rise of this movement and its later political implications. See also Anies Baswedan’s “Political Islam in Indonesia.”

<sup>121</sup> The doctrinal landscape of Indonesia is relentlessly complex. Abdul Fatah’s family claimed affiliation with *tarekat Ghazaliyah*. Unlike other *tarekat* (Sufi orders) active in Indonesia, *tarekat Ghazaliyah* had no formal structure of initiation or master-disciple relationships. Instead it meant that participants in this *tarekat* would follow both the “external-manifest” (*lahir*) and “hidden-interior” (*batin*) practices and traditions detailed in the corpus of Imam Al-Ghazali, the eleventh and twelfth-century Persian scholar and great synthesizer of *Ash’ari* theology, Sufi cosmology and normative Sunni practice. Abdul Fatah’s family are a compelling example of what Julia Day Howell describes in “Indonesia’s Salafist Sufis,” which is to say, Sufi devotional practice married to reformist zeal and rhetorical reliance on the authoritative (and authorizing) role of pious predecessors.

<sup>122</sup> *Pergerakan Mahasiswa Islam Indonesia* (PMII) dates to 1960. Founded by university students from Nahdlatul Ulama (the largest “traditionalist” Muslim organization in Indonesia), PMII is the direct competitor to *Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam* (HMI, Muslim Students’ Association), which is conventionally associated with *Muhammadiyah*, the largest modernist Muslim organization in Indonesia. In the State Islamic University system, these affiliations are often jumbled, but the popular division between HMI/Muhammadiyah and PMII/Nahdlatul Ulama tends to stand – this despite the fact that *Muhammadiyah* has a formal campus wing, the *Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah* (The Muhammadiyah Students League).

that school, both in Bogor. Other than his maternal relatives in Bandung, he had little contact outside of this insular world prior to attending university. He recalled that as an elementary school student, he closed out every school day with prayers for the destruction of Israel and the United States (in solidarity with Palestine, as taught by their principal), a practice that did little to negatively dispose him towards either Jews or Americans in adulthood. Abdul Fatah was a vocal proponent of what he considered Islamic values at their broadest social level. At the same time, he was tremendously flexible about particulars – I never heard him comment on or attempt to direct other’s individual performance of religious obligations, although he had many opinions about the ideal role of government in shaping public morality. A joking presence within the organization, his jocularly never came in for rebuke at IofC – for Abdul Fatah, IofC was fundamentally a social outlet, rather than a source of morals. This, too, was an acceptable relationship to the community.

Lia joined IofC at the same time as Abdul Fatah (2008). Invited by a friend to participate in that year’s Youth Camp, Lia was surprised to find an organization that would help her personally assimilate some of the difficulties of a troubled family background. Lia envisioned her participation in the organization as allied to a simultaneous effort to more fully manifest Islamic teachings – she was engaged in being what she understood to be a better Muslim at the same time as she availed herself of the moral changes promised at IofC. Whereas many IofC participants took seriously the opportunity to groom themselves for future leadership positions, Lia remained a quiet presence around the Secretariat. Friendly and demurring, Lia was uncomfortable taking a leadership position, even within Women Creators of Peace, an initiative spurred by IofC’s parent organization, and in the process of gathering steam during the period of

my research. Lia was self-conscious about her education, having graduated from a *diploma* program at a polytechnic rather than with a B.A. from UIN.

Lia, by self-characterization, had not been a very devoted Muslim growing up. One of the ways she remarked on this was through her easy familiarity with cross-gender sociality. Lia felt the need to remind herself, publicly, about the importance of maintaining appropriate gender segregation. Precisely as some women entered IofC and shed gendered norms of separation, Lia was actively trying to cultivate them. Lia was a willing interview subject, although at the last minute she remembered to make sure we were chaperoned when the interview was recorded. The result is my favorite personal example of the foibles of recorded interviews – at the end of a hot day of fasting, I was unable to ask a revealing question and Lia was unwilling to provide a direct answer. An hour-long conversation consisted primarily of disavowal, delicate refusal, and non-committal responses: what had her experiences in middle-school been like? *Lumayanlah* (okay; decent; really closest to the contemporary “whatever”), came the response. Was coming to university challenging? *Nggak begitu* (no; not so much). How about your experiences at IofC? *Biasalah* (the usual). The recorded result contrasts so sharply with the level of disclosure shared in other conversations, that it communicates to me the perils of conducting an interview with a chaperone, at an institution, and with a recording device, all at once. From the balance of our interactions, it seemed like Lia used IofC to explore what a more devoted Muslim life might look like, in the context of abiding social commitments. In keeping with a familiar IofC trajectory, once Lia married she largely withdrew from the organization.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> This was an enduring difficulty for IofC. Although Initiatives of Change, the parent organization, boasted many life-long members, IofC tended to attract its most active adherents in the busy university years of Indonesian middle-class independent living. Attending university, for many IofC members, was the first time they had lived outside of a family member’s care (or a religious institution). Assuming responsibility for a whole social world, organizational life held many attractions. If they followed the normative trajectory, within three-to-six years of

Fitria, who joined IofC around the same time as Lia, used the space for a very different sort of experimentation. Reserved bordering on taciturn, Fitria was nevertheless very interested in exploring the theological possibilities of pluralism: for her, this was *the* challenge facing Indonesia in the future. She did not disclose to me from where this interest originated, but she clearly found IofC a productive space for exploring its contours. Over the course of five years of contact with IofC members that began during my fieldwork, I watched Fitria rise to a position of ever-greater prominence, particularly within women-led initiatives like Women Creators of Peace (a conflict-resolution program that helped women lead social change in the aftermath of sectarian or political violence). Fitria had a guiding moral role in the organization – once she consented to something, other members took it as a cue that the proposed activity was Islamically acceptable. She tended to wait and see and only offer her approval once an activity had fully disclosed its implications to her.

Fitria was aided in her role as moral arbiter by a background in the traditional Islamic sciences, attained through years of primary schooling at Islamic institutions. She was confident in her foundational understanding of the tradition and vocal in her interventions. Nevertheless, with me at least, she was quite guarded. Although propriety (one aspect of *adab*) was very important to Fitria, just as important was the freedom that properly maintained propriety afforded. By this I mean the conversational range and theological flexibility that Fitria cultivated while policing the surface norms of idealized Muslim sociality. The one time I gave her a ride home from the IofC Secretariat, she insisted that I drop her off at the outermost boundary of her residential neighborhood: “so as not to give rise to *fitnah* [In Arabic “dissension,” in Indonesian,

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graduating university, they had married and begun a family life. This tended to signal the end of their involvement at IofC. So typical was this path that foreign Initiatives of Change facilitators, visiting Indonesia, remarked on it, and a running joke at IofC, when a member married, was that we should say goodbye, since we wouldn't see her or him again.

usually “gossip” or “slander”].”<sup>124</sup> Sensitive to moral perception as well as moral weight, Fitria modeled social engagement simultaneous to personal rectitude, precisely the sort of negotiation facilitated by adab.

Dewi, a recent graduate of UIN employed at UIN’s graduate school, was another compelling figure in the organization. Very comfortable with the frank disclosure prided at IofC, Dewi seemed to model another dimension of idealized sociality. She was very astute but often irreverent. Despite sharing some very dark experiences from her family of origin, she was one of the most outspoken and funny regular visitors to the Secretariat. She provided a feature necessary to almost all organizational life: the perspective that, really, we shouldn’t take ourselves too seriously. Dewi maintained this levity in concert with a number of very clear political commitments concerning gender equality. In point of fact, her “joking” demeanor allowed her to transgress others’ personal boundaries without seeming to cause any offense. This appeared strategic, as much as innate. Although I never saw her take a formal role in the organization, she was a long-time friend of senior members and a reliable presence at events.

Luthfi entered IofC towards the end of his time at university and continued his involvement post-graduation. Employed as a middle-school teacher, Luthfi took seriously the Islamic obligation expressed in Indonesian as *amar ma’ruf nahi mungkar* (this is an Indonesian

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<sup>124</sup> “*Agar tidak menimbulkan fitnah.*” The practice of giving someone a ride on the back of a motorbike (*bonceng*, originally to get a ride on a bicycle) is said to have been a source of social scandal in the recent past. The intimacy of riding in such close proximity announced, publicly, the existence of an intimate relationship. Perhaps owing to the proliferation of motorcycles, itself the result of innovations in a credit-economy at the end of the 1990s, the social stigma of *bonceng* has largely dissipated. In rural communities giving a ride might raise eyebrows, but in Ciputat the only criticism such rides generated was from *ojek* (motorcycle taxi) drivers, who clearly resented the business loss they represented. Fitria’s unwilling to be seen, by neighbors, indicated an abundance of caution – perhaps for her reputation (foreign white men are notoriously morally deviant in terms of sex), but if we take seriously her argument, this caution emerged from her concern that *other people*, in discussing her reputation, would be sinning.

transliteration of a repeated Quranic injunction to “enjoin the good and forbid the evil”).<sup>125</sup> This meant that Luthfi often “called” to the good within IofC, reminding other members of obligatory worship, encouraging them to watch their speech when it veered towards gossip, and generally policing his understanding of Islamic social norms. Luthfi traced his investment in *amar ma'ruf* to a troubled adolescence. After the death of his father and his elder brother’s involvement in criminal activity, Luthfi found respite from the chaos of home at a nearby mosque. There he began memorizing the Qur’an and became involved with *Jamaah Tabligh*.<sup>126</sup> Luthfi remained grateful for his participation in *Jamaah Tabligh*, even as he moved away from the organization’s narrow understanding of Islamic values. IofC armed Luthfi with a moral language to accomplish this critique – he saw himself as remaining constant in his moral advocacy, but developing a more nuanced understanding of moral progress.

Luthfi was initially quite wary of my participation in IofC. Understandably, he didn’t want to be the object of someone else’s research. Developing a relationship with Luthfi entailed demonstrating that I shared some of his central moral commitments. The biographical information above came from a single extended conversation, where Luthfi disclosed much of his personal history in terms he thought would be helpful for my research. He did so, pointedly, outside of IofC. Our recorded interview conducted within the Secretariat is another masterpiece of indirection and cliché. It was very important to Luthfi that I understand that his devotional

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<sup>125</sup> This injunction is found in 3:104; 3:110; 9:71; and in the inverse, 9:67. In much commentary, “evil” is understood as that which is socially harmful or corrupting.

<sup>126</sup> *Jamaah Tabligh* is the Indonesian iteration of *Tabligh-e-Jamaat*, a Muslim proselytizing organization dating to the 1920s in South Asia. The name, in Urdu and Arabic, denotes “the collectivity/congregation of the transmitters/conveyers.” Taking a pan-Sunni juristic and theological position (Tablighis do not adhere to a particular school of law or theology), *Jamaah Tabligh* (in Indonesia as elsewhere) sees its primary obligation as the moral reform of the Muslim community – bringing genuine “Islam” to people who are nominally “Muslim.” As such, the organization is formally quietist, taking no position on doctrinal disputes or this-worldly political aspirations. Nevertheless, it has a somewhat mixed reputation given the ardent nature of its calls and the earnestness with which its adherents carry on their activities. For an excellent recent history of the organization in Southeast Asia, see Farish Noor’s *Islam on the Move*.



ardor was an achieved state, not a birthright. His family was not like him – he had been the recipient of divine grace that allowed for his fuller manifestation of Islamic values. Luthfi understood IofC as a medium for spreading those values, for continuing the work of calling to the tradition that he had begun at *Jamaah Tabligh*. He maintained his faith in IofC even as members like Nur used the organization to facilitate their exit from Islam – Luthfi was fatalistic about the capacities of an individual to agentively change another’s spiritual state, even while he insisted on the moral obligation to attempt to do so. At IofC Luthfi and Fitria were allies, of sorts, in related projects of Muslim norming. Sometimes this meant that Luthfi averted his eyes – his non-participation communicating disapproval that adab insisted he not verbalize. The epistemic neutrality of IofC discourse, filtered through the ethical injunction to have adab, allowed for fruitful social engagements across marked spiritual divides.

### **Sources of Adab**

In contemporary Bahasa Indonesia, *adab* like its relative *adat* has coalesced around a general, deconfessionalized meaning – frequently it is glossed in English as civilization, customs, etiquette or manners. The Indonesian Department of Education’s *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI)* defines the term as “refinement and goodness of character [*budi pekerti*]; politeness [*kesopanan*]; character [*akhlak*]” (“adab”). The deconfessionalized status of adab is asserted in this definition by the selection of *budi pekerti* (a compound we could render “native/natural reason/intellect”). This compound, in turn, arrives in Indonesian by way of Javanese from Sanskrit. This heritage allows for the translation out from Islam into “neutral Indonesian,” at the same time as the third entry, character (*akhlak*) restores the term to its Arabo-Islamic heritage. Interestingly, this is also possible in Arabic itself, since the Arab grammarians consider Adab to be a pre-Islamic category. Given this provenance, adab has developed a

technical use within certain Islamic traditions at the same time as it retains a general sense ostensibly outside of those traditions. The author of the entry on *adab* in the Brill *Encyclopaedia of Islam* claims that, “in its oldest sense, it may be regarded as a synonym of *sunna*, with the sense of ‘habit, hereditary norm of conduct, custom’ derived from ancestors and other persons who are looked up to as models” (“Adab”). This author traces the etymology to *da`b* (custom), although acknowledges that, “indigenous lexicographers connect it with the root *`db* meaning ‘marvellous thing’ or ‘preparation, feast.’” This latter etymology was shared with me in Indonesia – that *adab* descended from the right conduct appropriate to a banquet or feast. The encyclopedia author, meanwhile, follows the path of the term to its classical sense of “the sum of knowledge which makes a man courteous and ‘urbane’” (ibid). From here it came to more narrowly denote “literature” and refined humanistic enterprise. This final sense is also expressed in contemporary Indonesian within the State Islamic University system: *Fakultas Adab* corresponds closely to a “School of the Humanities.”

*Adab* also figures in nationalist discourse, in the form *beradab*, enshrined in the second pillar or “base” of the Pancasila, the explicitly formulated state ideology (see Chapter 1 above): *kemanusiaan yang adil dan beradab*. Typically this is glossed as “just [*adil*] and civilized [*beradab*] humanism,” although “human-ness that is just and has propriety,” while cumbersome, helps communicate some of the further senses. The epigraph opening this chapter suggests the theological significance of *adil* (justice) and *adab* in relation to one another – as part of idealized relationality stipulated within the Islamic tradition. From this perspective, even the most “humanistic” of the Pancasila pillars also reveals an Islamic genealogy. *Beradab* (literally “with/having *adab*”) invites, through phonetic resonance, its opposite *biadab* (barbarism;

cruelty).<sup>127</sup> This latter term also features in nationalist discourse – both the internal others who must become subject to the state (for instance, West Papuans are *biadab*, and must be colonized, the rhetoric goes) and the inhuman others whose cruelty threaten the integrity of the nation (communists are *biadab* and thus their blood is permissible). These usages suggest that the opposite of *adab* isn't just “ill-mannered,” it is “barbaric.” In the *KBBI*, the three senses of *biadab* are, “uncivilized or not yet civilized;” “ill-mannered or ignorant” (*tidak tahu sopan santun; kurang ajar*); and “cruel” or “sadistic” (*kejam*).<sup>128</sup> Lacking *adab* is dangerous – it makes one the legitimate target of both civilizing missions and state violence.

The association between proper *adab* and Islam is core to the story Islam tells about its own origins. In the *Thematic Encyclopedia of the World of Islam (Ensiklopedi Tematis Dunia Islam)*, a standard Indonesian-language reference work on Islam, the ignorance and heedlessness of the pre-Islamic Arabs is characterized with reference to *adab*: “In these circumstances, Jahiliah (heedless ignorance) isn't actually the opposite of knowledge (*'ilm*), but of graceful gentility (*hilm* [*lemah lembut*]), patience (*ṣabr* [*sabar*]), and mannered culture (*adab* [*budaya*])” (18).<sup>129</sup> Working from Arabic to English, translators often stress the “forbearance” or “social maturity” of *hilm*, although the internal translation provided by the encyclopedia stresses the sense of social grace (*lemah lembut*). Patience (*sabar*) is more straightforward, transliterated as much as translated in the encyclopedia entry. Interestingly, the authors stress the “cultured” sense of *adab*, by translating it as *budaya*. Here, this is less the social scientific category of

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<sup>127</sup> *Biadab* is derived from Persian, where the *bi* prefix denotes an absence or lack.

<sup>128</sup> Although there are definitely worse insults, the height of polite outrage is publicly expressed in an exclamation of *kurang ajar*: “ignorant” (under-taught).

<sup>129</sup> “Dengan kenyataan seperti itu, Jahiliah sebenarnya bukan lawan dari *'ilm*, tetapi dari *hilm* (*lemah lembut*), *ṣabr* (*sabar*), dan *adab* (*budaya*). This Encyclopedia is edited by a “who’s who” of Islamic Studies in Indonesia, including the current head of the State Islamic University (Komaruddin Hidayat), and is officially endorsed by the Ministry of Religion.

“culture” and more the older sense of “cultivated bearing, manners, refined etiquette” (one can be without *budaya*, it is hard to have no culture in the anthropological sense). Exposure to revelation brought the Arabs from a state of heedlessness to one of civilization – to cognizance of right relations. Indonesians carry on this trajectory, and according to nationalist discourse, the state becomes the agent responsible for the continued promotion of adab. This brings us to yet another form of *adab* in Indonesian usage – as *peradaban*, civilization. The notion of “civilization” celebrates the achievement of social forms and institutions, while allowing for multiplicity (there are different *peradaban*). Indonesians, employing the idiom of adab, are thus always re-synthesizing Islam and nationalist discourses of ideal sociality.

The moral weight of adab in describing right relationality emerged very early in the Islamic tradition. J. Mark Halstead writes about adab in his introduction to a special issue of the *Journal of Moral Education*: “The second term for morality is *adab*, which combines two different but related ways of understanding good behaviour – on the one hand, politeness courtesy, etiquette, good upbringing, culture, refinement, good breeding and good manners, and on the other, morality and values” (285). Halstead further elaborates on the term for the purposes of his introduction, reminding the reader that, “*Adab* comes from the same root as one of the main Arabic words for education, *ta’dib*, which refers primarily to the process of learning a sound basis for social behaviour within the community and society at large” (285). Muhammad Abū Rīda corroborates this history in a UNESCO publication on the Islamic tradition, writing, “Among the collections of *hadiths*, books are to be found with the title *Kitab al-Adab* (Book of Manners) and they contain the elements of religious and social traits and virtues. From the very beginnings of moral, intellectual and political culture, the term *adab* has been widely used in the titles of books on the subject” (43). These “Books of Manners” emerged from scholarship

addressed to *ahadith*, and came to describe a whole host of social obligations – what I have termed “right relations.” Perhaps given its importance within the work of Islamic *hadith* scholars, the same terminology became a central genre in the early Sufi canon – and it is this corpus that provides many of the contours for normative Islam in Indonesia.

In *The Heart of Islamic Philosophy*, William Chittick presents the work of Afdal al-Din Kashani, a medieval Persian Sufi author who wrote for general Muslim audiences (as opposed to the highly specialized audiences who are the typical addressee of much Sufi literature). In the course of introducing Kashani, Chittick neatly summarizes the place of *adab* in Sufism, as well as what Chittick terms, “the general Muslim love for beauty...and the extreme concern to observe the *adab* or ‘courtesy’ of every situation” (31). Continuing this explanation, Chittick informs us that, “the word *adab*, for which we have no adequate English equivalent, refers to the proper and beautiful deportment and correct behavior, both physical and verbal” (ibid). Expanding, even further, in a footnote, Chittick writes, “It has been suggested that the best term for what ‘education’ implied in Islamic society is *ta’dib*, ‘conveying courtesy,’ since Islamic education involved not only the transferal of knowledge (*ta’lim*), but also the inculcation of the proper and appropriate activity (*adab*) that true knowledge demands” (331). I excerpt Chittick’s explanation at such length because of the context in which it is presented – as framing for a text intended for general audiences. The technical valences of *adab* in Sufi discourses have left a mark on the normative understanding of the concept for Indonesian Muslims. Understood in this light, my contention that *adab* is both a condition for change and medium for its achievement makes greater sense. Moral transformation arrives to those prepared to receive it. Proper

relationality (and the agentive self-positioning such postures require) makes one a fitting recipient for divine agency. In preparing for the change, however, one already commences it.<sup>130</sup>

The distinction I wish to maintain between “adab” and “piety” can, of course, be overstated. There is considerable pragmatic overlap in terms of prescriptive ethics. Yasien Mohamed introduces this argument in his essay “The Ethics of Education” by characterizing adab: “The *adab* of Islamic philosophical ethics was not merely concerned with etiquette, but also with the discipline of the self; whereby virtue becomes internal to the human soul through habituation” (633-4). This formulation employs many of the elements that distinguish “piety” in the hands of Saba Mahmood’s interlocutors in *Politics of Piety*. This kind of habituation, however, is implicated in relationships beyond that between the worshipper and God, or even among worshippers. Adab, as also denoting ethics, involves complex imaginings of moral being. As Webb Keane observes in “Ethics as Piety,” perhaps especially those internalized and habituated dispositions constituting unconscious integration require “constant self-monitoring, recurrent pokes at one’s self-awareness” (224). The internalization of adab, as of piety, reflects less an achieved form than a maintained state. Adab, with its relationality, requires constant maintenance. In the same essay, Keane goes on to assert that, “scriptural monothesisms objectify ethics, exerting pressure on them to become consistent and cognitively explicit. But

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<sup>130</sup> A Turkish scholar and diplomat, Bülent Şenay, has written about the concept of change in the context of public ethics. In an article concerning hermeneutical boundary negotiations within Islamic traditions entitled “Change and Changeability,” Şenay writes, “Islam strongly emphasizes that change in worldly life will be led and organized by human beings (which perhaps might mean that a certain level of secularity –not ‘ism,’ as in world view – is in operation as part of the Divine plan)” (138). In effect, this argument supports a notion of human agency unfolding in concert with divine design, an operation that Şenay understand with respect to ethics. The kinds of change Şenay is most interested in are changing relationships to the sources of the tradition, along with collective renegotiation of an Islamic concept of “the good.” The lack of a consensus inherent in this process, in turn, has other ethical correlates: “Disagreement can only be dealt with if there is a proper ethics of disagreement in a particular worldview or religious tradition. The Islamic tradition calls it *âdâb al-ikhtilâf* (manners/norms/ethics of disagreement)” (153). There is a distinct adab, too, of conflict – a right relationality that guarantees the good faith of the contestants, whether exegetes or battlefield combatants.

objectification also tends to separate ethics from everyday habits” (227). Where we read *adab* in the prescriptive Sufi manuals discussed by Chittick or taught in Indonesian *pesantren*, there is a demonstration of this argument. In the more nebulous intersubjective encounters that are at the center of this chapter, however, *adab* offers something of a corrective to this purifying movement. Instead of a singular and consistent ethic, *adab* tends to emphasize multiplicity. The ethical subject is not endowed with a rule that can be uniformly applied, she is hailed by the particularities of a given relationship and the rights exerted within it.

### **Heeding the Dictates of Adab**

The language of hailing, or interpellation, can be instructive in this discussion of *adab*. The logic of interpellation is familiar from Althusser’s classic reading of ideology, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses.” In that text the relationship between the “Subject” and a “subject” is traced out with respect to the Christian tradition. Althusser’s selection of religion as the example of ideology is not, of course, arbitrary. Given his insistence on the inescapability of “ideology,” it is imagined that a religious tradition will be sufficiently objectifiable, sufficiently outside, so as to be recognizable. Hailing, Althusser tells, calls a subject into relation (rather than being), as a subject:

In the ordinary use of the term, subject in fact means: (1) a free subjectivity, a centre of initiatives, author of and responsible for its actions; (2) a subjected being, who submits to a higher authority, and is therefore stripped of all freedom except that of freely accepting his submission. This last note gives us the meaning of this ambiguity, which is merely a reflection of the effect which produces it: the individual *is interpellated as a (free) subject in order that he shall submit freely to the commandments of the Subject, i.e. in order that he shall (freely) accept his subjection, i.e. in order that he shall make the gestures and actions of his subjection ‘all by himself’ . There are no subjects except by and for their subjection.* (182).

Althusser is quite clear that there is neither writer nor reader encountering these claims outside of ideology. Yet an emancipatory yearning permeates the text. For the Sufi worshipping, of course,

the inverse is true. The fantasy is not escape from this predicament but ever fuller realization of it. This is the notion that one might willfully extinguish the will: *fana*, or annihilation. For Muslims more generally, Althusser's submission is the stated goal of the tradition. The extension of this logic to an analysis of adab relies on an operation of recognition – the subject must recognize the existence of a relationship in order that she be rightly positioned within it. The quotidian dimension of this involves relating not only to God or the state, but to the subjects and objects of one's immediate environs. Having adab, then, is to be constantly (and appropriately) hailed into all sorts of subjectivities – positions of right relations relative to other subjects (and objects).

As the discussion of hailing claimed, the purview of adab encompasses also things: there are right relations to rocks and trees, and right relations to procedures and processes. Thus technical means and approaches also have an adab. Alexandre Caeiro writes about the specific kinds of adab cultivated and inculcated in the Islamic juridical tradition. Writing in, "The Shifting Moral Universes of the Islamic Tradition of *Iftā`*: A Diachronic study of Four *Adab al-Fatwā* Manuals," Caeiro compares different *fatwa* (opinions concerning religious rights, obligations or prohibitions) manuals composed in discrete historical moments. Writing about the work of Ibn al-Salah al-Shahrazuri, he describes the tripartite division of the text: "the *shurūt al-muftī* section sets out the qualifications for practitioners; the *adab al-fatwā* is a discourse on the very technology of fatwas; and the *adab al-mustafī* instructs petitioners on the adequate manners and procedures" (664). Both the discussion of the technology – how *fatāwā* (plural of fatwa) relates to the world – and the discussion of the users (how subjects are to relate to the technology), are organized beneath the term adab. Of further significance, we can surmise from the very existence of these manuals that adab is not simply a matter of intuition. It requires



instruction, discourse, to emerge. Although our context is well removed from the intellectual world of 13<sup>th</sup> century Damascus (where al Shahrazuri wrote), the semantic range of adab as detailed by Caeiro is still present at IofC. In further confirmation of the enduring significance of adab, Caeiro turns to these texts to witness “transformations in conceptualizations of religious authority, subjectivity, and agency” (677). That such transformations would be articulated within the idiom of adab is precisely my point in focusing so doggedly on the term. As will be contended, there is a right way to do everything, even the wrong thing. There is thus also an “adab of adab.”

To say that has a person has adab is to assert that she or he acts in graceful consciousness of the rights incumbent upon her or himself with respect to these three axes of relationships: vertically to the divine, horizontally to the creation (including other subjects), and internally with the self (understood as a complex of soul, heart, appetite and reason). Such a consciousness entails recognition of hierarchal orderings (as per the epigraph opening this chapter), at that same time as that consciousness is repeatedly re-configured in the context of new relations. For example, the adab of a reading a book of Quranic commentary (a state of ritual purity; undivided attention; explicit intention to benefit) would be suddenly interrupted by the ringing of a doorbell. The arrival of a visitor shifts the ethical imperatives of relationality to this relationship: one is hailed into the adab of hosting by the appearance of a guest. The adab of the book, dominant before, is closed as the text itself is closed: the final right of the book is respected precisely by putting it to the side. Sometimes the adab of a thing demands that it not be engaged, since the “rightness” of the relationship also entails the “rightness” of timing.

Concerning the rights of others – one’s hierarchically-determined horizontal relations – adab is understood to be both relative and universal, reflecting values that obtain in a given

region or locality in concert with the standards dictated by the Lawgiver. Because of its insistence on a “right” within every relationship, adab is the locus of contest between seemingly competing norms. This variability allows for its deconfessionalized senses in modern Indonesian: the common use of adab for “civilization” (although there is of course a moral character to the concept of civilization). Adab becomes part of a constellation of related Arabic terms that enter into “neutral” Indonesian as sources of ethics. Grouped with related terms like *adat* (custom, etymologically, that which is done) and *urf* (custom, etymologically, that which is known), adab exerts its influence even on non-Muslims. Although, *adat* and *urf* are both supplementary sources of Islamic jurisprudence, the former at least now denotes non-Islamic local custom.<sup>131</sup> As discussed in the opening chapter of this project, what has come to be thought of as the opposition between *adat* and Islam had a particular colonial genealogy. The ubiquity of this supposed contest of laws and norms, in contemporary Indonesia, is the outcome of a sustained effort to abstract and purify culture and religion. Despite the Islamic genealogy of the very category of custom/culture/adat, it is rhetorically available as a “real” category, that is to say, a stable-and-pure description. When this category is brought into conflict with the category of Islam, a social demand for reconciliation emerges. How can ethics imagined to derive from “adat” continue to exert their force when they compete with those imagined to emerge from “Islam?” Adab becomes an intersubjective idiom for the negotiation (and re-assembly) of adat and Islam. Salient Islamic imperatives are articulated from within both adat and Islam, and adab allows for a conscientious response. Reconfiguring relationship with respect to the dictates of adab becomes one more technology of change – changing relations entail changing selves.

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<sup>131</sup> For a general introduction to the role of *urf*, see MZH Othman, “*Urf* as a Source of Islamic Law.” For a brief history of the incorporation of *urf* and *ada*, highlighting their initial adoption by Hanafi jurists, see Gideon Libson, “On the development of custom as a source of law in Islamic law.” For this tradition specific to the Malay world, see Madya Ishak’s “URF and Customs as Being Practised among the Malay Community.”

## **Adab and Muslim Sociality: You can hug her if you want to**

On joining the IofC community, I was struck by the plurality of relationships to Islamic practice and norms. Initiatives of Change is no longer affiliated with any denomination or faith tradition, and IofC aspires to emulate the inter-faith posture and theological openness of the parent movement. However IofC is a Muslim-dominated organization that engages in activities and advocacy from a principally Muslim perspective. And so the lack of isomorphism within this close community is somewhat surprising— one member (Abdul Fatah from above) described his first impression of the organization: “what I felt was just this family-ness (*kekeluargaan*; kinship) that was really, really awesome at IofC, a family-ness that was really pious (*sholeh*; *saleh*, pious but also wholesome), you know what I mean.”<sup>132</sup> As my friend struggled to articulate what drew him to IofC, he identified both the “kin-like” relationships of the organization and the moral stature of its membership. Here was a pious family formed by volitional association, despite the highly evident differences in the ways the membership conceived of Islam. This plurality of postures included varying commitments to the very idea of being Muslim. Given the vast array of dispositions towards normative Sunni Islamic doctrines and practices evinced within IofC, it’s difficult to hear this one member’s characterization of the organization as *sholeh* and to imagine the ethical self-cultivation we have come to associate with the concept of piety. It seems that the wholesomeness and familial atmosphere of IofC are collective responses to moral injunctions other than those typically organized by piety. What my friend referred to as *sholeh* may make more sense within a discussion of adab.

Stripped of my deliberately elliptical language: along almost any axis of the conventional proxies for piety (devotional rectitude, supererogatory worship, self-policed chastity and

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<sup>132</sup> Interview with Abdul Fatah. “Yang saya rasakan adalah hanya kekeluargaan yang sangat sangat bagus di IofC, kekeluargaan yang sangat soleh gitu, dan segala macam.”

modesty, sartorial choices and their presumed communicative content, and so forth), IofC members were diverse. Negotiations between and among their various choices were carried out with sensitivity, tact and only ever the occasional jarring or abrasive failure (see my miscue below, as well as the anecdote closing this chapter). The longer I interacted with IofC the more I came to see it as an experimental space. Participants in the organization were trying out different models of change, different versions of a self, and different manners of sociality. Put in the language of interpellation, IofC members were learning to recognize new and different hailings. The fluidity of the subjectivities coupled with the complexity of the social forms required a seeming surfeit of adab. IofC adopts the language of “safe space” as a self-characterization, and for many IofC participants the organization provides just that. Meant as a place free from disapprobation – recall that IofC practices placed a premium on self-disclosure – the safety of the space was broadly construed. It was an environment where the membership could explore different social orderings, different responses to different hails, different ways of being Muslim, Indonesian, human.

In the common settings of the organization (weekly meetings, social events at the Secretariat, Youth Camps) IofC members explored different models of personal and public behavior, including those at variance with the norms associated with the UIN community, their families of origins and their communities of residence.<sup>133</sup> Although formally a “non-religious” (although not secular) space, as mentioned above, IofC Indonesia is a Muslim organization.<sup>134</sup>

The currently liberal humanist bent of the parent Initiatives of Change movement, coupled with

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<sup>133</sup> Recall that the vast majority of IofC members are or were affiliated with the State Islamic University Jakarta (UIN).

<sup>134</sup> I am here following the distinction between an Islamic and a Muslim organization – the former incorporating the Prophetic vision of community into its institutional forms, and the latter being characterized by a preponderance of Muslims and associated social norms. As we have seen in terms of the national project of Indonesia and the post-Independence doctrine of Pancasila, non-Islamic should not be read as “secular.” Instead, the ecumenical character of non-religious organizations in Indonesia often reflects deconfessionalized Islamic principles.

its historical rhetoric of emancipatory evangelism, require reconciliation with some of the prescriptive values of Sunni Islamic teaching. This discussion involves a detour into some of the signs of “Islam-ness” that frequently function as a proxy in scholarly discussions for devotional rectitude or piety: how people dress, how they touch, what greetings they employ. This means addressing the signifying content of clothing, cross-gender communication and contact, and a host of interactional practices. The argument is that where some might see a dearth of piety within the IofC family we might plausibly recognize the operations of adab. Highlighting the role of adab in negotiating among different ethical commitments allows us to discuss Muslim performances and behaviors without subjecting them to our evaluation of their Islamic legitimacy. We can leave aside the discussion (except where it emerges organically) of how “Islamic” an instance of Muslim sociality *really* is, a dispassionate posture difficult in analyses of piety (where even the phenomenological position tacitly entails assessment of others’ interior states).

At IofC I observed no abiding consensus on proper adab as it pertained to cross-gender interactions – different members acted in accordance with their own visions of preferred relational dispositions, delicately negotiated alongside the desires of their interlocutor. It was an incredibly fluid and dynamic environment. Long-time members appeared to operate intuitively, meeting their peers where they were, so to speak. Their flexibility was a mark of their adab. They bent towards the unique standards of different individuals while simultaneously encouraging their fellow members to reciprocate. And in most instances, the membership did, such that attending an IofC event was also to witness a cascade of different models of gendered sociality. First-time visitors, including this author, were easily confused. By default I aspired to the most

“respectful” attitude and practices.<sup>135</sup> My hope was to manage the gendered terrain of social relations with the absolute minimum of awkwardness.<sup>136</sup> The quixotic nature of my approach to this ambition was swiftly revealed to me. Reflecting later on the moment described in the following brief anecdote (memorable to me, no doubt, because of the chagrin experienced within it), I began to recognize the operation of adab.

In Indonesia, handshakes have come in for sustained scrutiny in recent years.<sup>137</sup> “Western-style” handshakes are rejected not only as non-Indonesian, but especially as un-Islamic. This is even more the case where the parties to a handshake are different genders. In its place, several different cross-gender *salaman* (greetings) have risen to the fore. One can clasp one’s hands together in a prayer position and nod, although this seems excessively formal in many situations. The current popular alternative appears to be a meeting of hands raised in

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<sup>135</sup> It is indicative of my naivety that I characterized the most “conservative” posture as the most “respectful” – this misrecognition is itself representative of a failure of adab, an error-strewn misreading of the values at stake in a relational field. The classical Sufi manuals on adab discussed by Daphna Ephrat in *Spiritual Wayfarers* lead her to conclude that, “the acquisition of *adab* is described as more important and praiseworthy than the accumulation of knowledge (*ilm*) or prolonged engagement in ascetic practices” (97). Dr. Sadiq, the scholar cited above in our discussion of *ikhlas*, informed me that it was better to break a voluntary fast than to draw public acclaim for it: that even one’s piety should be protected from this-worldly entanglements like recognition. Ostentatiously refusing to touch women, then, was reflective of deficient adab: Insofar as I tried not to offend other humans, I was subjecting myself to the wrong metric (human approval). Simultaneously, if I did offend others (in either direction) I demonstrated my lack of adab.

<sup>136</sup> The notion that the most austere choice was the right choice brought me in for ridicule on other occasions as well. Just as stubbornly insisting on fasting, when one’s hosts are not, demonstrates a lack of adab with the hosts, refusing to avail oneself of divinely granted dispensations demonstrates a lack of adab with God. At various points, while travelling, traditionally-educated companions rebuked my intransigence on not “joining” (*jam*) worship cycles, and “shortening” (*qasr*) worship cycles. You must have adab with Allah, a friend chided me – God loves those who exercise the options given them. Adab was far more important than mechanical obedience to an impoverished understanding of the tradition.

<sup>137</sup> Public discussion of handshakes is most often occasioned by the performance of a celebrity or the arrival of a foreign leader. For instance, when Michelle Obama visited Indonesia, along with President Obama, in November 2010, she was greeted by the then-president of *Partai Keadilan Sejahtera* (PKS), Indonesia’s reformist Muslim political party affiliated with Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood. The fact that Tifatul, PKS’s president, shook Michelle Obama’s hand set the Indonesian internet alight. See *Republika Online*’s coverage of that minor tempest: “Salaman Tifatul-Michelle Masih Jadi Gunjingan di Dunia Maya.” (“The Greeting between Tifatul and Michelle Continues to be Gossiped about Online”). As a side note, the Indonesian term for “online,” or “the Internet,” *dunia maya*, is a fascinating compound, merging the Sanskritic concept of illusory reality (*maya*) with the Arabo-Islamic category of transient, contingent, this-worldly existence (*dunia*). To say something takes place in *dunia maya* is to smuggle in a duplicated theological notion of impermanence – the “virtual” world of a virtual world, where virtual is understood in its sense of “functionally or apparently true” (but not ultimately true).

prayer position. For me, this entailed greeting women with hands pressed together, extended before me, without quite meeting the similarly extended hands of the other party (the slightly less formal variant involves allow the fingers to overlap with those of your interlocutor before drawing them back towards your heart, although this cancels one's state of ritual purity or *wudhu*, required for performance of worship cycles). This particular greeting, described to me as originally Sundanese (and differing from the Javanese *sembah* that usually involves one party adopting a more humbled posture and marking relative social status), has emerged as a general strategy in contemporary Indonesia for negotiating cross-gender contact. One sees it on TV, in offices and houses across the country. My adoption of this strategy frequently met a favorable response. This courtesy was usually appreciated at IofC too, given the variety of dispositions in play amongst the membership. At one of the first meetings I attended, however, it was met very differently.

I was introduced to a young woman (Dewi from above) and gently extended my pressed palms. She stared at me with mock seriousness and proffered a single hand primed for a handshake. The friend, Abdul Fatah, making the introduction reached his arm around her back, grabbed her far shoulder and pushed her towards me. "Why so stuffy [*kok kaku gitu*]?" he exclaimed, "you can even hug her if you want to [*dipeluk aja boleh*]." It was a minor act of social charity of the sort I became accustomed to – clearly I should have known that this was someone who privileged interactional equity over the maintenance of gendered boundaries of touch. There was some way that this disposition was being communicated that a more careful observer would have been attuned to. (And no doubt, embarrassment is what allows for the clarity of my recollection of this very minor incident). Like the vast majority of Muslim women who participated in IofC, this new acquaintance wore a *hijab* and what is usually called modest

dress. So the signifying content of clothing could not have alerted me (I'm told, even two decades ago, dress communicated much more clearly concerning desired modes of social intercourse). Furthermore Abdul Fatah, the friend responsible for the introduction (and he made hundreds for me over the course of my research) was clearly approving of a similar courtesy when meeting other persons, including his sister, mother and girlfriend. But what was frequently understood as graciousness here figured as distancing, for reasons wholly obscure to me. Not only distancing, but rigid, stiff, unsociable – *kaku*. I did not possess the adab appropriate to the situation. What deserves mention here, however, was not just my personal failure to evince adab in meeting Dewi. It is the flexibility of Abdul Fatah in negotiating between his commitments to moral conduct and the values of his female interlocutor. It wasn't hypocrisy that let him clasp her – it was his response to an ethical hailing that *contingently* outweighed his felt obligation to maintain ideal gendered separation. And for Dewi, this comfort with touch was part of a political project of gender egalitarianism that she understood in explicitly Islamic terms (this latter fact only emerged much later in discussion).

The minor social awkwardness of the above episode is suggestive of the confusion concerning appropriate behavior that proliferated following the collapse of the New Order government. Partly this is a question of media. Despite the much-remarked Islamic turn of President Suharto's final decade in power, the rapid expansion of Islamic media began in earnest only with the relaxation of press rules initiated by his successor B.J. Habibie. The emergence of websites, magazines and especially television shows advocating particular visions of Islamic social ethics has fed this confusion. This has occurred in concert with the developments analyzed in *Expressing Islam*, Greg Fealy and Sally White's edited volume exploring this changing cultural and commercial landscape of contemporary Muslim Indonesia. As Carla Jones



characterizes it in an article addressed to one element of this new marketplace, “Materializing Piety”: “The proliferation and the variety of these goods and services index how the elaboration of minute, daily techniques of ethical living and cultivation in contemporary Indonesia intersect with the promise of religion, placing virtue, and its anxieties, at the junction of religion and commerce” (617). Anecdotally, I’m informed that ethnic-, regional-, class-, and education-determined norms of cross-gender greetings obtained until relatively recently. Which is to say, adab was very much relative along multiple axes into the 1990s (despite the existence of a nationalized set of norms endlessly re-performed in the context of state functions). In 2010, in many the circles in which I moved, this situation had largely been displaced by efforts to bring sociality into conformity with what were imagined to be consistent and unitary Islamic standards: something like the category of “piety.” The IofC Secretariat stood out as a place where adab was still being actively negotiated – a space disconnected from institutional and environmental cues that re-inscribed a singular ideal of social intercourse. It was genuinely uncertain where the privileged standard lay, and the ease with which many members operated in this space belied the supposed achievement of uniformity beyond its walls. This first introduction to adab as a mediator of piety and relational dispositions was to continue in other social settings during my fieldwork.

### **Adab and Hospitality: You must be so tired!**

The complexities of the overlapping ethical mandates to be god-conscious (*bertakwa*) and to possess right relations, or civilization, (*beradab*) are especially visible in the realms of sociality governed by familial idiom. Islam provides clear definitions of family relationships, with attendant rights and responsibilities. Unmediated cross-gender contact is conventionally

limited to *muhrim* (Ar. *mahram*; those whom one is prohibited from marrying),<sup>138</sup> the juridical category of people covered by an incest taboo. In contemporary Indonesia, discussion of *muhrim/mahram* often concern not just sexual relationships but bodily coverings and proper fraternization. Here Indonesian linguistic conventions must be reconciled with Islamic juridical categories. These negotiations are differently enunciated, often under the auspices of adab. Some elements of this process have been amply observed: although analyses of fictive kinship have largely disappeared from the ethnographic canon, attention to kin terms and pronouns remains a frequent point of entry to scholarship on Indonesia, Indonesian, and the many vernaculars present in the archipelago.<sup>139</sup> As has been often observed, Indonesia has a wealth of pronouns, alongside a rich tradition of pronoun-avoidance.

A key window into sociality is language – what sorts of relationships are constituted with respect to what sorts of terms. At IofC, terms like *gue* (I) and *loe* (you) (both “national” slang terms derived from Betawi vernacular) were used in concert with “correct Indonesian” terms like *saya* (I) and *kakak* (elder sibling), nationalist (but also Sumatran Malay) *bung* or

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<sup>138</sup> The “wrong” vowels of *muhrim* (in Arabic, one in the ritual state of dress for performing pilgrimage) have been widely criticized in Indonesia. Nevertheless, it is still more common to hear “*muhrim*” rather than “*mahram*,” where the latter legal designation is intended.

<sup>139</sup> Errington in *Shifting Languages*, especially pages 92-97 is instructive in this regard, as he contrasts Javanese and Indonesian. Another example would be Rita Kipp’s “Terms for Kith and Kin,” which is a critical revision of key scholarship addressed to Karo Batak kin terms. See also Greg Flannery, “Open and Closed Systems.” If, as we have already mentioned in the prior chapter, Indonesian is imagined to be readily objectifiable, this is even more apparent when situated alongside vernacular languages, as Zane Goebel argues in, “When do Indonesians Speak Indonesian?” The importance of family terms for social organization is of course, widely remarked. Early in *Talking to the Enemy*, in a section addressed to *jihadis* in Sulawesi, Scott Atran reports his revelation that, “It’s no accident that nearly all religious and political movements express allegiance through the idiom of family... Nearly all major ideological movements, political or religious, require the subordination or assimilation of the real family (genetic kinship) to the larger imagined community of ‘brothers and sisters’” (13). This then leads him to the strange conclusion that, “Indeed, the complete subordination of biological loyalty to loyalty for the cultural cause of the Ikhwan, the ‘Brotherhood’ of the Prophet, is the original meaning of the word *Islam*, ‘submission’” (ibid). Aside from the suspect claim that submission is primarily about a “brotherhood” rather than god, one might also suggest that *ummah*, “community” or “nation,” with its speculative etymology linking it *umm*, mother would fit this argument more closely. Although Frederick Denny in “Meaning of Ummah in the Qur’an” contests this folk etymology (as do classical Arabic grammarians), it is frequently provided as an explanation for the “family” of Islam.

Jakartan *bang* (elder brother), English *you*, Arabic *ana* (I) and *antum* (you) alongside Indo-Javanese slang like *masbro* (a fascinating conjunction of the Javanese term for elder brother with the English “bro,” an ironic joining popularized through television shows). Rather than a strict reflection of structured relations, term selection often seemed to evince aesthetic dimensions of style – performances that sometimes bore clear social markings and sometimes served to demonstrate the speaker’s virtuosic mastery of address. The role of code-switching in stressing affinity and intimacy was clearest when a speaker interpellated her interlocutor with a term of address from her most comfortable vernacular. Employing vernacular terms of address – particularly with an interlocutor with a different ethno-linguistic heritage – was a way to establish and maintain immediacy within relationships. Thus *mas* from a Javanese speaker was meant with respect that showed closeness, and *akang* from an individual with a Sundanese background could stress incorporation rather than status (or more precisely, incorporation into vernacular hierarchies of status, rather than social distance). This was hardly a unique feature of IofC – these linguistic possibilities found similar expression in other social settings across the archipelago.<sup>140</sup> Particular to the IofC context, however, were the moral overlays of family (and “family group”) derived from the Buchman-inspired parent movement. Family in Initiatives of Change discourse was the primary locus of moral re-direction, not just social intimacy. The characterization of IofC as a “pious family,” voiced by Abdul Fatah above, reflects the

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<sup>140</sup> In fact, this possibility is where Henk Maier finds his title for his survey of Malay Literature, *We are playing relatives*, drawn from the “fiat kinship” Hang Tuah assumes in the Malay epic, perhaps as a matter of convenience, perhaps out of adab. In that text, Maier describes a nineteenth century colonial process of linguistic purification, which we might imagine in concert with the efforts to stabilize Islam and *adat*: “In tune with nineteenth-century European idea, scholars and administrators on the Peninsula and the Islands operated from the assumption that a distinct language accompanies a distinct culture, and a distinct culture characterizes a distinct nation” (11). This linking of language to people was the back of terminological stabilization: “*adat* and *bahasa* [language, suite of interactional behaviors]: the two terms were given an aura of authenticity and solidity which, subverting the daily experience of fluidity, increased the anxieties already widely experienced in the area that was taken to be the heartland of the Malays” (8).

importance of “family” as site of moral development. But even outside the organizational norms of IofC, familial idiom remained a site for related negotiations of *takwa* and *adab*.

Early in my fieldwork, I traveled with Abdul Fatah to visit his family in Bogor. The hillside city now marks the southern boundary of the Jakarta metro area, but once upon a time it was considered part of the Sunda heartland, a crasser cousin to refined Bandung. We arrived at his house in a pleasant middle-class housing development relatively early in the evening. I was welcomed by his mother and two sisters, as well as a female cousin who was staying with them while attending the pesantren where Abdul Fatah’s mother still worked. We had eaten en route to Abdul Fatah’s home but had also picked up food for dinner for the rest of his family. I was expecting to eat again, but suddenly Abdul Fatah became very insistent that I must be tired. His mother concurred, and I was directed upstairs to the concrete loft where we would be sleeping. I wasn’t tired, it wasn’t late and I naively missed the impulse behind this particular courtesy, so I resisted longer than was appropriate. After I finally acquiesced, I followed Abdul Fatah upstairs and dutifully began to approximate a tired state. It was now clear that being tired was important and I did my best to oblige. Once I was sufficiently “sleepy,” he took leave of me and returned downstairs to his waiting family. As I sat, alone and in the dark, on the foam mattress of my friend’s bedroom I gradually recognized what had transpired. My friend was only in a position to visit his family every several weeks and the obligations of hosting would sharply curtail his and his family’s normal interactions. My being tired allowed them the option of a more relaxed chance to catch up (and to not feed me, a seemingly major slight!). Additionally, since both his mother and sisters wore *hijab*, my being upstairs allowed them to relax their standards of modesty as well. It was this latter fact that focused my attention on the ethical dimension of *adab*.

Over several visits spread across a matter of months, I got to know Abdul Fatah's family better and the formalities governing host-guest relations began to be replaced with the manners appropriate to family interactions. Once I was very superficially folded into an extended family relationship (marked by the Sundanese term of address for elder brother, *akang*), the obligations of modesty began to be experienced and understood differently – first my friend's sisters, and eventually his mother, no longer felt compelled to be fully covered in my presence. There is a cynical, and simplistic, reading of these events – their house was warm, head coverings can be impractical, logistical exigencies impelled an abandonment of socially-enforced but lightly held moral obligations, and so on. It is definitely possible that Abdul Fatah and his family's commitment to normative Islamic values are only partial and still subject to the intrusions of *adat* (imagined as custom external to Islam), convenience or personal hypocrisy. A more interesting explanation that reflects the sort of account I could elicit from my friend, however, foregrounds the role of *adab* in this encounter. Being Muslim, and properly so, was very important to Abdul Fatah and his family. Being hospitable was not understood as a (non-Islamic) *adat* survival, but as a fundamentally Islamic injunction. Insofar as hospitality was conceived of as Sundanese, Sunda itself was seen as Islamic as well. This put the emphasis on hospitality into potential conflict with notion of ideal gendered separation. The resolution was found in *adab* – the initial *adab* that insisted I be “tired” and the eventual *adab* that I became “akang Saul.” This allowed for a familial *adab* of hosting that *felt* more acceptable than the formalities imagined to inhere to the reception of a foreign visitor.

Although certain fundamental facts had not changed – I was not now somehow *mahram/muhrim* – clearly other sorts of hosting obligations had risen to the fore. When I pressed my friend about this, he refused to entertain an opposition between “indigenous Sundanese”

social values and prescriptive Islamic norms. Rather, he made recourse to an argument about *adab*. Thus even as Islamic norms are formally enunciated within legal categories of family, *adab* demands that social interactions adopt an overlapping idiom of family. The scholarly focus on piety, meanwhile, has tended to privilege juridical discourse as the final arbiter of the boundaries of Islam. Understood in this narrow framework, the lack of maintenance of gendered norms is a mark of ill-discipline: deficient piety. *Adab* allows us to see how the particular hailing of an ethical injunction does not abrogate or replace scripturally-authorized norms, it just temporarily obtains, a local instantiation of the universal Islamic principles of mercy, justice and moral conduct. *Adab* precludes a conflict between the “letter” and the “spirit” of the law. It is a pragmatic approach that responds to one, the other, or both depending on the immediate context. Recognizing how and when to do so is one meaning of “having” *adab*. This is what it means to be “civilized.”

Family is significant to this discussion of *adab* in a further sense as well. Throughout Indonesia, one encounters the prevailing injunction to maintain the ties of kinship. Typically this involves an invocation of *silaturahmi* or *silaturahmi* (both Indonesianized transliterations of the Arabic terms *silah* [connect] and *rahim* [womb]). There are different common formulations, including *menjaga silaturahmi* (guard the ties of kinship), *menjalin silaturahmi* (“weave” the ties of kinship), and in the negative, *jangan memutuskan silaturahmi* (don’t sever the ties of kinship). All of these derive from abundant *hadith* that attest to the importance of maintaining relations with ones kin (often articulated in the context of the non-believing kin of some of the Prophet’s companions).<sup>141</sup> In contemporary Indonesian, this compound “ties of kinship,” functions also as

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<sup>141</sup> Perhaps the two most well-known of these are recorded in Bukhari, in the book of *Adab*. The first has the Prophet detailing the path to Paradise: “you should worship Allah and join none in worship with Him: You should offer prayers perfectly, give obligatory charity (Zakat), and keep good relations with your kith and kin” (5983). The

a verb: *silaturahmi ke* denotes “paying a visit to” (upholding the bonds of kin) someone.<sup>142</sup> This someone can be deceased, and thus this phrase becomes another term for minor pilgrimages or *ziarah*, devotional acts performed at the place of interment (or symbol of interment) of a saintly figure or ancestor. Thus to *silaturahmi ke Gus Dur* denotes the act of visiting the grave of the former president at Pesantren Tebuireng, his family’s Islamic school in East Java. To do so one need not assert genetic kinship, and thus the “bonds of kin” became a cognate for the social rights exerted within *adab*. Every return trip to Bogor, visiting the family of Abdul Fatah, became about maintaining the “bonds of kin,” and before my return to the United States I was admonished not to “sever” them.

The importance placed on *silaturahmi* also illustrates how *adab* can become a medium of change. There is an abiding concept of change, in the Islamic tradition, attributable to “association.” Rather than through striving, one can be changed by associating oneself with people of enhanced spiritual stature – chiefly, saints, lineal descendants of the Prophet, and accomplished scholars. Attested repeatedly in *ahadith*, this derives from the concept that in the life to come, associations made in this-world will continue to obtain. Thus not through effort but via grace, associating oneself to spiritually significant individuals can be sufficient to enhance one’s own spiritual standing. By asserting “bonds of kin” through practices of *silaturahmi* one can cultivate such efficacious associations. Constituting new relations and paying the dues appropriate to existing relations – both elements of *adab* – becomes a vehicle for transforming the self. The mechanism behind the attainment of change through association is divine mercy, a

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second is more concise, and framed in the negative: “Narrated Jubair bin Mut’im: That he heard the Prophet (ﷺ) saying, ‘The person who severs the bond of kinship will not enter Paradise’” (5984).

<sup>142</sup> The *KBBI* defines *silaturahmi* as “bonds of companionship” (*tali persahabatan*), adding parenthetically, “siblinghood” (*persaudaraan*). Thus, elsewhere in Indonesia I’m told that *silaturahmi* is the term used for a social gathering during the feast that follows *Ramadhan* – an ideal time to maintain those bonds.

spillover effect of the grace accorded to higher-ranked individuals. Recognizing who has this rank is part of the hierarchal dimension of adab, necessary to activate the potentials of association.<sup>143</sup>

### **Adab and Others: You just can't do that!**

Adab allowed for the negotiation between Initiatives of Change discourses on moral transformation and the authorizing tradition of Islam. Under the auspices of adab, relationships became a key medium for affecting change. When adab failed, or rather, when the mutual recognition of adab was not accomplished, the results could be startlingly confrontational. Degrees of foreignness entailed new domains of adab, not all of which could be handled as adroitly as handshakes and hugs. The extended visit of an “Action for Life” (AFL) team from Initiatives of Change demonstrated this potential. AFL teams, the inheritors of the small mission cells sent out by Frank Buchman so long ago, are (typically) multi-ethnic small groups that sally forth to share the message of Initiatives of Change. Although the AFL program has been discontinued, AFL teams were convened on five occasions between 2005 and 2011.<sup>144</sup> The team that visited during my fieldwork had members from the Indian Kashmir, Lebanon, Australia, Vietnam, Kenya and the Ukraine. They were a spirited group, several of whom were already acquainted with senior IofC leadership from trainings in India or at Youth Camps in Malaysia and the Philippines. The AFL team brought a specific set of workshop materials and participated in a variety of IofC outreach efforts over the course of their residence in Indonesia. As the

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<sup>143</sup> From one perspective, the practice of sending *shalawat* (Indonesian *shalawat* or *sholawat*; prayers and blessings) on the Prophet is a part of this logic of association. “Sending” is something of a misnomer, too: praise hymns dedicated to the Prophet are actually supplications to God, where God is the agent of the blessing requested for the Prophet. By asking God to bless the Prophet, the worshipper honors the adab of both relationships – with God and with the Prophet, in the process associating herself with the personage of the Prophet and thus, ideally, being gathered in the Prophet’s company in the life to come. This is moral attainment understood as taking place not through “deeds” (although the request for blessings is a behavioral action in this world), but through grace.

<sup>144</sup> For a clarifying first-person account of AFL participation, see Mike Mukia’s “My Experiment with Truth.”



beneficiaries of further Initiatives of Change training, they came to inspire, to educate and to bring the moral transformations of different national iterations of the movement into conformity with the global message. Initiatives of Change, according to itself, is now principally a vehicle for conflict resolution, the promotion of peace, and attendant moral transformations. It is important to the larger movement that the disparate activities of its many affiliates conform, at least in broad strokes, to these objectives.

Two incidents, where IofC met the representatives of Initiatives of Change, stand out. One is so minor it can be mentioned in passing: the Lebanese volunteer of the AFL team was incredulous, and then critical, of the frequency of *assalamu'alaikum* as a greeting within IofC. In Arabic-speaking Lebanon, he informed his Indonesian audience, the non-confessional *marhaban* is the preferred greeting for a religiously-mixed audience. This provoked some surprise amongst his audience: how were they supposed to respond to the ethical injunction to greet Muslim brothers and sisters appropriately (one of the “rights” a Muslim has is to be properly greeted by other Muslims)? The notion that an Arabic speaker would be other than Muslim, while superficially obvious, cut deeply against prevailing language ideologies that view Arabic as the medium of Islamic authenticity. The Indonesian compromise on the issue of greetings, achieved on a national scale in the 1990s, is to string several together (*assalamu'alaikum* [peace upon you, in Arabicized Indonesian], *selamat sore* [good afternoon, in Indonesian], *salam sejahtera* [prosperous greetings, in Indonesian], a speaker might begin).<sup>145</sup> It is up to the audience to determine which interpellation applies. The multiplicity of “hailings,” in fact, is an important feature of Indonesian Muslim discourse – it cuts to the heart of what I am exploring under the sign of *adab*. Different relationships operate in accordance with different rules. Recognizing both

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<sup>145</sup> Of course, given the hybrid character of Malay and Indonesian, all three of these greetings are etymologically linked to *salam* in Arabic. Nevertheless, they signify differently – one the language of Islam, one the language of deconfessionalized business, and media, and one in the language of nationalistic organizational appeal.

the relationships and the rules occurs through adab. Thus Islamically-significant hierarchies of meaning are maintained while nationalistically encouraged egalitarianism is performed. Simultaneous address, whatever real exclusions it might constitute, is imagined as a smooth resolution to the problem of multiplicity and pluralism.

Far more troubling than greetings, however, was the spectacular failure of adab that occurred during the course of an otherwise typical weekly gathering. This failure was produced by competing agentive models of change, brought into irreconcilable relief, between an Indonesian facilitator and parts of his AFL audience. IofC's weekly gatherings played host to the core institutions of check-ins and quiet time. They were also a venue for IofC participants to educate, edify and enlighten their fellow members.<sup>146</sup> One particular week, with the AFL team in attendance, an IofC facilitator named Mabe took charge of the gathering. Mabe was excited to share a particular technology of change he had been studying in another context (that technology, and that context, are the focus of the subsequent chapter of this project – namely, hypnotherapy and Kahfi Motivator School). Mabe didn't tell us what he was doing. There was no notion of consent. Instead he simply dimmed the lights, and in parallel languages (English and Indonesia) attempted to perform a mass hypnotic induction. Reading a guided imagery script, Mabe directed those in attendance in a program of progressive relaxation. Once the desired state had been attained, Mabe changed course from relaxation towards contemplation of guilt, shame and personal moral failings. In our relaxed state, he encouraged us to ruminate on our shared history of disappointing our parents, failing to respect them, and neglecting their rights. Twenty minutes into this process Mabe directed us to express our guilt (many in the gathering were already sobbing) and somewhat cumbersomely tried to absolve said guilt by repeatedly invoking the

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<sup>146</sup> Reflecting exclusively aspirational character rather than experiential acumen, I offered workshops on time management.

divine capacity for forgiveness. Then the lights came on and the IofC practice of “sharing” (another genre of frank emotional disclosure) began. “Sharing” meant open discussion of current experiences, often those provoked by an IofC exercise.

One IofC member shared how she really felt, powerfully, her sense of neglect to her parents. Her experience with Mabe’s ministrations, she claimed, would motivate her to reach out and re-engage with them. Before any more testimonies of this sort were shared, however, the AFL team member from Australia spoke up. Peter was incensed. He found the exercise coercive. Manipulative. Poorly executed. Intrusive. Totally inappropriate. Amateurish. A mockery of the moral awakenings cultivated at Initiatives of Change. Simplistic. Offensive. His indictment was sharp, explicit and unrelenting. The Indonesian IofC president spoke next. He explained that what had happened was “culture shock.” Mabe, he claimed, was using a locally appropriate emotional discourse that Peter didn’t understand. His appeal to cultural relativity fell on deaf ears. Peter spoke up again: no, this was not a function of cultural difference. This was inappropriate in every context. Now it was Mabe’s turn to defend himself. He weakly repeated the claims of the IofC President. I tried to shrink into the wall, terrified that someone would ask me to arbitrate between whiteness and Indonesian-ness, a cultural translation I was imagined to have entry-level insights into by dint of speaking passable Indonesian. Eyes turned to me, but Peter preempted my participation. This kind of intrusive emotional blackmail (his words!) was totally unacceptable in Initiatives of Change practice. As a result, he demanded an apology. The apology he received, however, was yet one more re-statement of essentialized cultural difference, an apology for not bridging a cultural divide. Tensely, awkwardly, uncomfortably, the weekly gathering was brought to a close.

From my (not disinterested)<sup>147</sup> perspective, several forces were implicated in the spectacular failure of the above interaction. Certainly culturally salient notions of access to affect were at work (acceptance of emotional reasoning is predicated on consent in the dominant Euro-American model of agentive change). The clumsiness (insistence on guilt) of this particular performance also contributed to its abrasive reception by some of those in attendance (the Kenyan member of the AFL Team, Medi, and Nur from IofC expressed shared concerns). But the stakes were sharpest in terms of the adab of change. Initiatives of Change, in its earliest Buchman-directed instantiation, required an individual's assent to divine grace. God changed those who opened themselves to God, clearing away the moral wreckage of past misdeeds. Seen from this individual-centered tradition of change, Mabe arrogated that agency to himself. From Mabe's perspective, however, moral intervention could be legitimately spurred from the outside. Still reliant on a divine agent to affect change, Mabe employed a concept of change that allowed him to access moral interiors. These interiors were not the private possessions of atomized individuals, but collective properties with broadly shared features (evidenced by the uniformity of guilt ascribed to them). Adab demanded that actors maintain right intersubjective relations. When there was not a reciprocal re-positioning, however, sociality collapsed into acrimony. The sudden juxtaposition of different agentive understandings of change proved to be a gap too vast for the social logics of adab to bridge. Into this gap the adab of mistakes – the socially adroit way to elide failure – was incommensurate with the intransigence of one interlocutor. Adab allows for multiplicity, but there are some positions too divergent to be reconciled. The failure of adab was

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<sup>147</sup> When this event occurred, I was already partway into my study of Islamic hypnotherapy at Kahfi Motivator School (Chapter 4). Mabe, a cohort behind me at Kahfi, was mimicking the technique of the instructor at Kahfi, but was not yet "authorized" to engage in hypnotherapeutic practice, since he hadn't studied it. Thus I could fault him for a technical violation of adab (accessing unauthorized knowledge) while remaining agnostic about his particular performance (which was rather amateurish). Peter's complaints made sense to me, although I didn't feel the visceral address of Mabe's ministrations, so I didn't have the experience of feeling an interior violation.

collective – Peter’s inability to bend himself to Mabe, but also Mabe’s infelicitious assessment of his audience.

Adab, too, can be weakened by its explicit invocation. Bringing adab into discourse always places adab, as a source of right conduct, in a subordinate position relative to canonical sources of social ethics.<sup>148</sup> The Qur’an and *ahadith* clearly stipulate the appropriate boundaries of gendered sociality as well as the *real* impossibility of non-Divine agentive action. Adab did not constitute an alternative or a suspension of those mandates. If I asked someone directly, the “right” answer she or he provided would adhere to those explicit norms. But in the local pragmatics of an interaction, one could be hailed by the immediate ethics of adab. In those instances, sensitive recognition of the rights and needs of the other were also sources of prescriptive ethics. Adab involved micro-alignments of self-and-other that facilitated lasting changes. The relational rights exerted in social interaction allowed an individual to change through these micro-alignments. Instead of the sudden awakenings of broader IofC discourse (and attempted by Mabe above), these were moral transformations of a local character. This is the “educational” variety of Adab excerpted at the outset of this chapter. It is the instilling of recognition and rights in the souls of individuals. Lost in discussions that allow only for the relationship between the worshipper and the divine (the reductive reading of piety), the “adab of change” is both prescriptive and descriptive. It is the right way to attempt change and a social means through which change is achieved.

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<sup>148</sup> I am sure that at Abdul Fatah’s family home in Bogor, had I mentioned my non-*mahram* status, the head-scarves would have returned, for precisely this reason.

## Chapter 4

### Kahfi Motivator School and Islamic Hypnotherapy

Patience with a limit isn't patience.<sup>149</sup>

-Tubagus Wahyudi

#### The Grounds of Hypnosis

The preceding chapters introduced Initiatives of Change Indonesia, one of the many organizations formed or revitalized in the post-Reformasi era. The moral emphasis of IofC is broadly shared across diverse groups, although the particular features that mark IofC are unique: the four moral absolutes, quiet time, Youth Camp. This chapter addresses Islamic Hypnotherapy, as taught and practiced at Kahfi Motivator School. The curriculum of Kahfi Motivator School (Kahfi) is allied with IofC in its faith in agentive change and individual moral refinement, but they are vehicles for divergent aspirations. Islamic hypnotherapy (IH) is only one element of the Kahfi curriculum, although it looms large in students' accounts of the institution. IH, as elaborated here, sits at the nexus of motivational speaking, a particular Indonesian iteration of a more global popular psychology and a sustained effort to reimagine Islamic epistemologies. It departs considerably from IofC in terms of how change is imagined and attempted. IofC participants attend to *adab* as they try to host divine agency. *Adab* remains important at Kahfi,

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<sup>149</sup> *Sabar yang punya batas, bukan sabar.* The speaker of this aphorism, the founder and lead instructor of the Kahfi Motivator School, the institution at the heart of this chapter, was fond of making such utterances. Beyond its pithy concision, Om Bagus was gesturing towards the absolute horizon of divine qualities – *As-Sabur*, the Ever-Patient, is the 99<sup>th</sup> name/attribute of God, in the conventional listing of Divine names. Hypnosis, in the hands of a skilled practitioner, brought the subject of hypnosis ever-closer to the realization of these perfect attributes. Sometimes this same thought was expressed in the formulation “*Sabar itu ada batasnya. Batas sabar adalah liang lahad*” (Patience has a limit. The limit of patience is the grave).

but the role of the mediator (hypnotist) is front and center. The subjects of IH open their subconscious to the ministrations of a skilled practitioner. With divine license, he changes the subject of hypnosis. Change comes from without, as well as within, in both instances. But the taste of change varies considerably. For IH, the hypnotist makes change and the hypnotized subject has change – these two sense of *ubah* are attached to discrete parties, unlike the IofC context where having change is the first step to making change.

This story is already familiar: a psychological tool (an approach, a technology), with a distinct genealogy, comes to be practiced and absorbed in a radically different socio-cultural context than that where it first emerged. But the particulars matter, and they matter a lot. The story of IH in Indonesia is a part of the story of how knowledge is integrated into Islam. It also casts in relief changes in the Indonesian state management of religion and popular responses to those efforts. An organization like Kahfi, with its unclear political intentions (none that I could recognize, which would have connoted danger in the old regime), was almost unthinkable during the decades of New Order rule. The changing organizational landscape in its wake allowed for revisions to the boundaries between religion and culture, technology and tradition. Taking up the practice of IH provokes, anew, questions of change: what kind of agency allows for change? What kind of subjectivity is configured within it?

Post New-Order reforms allowed Initiatives of Change Indonesia back into the country. They were followed by a host of other formerly banned groups, movements, and ideologies – not just the Bahá'í tradition, but also Chinese language print documents, and even Masonic orders. The de-regulation of certain aspects of social, cultural and religious life also spelled new opportunities for novel organizations. Riding the wave of interest in character building and moral reform, groups like Emotional Spiritual Quotient (ESQ) and Manajemen Qolbu (MQ) rose to

prominence.<sup>150</sup> These groups were marked by promises to succeed in both this life and the next, melding developments from business leadership seminars with self-help psychology and the language and practices of Islamic self-cultivation. The tremendous popularity of MQ, in its heyday, along with the enduring dominance of ESQ, has encouraged the development of conceptually similar operations. Islamic motivational practice is the explicit focus of the subsequent chapter in this project. Here, however, I am interested in the development of IH within a much smaller organization. The figures most invested in Kahfi have a vision that extends to the sort of broad cultural salience of MQ or ESQ, but they are aware that such a future is still far away. In the interim, there is a serious commitment to providing the training and skill development promised to the current generation of Kahfi students. This chapter explores the scope and nature of that commitment. As such, it is also the story of how Kahfi Motivator School enlisted a diverse repertoire of texts to make hypnotherapy meaningfully Indonesian and Islamic.

My first introduction to Kahfi came during a Youth Camp run by Initiatives of Change Indonesia. One of the IofC facilitators, Mabe, was privately insistent that I accompany him to meet his teacher, whom he described as teaching hypnosis alongside other strategies for enhanced self-efficacy. I didn't make the immediate connection to IofC – I didn't see, at the time, how Mabe's pursuits were part of a concerted effort to remake himself, or that the moral reforms of IofC could be simultaneously pursued within a motivational idiom. Instead, only dimly cognizant of the moral impetus behind IofC I struggled to understand the relevance of hypnosis to Mabe's other interests. I was, however, gradually enlightened concerning the extent

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<sup>150</sup>See Rudnykyj *Spiritual Economies* and Hoesterey in the forthcoming *Rebranding Islam*, for recent accounts of ESQ and MQ respectively. Rudnykyj explores how ESQ, the brainchild of Ary Ginanjar, is deployed within the Krakatau Steel company as part of a personal-cum-professional development program that Rudnykyj strongly identifies with economic rationalization. Hoesterey explores the meteoric rise of a popular "lay preacher," AA Gym, his equally precipitous fall and subsequent re-emergence (re-branding). Both authors look at the nexus of popular psychology, self-help discourse and Islam. The Kahfi response to similar impulses is the explicit focus of the subsequent chapter of this project.



to which individuals active in one community also participated in the other. There had been people involved in both before Mabe, but due to his urgings ever more IofC members became involved in Kahfi. Just before leaving Indonesia at the close of my field work, I saw several Kahfi students make the reverse trip, and subsequent communications demonstrate a great degree of membership overlap. At the time I heard of Kahfi, however, I only grudgingly accepted the invitation to meet this teacher. The way Mabe spoke of his teacher – and the fact that he was located at a mosque in Bintaro, a suburb of Jakarta neighboring Ciputat – I didn't expect to find a thriving youth-oriented institution. From the information Mabe provided, I imagined I would be taken to meet an autodidact preacher. Having already met several figures matching this description, I was less than enthusiastic. Besides, it was all clearly Oprah-esque derivative business-speak. And I had a clear understanding of exactly what that entailed from my broad base of received wisdom and well-honed skills of contempt prior to investigation, as the quote misattributed to Herbert Spencer has it.

## **Induction**

Imagine a crowded auditorium. There are roughly three hundred people sitting in chairs arrayed in a semi-circle. The air is still, wet and very warm. Those assembled perspire through dress shirts, blouses and headscarves. They are attended to by facilitators; attired in matching black uniforms, white stitching over their breast pocket displaying their names, more stitching beneath the back of the collar revealing an identification number. It is Saturday, and the setting is the Student Center at the State Islamic University Syarif Hidayatullah (UIN) in Jakarta. Those gathered are primarily university students from UIN, with a couple of faculty members and the occasional recent graduate. They wear nametags, identifying them as prospective students at Kahfi. Their participation in today's seminar on public speaking is the first step in admittance to

the program. A middle-aged man, with a warm pleasing voice, is speaking from the center of a low-stage. He invites the attendees to relax. He gives them a moment to offer prayer. Speaking in strong, even-but-soothing tones, he encourages them to relax further. And then he begins a process characterized in the relevant literature as a mass-induction, escorting as many of the participants as possible into the relaxed, hyper focused state typically understood as hypnosis.

The man at center stage is Tubagus Wahyudi, referred to by students at his institution as Om Bagus. The institution in question is now the Kahfi Motivator School, although at the time this scene took place it was still operating as the Bagus Brain Communication Kahfi School of Public Speaking. It is a unique institution, offering a three-year non-accredited degree program in Public Speaking, free from any formal tuition besides the mandate to *salat lima waktu* (perform the five obligatory daily worship cycles). When it was founded, in 2003, it was called Kahfi al-Karim, and operated out of the annex building of Masjid al-Karim in Bintaro, Jakarta. Bintaro is a residential development to Jakarta's southwest and Masjid al-Karim served the largest housing development in the neighborhood called Sector 9. The founders of the school settled on "Kahfi," reflecting the importance of *Surat al-Kahf* (the Chapter of the Cave), the 18<sup>th</sup> *surah* of the Qur'an. This *surah*, recommended for weekly recitation on Fridays, contains the narrative of Al-Khidr, an important passage for the Sufi tradition of master-disciple relationships.<sup>151</sup> This *surah* also describes the experience of youths escaping from a heedless town to the sanctuary of a cave, where God gave them respite until the peoples of the town had become believers. A place for youths to retreat – al Kahf, the Cave – was the original motivation behind the school: several wealthy residents of Bintaro Sector 9 were hoping to establish an institution that could educate Muslim youths in a useful science. Given the omnipresent

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<sup>151</sup> For more on this, see Hugh Talat Halman's recently published revision of his dissertation, *Where the Two Seas Meet*; for a fascinating detour, see Nicholas Battye's "Khidr in the Opus of Jung," that explores Carl Jung's fascination with this foundational Sufi narrative.

temptations of the world, and the shaky economic and religious prospects of 2002, these local leaders hoped to provide an alternative. Om Bagus, then a teacher at a for-profit public speaking school in Jakarta, possessed the vision and the technical know-how to establish the institution. And he was their neighbor, and thus one of the founders.

Om Bagus, born in 1968 and raised in Makassar by Javanese parents, had a background in a technical field – an undergraduate degree in architecture from Universitas Merdeka Malang, East Java. He had moved to Jakarta following his graduation from university. Unable to find work in his field, he labored as a *galon* (five gallon water jug) distributor and salesman. He had begun to work as a presenter and radio DJ in Malang, and he maintained this interest during the subsequent year. Committing himself to the performing arts, he attended a number of auditions and slowly began to find success as a commercial voice actor. With a warm, authoritative voice, Om Bagus landed a number of parts in nationally televised commercials. At some point in this period, Om Bagus moved from what he characterized as *zaman belum shalat* (the time when I didn't yet perform obligatory Muslim worship) into a more devout posture. He got serious about his faith. Then he married a childhood acquaintance from Makassar and relocated back to Central Sulawesi. After the birth of his first child, the three of them moved to Bintaro Sector 9. Getting regular work in radio and television, Om Bagus's star as an MC was in the ascendancy. It was at this point that he was recruited to offer vocal trainings at a for-profit public-speaking school run by an Indonesian celebrity, Tantowi Yahya (famous as the presenter for Indonesia's version of *Who Wants to be a Millionaire*). As Om Bagus became more versed in the science of public speaking, he expanded his interests to hypnosis and other popular pursuits for Indonesian motivational speakers. Having acquired this skill-set, he was the natural choice to lead Kahfi al-Karim when the school was founded in 2003 – declared by wealthy benefactors from the

neighborhood who ceded day-to-day administration to Om Bagus, with oversight from the principal financier along with the Imam of the Masjid al-Karim.

By the conclusion of my fieldwork, Kahfi had moved on from its original location. Its original patrons had changed, although Om Bagus and one of the other founders continue to oversee its growth and development. It now occupies a rented space elsewhere in Bintaro – Sector 4. The institution itself has also seen its name change first to Bagus Brain Communication Kahfi School of Public Speaking and more recently, to Kahfi Motivator School.<sup>152</sup> The curriculum at the close of my field work consisted of one semester of study about theories of mind and consciousness, broadly incorporated into a program of *pembersihan hati* (cleansing of the heart), followed by one semester of instruction in public speaking, consisting of lessons exploring gestures, facial expressions, vocal techniques and other features of effective communication. The ordering is intentional: the Kahfi model is predicated on first preparing the mental and spiritual grounds for future growth, so cleansing is a necessary first step. The third semester focused on contemporary media, training students in everything from radio hosting to basic film editing. The fourth semester introduced the formal study of hypnotherapy; the fifth the study of psycho-cybernetics<sup>153</sup> and PowerPoint; and the final semester was devoted to the production of an original treatment of a Kahfi-authorized subject, to be presented in both a book and an oral form: a “final project” or *tugas akhir*. This curriculum had changed substantially from earlier iterations of the institution, and has since changed further. Hypnotherapy, public-speaking, and the technical manipulation of media have remained constants through these

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<sup>152</sup> This most recent change has to do with the re-incorporation of the organization. A for-profit arm, providing seminars to paying customers is Bagus Bina Cendekia (BBC), while the non-profit education arm is the Kahfi Motivator School (Kahfi).

<sup>153</sup> Psycho-Cybernetics is a term coined by Maxwell Maltz, and introduced to a broader audience in the 1960 publication of a text by that name. It is concerned with how humans develop psychological, cognitive and behavioral mechanisms to ensure certain desired outcomes. It is a key text in both the vast field of popular psychology and the motivational literature industry. In the next chapter, addressed to motivation, *Psycho-cybernetics* is reconsidered in greater detail.

different versions.

Kahfi incorporates a range of teaching materials, including many drawn from Euro-American authors, especially the materials pertaining to hypnosis and hypnotherapy. That it manages to do so without troubling the explicitly Islamic emphases of the institution is a testament to a profound set of negotiations carried out in plain view – a serious and systematic effort to ensure an Islamic genealogy, and an Islamic objective, for ostensibly non-Islamic knowledges. Although the language of epistemology is not discussed at Kahfi, the presentation of information is keenly attuned to what are classically considered epistemological concerns: what is knowable, how something is known, where and how belief interfaces with knowledge. Since Kahfi curricula is addressed to a student imagined to be invested in normative Islamic ethics, and attendant beliefs, this concern is most visible in terms of situating course materials derived from non-Islamic contexts. Unsurprisingly, the immediate recourse is to canonical Sources – Qur'an and *ahadith*. This entails demonstrating that seemingly secular knowledge like that comprising Western hypnosis is not only consonant with Islamic knowledges, but effectively presaged by them. The incorporation of these materials requires Kahfi educators to repeatedly enunciate theories of change. From the inaugural classes addressed to cleansing of the heart (*pembersihan hati*, preparing for change) through to the capstone project that concludes a Kahfi student's formal studies, Kahfi students seek to be changed and to be changed into agents of future change. But first to return to the scene described above.

Back in the UIN Student Center, the potential students are directed to follow closely the verbal cues of Om Bagus. They perform a simple physical induction that involves the sensation of weight and weightlessness on opposing hands. Still speaking in even tones, Om Bagus encourages the assembled participants to imagine that their left hand is holding an increasingly

heavy stone, whereas their right hand is increasingly unbound by gravity. About three quarters of the participants accede to this instruction, and the room is now dominated by sitting prospective students, their left hands bowed towards the floor, their right drawn to the ceiling. The weightless hand becomes affixed to a rope dangling from a gas-filled balloon. And now, the balloon is bound for the Holy Lands, for Mecca. If three-quarters acceded to the initial induction, the vast majority of that number now follows on their balloon voyage, some pulled to their feet by the buoyancy of their craft (Figure 1 below). They are encouraged to alight from their craft and set foot on the holy lands. As they perform a *tawaf* (counter-clockwise circumambulation of the Kaaba), many are moved to tears. Om Bagus instructs them to remember the angle of their view of the Kaaba, so that when they eventually go on pilgrimage they will recall that precise vantage. The guidance leaves off additional circumambulations of the Kaaba, Om Bagus electing instead to emphasize the affective rewards of this sudden sojourn to the Holy Lands. Om Bagus tells them to feel (*rasakan*) the depths of their sin (*betapa bersalah*). Those assembled are directed to the waters of Zamzam, and then to reflect (*ingatlah*, remember) on their sins and their yearning for repentance, focusing especially on presumed neglect of their parents (*durhaka pada orang tua*, insubordination to one's parents, a grave sin). At this point, most of those in a trance are weeping, many loudly and sometimes violently, and a few fall to the floor in *sujud*, prostration before God. In the space of fifteen minutes, a room full of university students has been transported from a banal state marked by nervous laughter, splintered attentions and physical discomfort into a powerful and powerfully earnest expression of remorse and repentance, into the varied physical manifestations of the desire to *taubat*, the heartfelt entreaty for forgiveness directed towards God (*taubat*, as I was often reminded, involves a *return* to God). This was Islamic Hypnotherapy at its most elemental.



**Figure 1 Mass Hypnotic Induction**

This exercise is conducted not simply for the affective benefits described above, but as a sort of test – a test designed to check prospective student's “focus.” Focus is the key term for IH as practiced at Kahfi. Whereas other hypnosis literature privileges “suggestibility,” in the conceptualization of hypnosis adopted at Kahfi, the ability to be hypnotized is a mark of one's ability to focus. The higher that focus is, the easier it is to direct it to the stimuli proffered by the hypnotist and away from any other sort of sensory inputs that might challenge the hypnotic

state.<sup>154</sup> It is central to the conduct of teaching at Kahfi that the vast majority of students have a high level of focus, and those who were unable to follow along the above induction are cut from the potential rolls of future students. This is connected to the theory of mind in circulation at Kahfi, based heavily on a distinction between conscious mental activities directed by the left brain and subconscious activities controlled by the right brain. From this distinction a categorical divide is generalized between left-brain inclined individuals (*otak kiri=oki*) and right-brain oriented individuals (*otak kanan=oka*). Although left/right brain schemata have been largely disavowed in contemporary psychological literature, they retain tremendous currency in contemporary popular psychology as practiced in Indonesia. At Kahfi, this distinction is employed to valorize certain capacities associated with the right brain, rather than as an explanatory framework in pursuit of knowledge itself.

To maintain the educational atmosphere desired at Kahfi, it is necessary that the vast majority of students be “oka,” and that only a small sliver of the students be “oki.” Oki people are considered unable to relax the critical faculties that interfere with hypnosis, as well as unable to receive the sort of spiritual counseling that depends on direct access to the subconscious on the part of the counselor. Healing my oki tendencies was a major component of my training at Kahfi, despite my status as a special student. By the time I departed, Om Bagus considered those efforts a qualified success: I had moved from *butet* (*bukan suyet*, not hypnotizable) to *sutet* (*setengah suyet*, halfway hypnotizable), in the idiom particular to Kahfi. Since all IH practitioners require ample practice, it is important that a stable of oka volunteers be at the ready. As mentioned above, the first semester at Kahfi consists of *pembersihan hati* (cleansing of the heart), and the few oki individuals fortunate enough to enter the institution are the

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<sup>154</sup> Fokus, in this context, is densely related to the quality of *khusyu'*, or humble concentration – an important attribute of worship as correctly performed. Often Om Bagus or other instructors would claim that, “experts” (*ahli*) of worship cycles (*salat*) were easier to hypnotize, because they had already disciplined themselves to have *khusyu'*.



recipients of extended attentions during this period, to enhance the activity of their right brain in preparation for future study of hypnosis, psycho-cybernetics and public speaking.

### **The Students of Hypnosis**

The students of Kahfi Motivator School are overwhelmingly drawn from Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah in neighboring Ciputat. That said, of course, there is no “typical” Kahfi student. UIN students, generally, are from middle or aspiring middle-class backgrounds, and are usually graduates of either the state Islamic school system (*madrasah*) or non-state Islamic schools (*pesantren*). Although West Java is heavily represented, UIN (and thus Kahfi) students arrive from across the archipelago. When asked, students at Kahfi articulated a variety of rationales for their participation in the school. Despite the difficulty of generalizing, it is useful to provide at least a partial sketch of the people active within the institution. In the spirit of addressing the *who* of IH, I offer a brief introduction to several of the students with whom I worked most closely. Three of these participants were from the Kahfi cohort I attended (ninth – entering in 2009), one was a graduate from the fourth (starting in late 2004), and one from tenth (coursework begun in early 2010). Our “senior,” the graduate from the 4<sup>th</sup> cohort, was active in the institution as an instructor and frequently appeared alongside Om Bagus in other, outside capacities – as a paid trainer and motivator. Two of the individuals from my cohort were in current formal leadership positions at the time I joined – one atop the student hierarchy of the institution, and one within the cohort. The individual from the tenth cohort was aspiring to a leadership position, which she achieved subsequent to the conclusion of my fieldwork. Although they remain identifiable to people familiar with the institution, per my agreement with Kahfi I use pseudonyms to refer to each of these figures.

Feri was an early student at Kahfi, enrolled when the cohorts were small (not exceeding

fifteen students) and the curriculum was in flux. When Feri began, the emphasis was still strongly on public speaking – in particular, mastery of the vocal and gestural ranges intended to be maximally persuasive. Islamic values, broadly conceived, were understood to animate the enterprise, but were not a prominent feature of the instructional materials. Feri came from a very humble background, and so his participation in Kahfi, then still located in a wealthy residential community in Bintaro, facilitated his introduction to a class and a community previously inaccessible to him. Feri had started at Kahfi at a younger age than usual – 19 instead of the 22-24 that typified most of the more recent incoming students. Several months before I returned to the United States, Feri opened a small print shop and graphic design studio. Using skills he had developed at Kahfi, alongside a long-standing interest in artistic craft, Feri began taking small commissions for custom designed banners, business cards, and posters. Feri was a near-constant presence at Om Bagus's paid engagements and he was also one of the lead instructors for higher (11+) cohorts of Kahfi classes. Feri had not yet married, and his enduring bachelor status was the subject of sustained commentary and jokes. In all likelihood, he was still assembling the capital necessary for a Betawi wedding.<sup>155</sup> An easy-going presence around the Kahfi classroom, Feri was one of the most experienced trainers after Om Bagus. We never discussed precisely what drew him to the Kahfi program, but it had clearly provided him with a new range of possibilities, both personal and professional.

Salih was a leader within my cohort of Kahfi students. He also fulfilled a leadership role in the broader student assembly that liaised with Om Bagus, alumni and other decision-makers

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<sup>155</sup> Amongst the Betawi, in addition to the *mahr* (the contractually stipulated sum of money or material negotiated by the marriage partners and paid to the female spouse), it is still customary to provide a financial gift to the family of the female spouse. For my unmarried Betawi interlocutors, this was a common source of consternation. Alongside the standard family wisdom regarding ethnicity (marry anyone but a person from Sunda), this capital represented a steep barrier to marriage. A basic gift in 2010 was, at a minimum, 1,000USD. This is roughly four times as much as the Jakarta specific monthly minimum wage, itself something of a fantasy figure since so few occupations are touched by Indonesian minimum wage law.

in the organization. He grew up in a small household in a quasi-legal squatter settlement in Bintaro, very near to the original Kahfi al-Karim campus. This latter fact was a closely guarded secret. The marginal location of his residence, and the associated poverty, were elements of Salih's biography that he preferred not to share with the larger Kahfi community. Before I first visited his mother, step-father and grandmother he took me to see his half-sister. She ran a small restaurant and had met with comparative financial success. While we ate, he swore me to secrecy. Only then did we drop in on his immediate family. Of Betawi ethnicity, his family lacked the thing most commonly associated with the Betawi – land. As some of the earliest residents of the area that became Jakarta,<sup>156</sup> the Betawi had incrementally sold family land to developers, burnishing a reputation as an insular, protective community in the process. According to Salih, his family had, at one point, very minor land holdings in the North of Jakarta (Bintaro is far to the Southwest). However his grandfather was that rare creature – a Betawi leftist – and was imprisoned in 1965. The survivors fled to the then distant margins of the capital, the southwest. Before becoming involved with Kahfi, Salih had been very involved with Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam (HMI, Association of Muslim Students). For him, his involvement and leadership in the organization comprised a historical irony, as HMI was once directly involved in purging individuals like his grandfather. Salih was a rarity at Kahfi in that his academic background was in Fakultas Ushuluddin, the Divinity/Theology School at the Islamic State University Syarif Hidayatullah. At Om Bagus's urging, Salih was one of the students who took me under his wing when I first started regularly attending classes with the ninth cohort. He aspired to be a motivator, and was already landing regular gigs to that effect at nearby secondary schools, especially during the busy season leading up to the National Exams.

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<sup>156</sup> The history of this creole ethnicity has been well documented. See, for instance, Jacqueline Knorr's recently published *Creole Identity in Postcolonial Indonesia*, for a carefully documented account of the Betawi relative other neighboring and national configurations of identity.

Well versed in the traditional Islamic sciences, Salih was also very active in a Sufi *tarekat* (order, tradition; path). He was both capable and willing to provide points of meaningful contact between the materials introduced at Kahfi and his knowledge of the Islamic sciences. Along with his earnestness and enthusiasm, this skill set contributed to this prominence within the organization. Salih was self-conscious about others' possible interpretations of his striving – material and social advancement were very important to him, but he hoped to temper their lure with spiritual attainment. More so than many of the students at Kahfi, Salih was a true believer in the spiritual prospects of the courses offered at the institution.

Leila, another fellow student in the ninth generation, was a psychology major at UIN. The School of Social Sciences at UIN is rumored to be the most academically rigorous, and Leila exemplified that reputation. A published author, she was an accomplished essayist and the daughter of a noted family of Sundanese and Javanese academics. Gender at Kahfi was often a fraught element of sociality. Cross-gender fraternization was formally discouraged and gender segregation unevenly enforced. As such, my access to, and interactions with, women were relatively circumscribed. Leila was somewhat exceptional in this regard as well, as she was far more forthright than many of her female peers. We often spoke candidly about academic, literary and purely speculative matters. On one occasion I drove her into Central Jakarta to her family's home in the well-to-do neighborhood of Menteng, discussing Indonesian Islamic literary fiction for the duration of the trip. At other points I met with her and her boyfriend for dinner (she has since married someone else) and I had the opportunity to read a variety of her written pieces. Leila had a minor leadership role in our cohort, but her influence had spread across the institution by the conclusion of my fieldwork. She frequently accompanied Om Bagus to paid engagements, and was already working as an instructor for “younger” cohorts before

even completing the final semester. Her word was often the last, and her analysis of course materials generally commanded attention. As much as her family's presumed wealth, her lineage in a scholarly tradition seemed to afford her a level of comfort and authority over-and-above many of her peers. Given her considerable intellectual openness and curiosity, her often somewhat "reactionary" politics came as a surprise, if only to me. She viewed Islam as a tradition under siege, and vocally defended organizations and individuals who she felt struggled in its service – most obviously, *Front Pembela Islam*, a vigilante organization that frequently enforces its understanding of public morality. Already a comfortable and competent speaker, Leila was drawn to Kahfi initially by its efficacious theories of mind: outside her formal study of psychology at the university, she hoped to master persuasive tools that would allow her to influence others more strongly. Kahfi, for her, was part of a suite of skills development that she consciously undertook in concert with her education.

Syarifah was a student in the cohort after mine. Our interactions typically occurred along two axes – English language (she was active in the Kahfi English Club) and Islam. Hailing from West Sumatra, Syarifah was very invested in some of the attributes commonly associated with Minang ethnicity. Given the place of matrilineality in Minang society, an outspoken Minang woman comfortable assuming a leadership role in mixed gender environment is hardly a rarity. Syarifah was further concerned with upholding the Minang reputation for piety and exemplary Islamic character. This meant her leadership in the Kahfi community often took the form of policing conduct in keeping with her understanding of Islamic obligations and norms. This entailed at one point correcting my performance of obligatory worship – incorrect positioning of my legs visible to her from the vantage of the women praying behind the men, and at another point erroneously correcting the English transliteration of an Islamic term (the Indonesian

conventions for transliteration vary significantly from those used in English). I was not the sole target of her interventions – maintaining gender segregation amongst the “younger” cohorts often fell to Syarifah. Syarifah had graduated from university several years earlier and was working as a teacher near the UIN campus, actively seeking a marriage partner. (Since my time at Kahfi, Syarifah has married and moved back closer to her family in Sumatra). For Syarifah, accustomed to behaving as a leader, Kahfi promised her the opportunity to do so in a minimally abrasive manner – the technologies of persuasion taught at Kahfi seemed appropriate to asserting oneself while possessing adab. During an English Club meeting we spoke pointedly about precisely this – the difficulty of enjoining the good while also respecting the rights of ones interlocutors. Kahfi, with its celebration of song, movement, and oratory, required participants who were willing to enforce a minimal standard of decorum, necessary to preclude rumor, gossip and social dischord. The leadership at Kahfi embraced a sensuous Islam, while striving to instill recognizably Islamic ethics and norms amongst the community. Syarifah’s efforts were central to the successful negotiation of this potential conflict. When an event was really heating up, Syarifah made sure it did not get too out of hand and bring disapproval upon the institution.

Tomo became a close friend and a trusted associate over the course of my time at Kahfi. A friendly, outgoing man several years my junior, he brought a physical disability in addition to his enthusiasm. One of several blind Kahfi students (including two in the ninth cohort), Tomo had begun losing his vision at the end of primary school. By the time he had completed middle school, he was entirely unsighted. He was very active at Kahfi, and while attending classes there was finishing a degree in special education at UNJ, the State University of Jakarta, probably the premier school of education within the capital. Tomo’s disability was the object of considerable attention at Kahfi. He was a stock example for instructors (“even Tomo can do it!”), and the

frequent butt of simple practical jokes (for instance, re-arranging furniture, forcing him to guess who was in the room by remaining silent, misdirecting him). There was an unremarked cruelty to these acts, although Tomo was generally a good-natured victim. A staunch advocate of the disabled, he was resolutely independent, navigating public transit and public spaces across Jakarta. Through Tomo I came to know his mother (of unknown biological relationship, but always introduced to me as his mother), and his adoptive blind sister, a slightly older woman who had assisted him in adapting to life without vision. Tomo was active in a related community of the blind, while volunteering on the side with an Islamic organization dedicated to helping “street children” (*anak jalanan*). Tomo wanted a life of advocacy and activism. Despite his outgoing personality, he had difficulty speaking in front of audiences and so the lure of Kahfi Motivator School, for Tomo, was clear: here was a place to polish his performance and presentation. A fastidious student, Tomo could be relied upon to query the instructor for greater details on the minutiae of a specific hypnotic induction or the brainwaves associated with a hypnotic state.<sup>157</sup>

In April 2012 I returned to Kahfi to follow up with friends, acquaintances and unanswered questions from my research. Conveniently, the process of accepting new students for a fresh cohort was already underway when I arrived. Thus, in concert with a fellow member of the ninth cohort, I was able to serve as the M.C. for another public speaking seminar where Om Bagus permitted me to film the proceedings, including a mass induction. Additionally, as a Kahfi senior, I helped with the formal intake process, reviewing applications and conducting interviews. The interviews were short (fifteen minutes), intense sessions where the interviewer queried the interviewee about their intentions, aspirations, experiences, and skills. We were

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<sup>157</sup> Tomo was also married as a result of his involvement in Kahfi. Om Bagus solicited suitors, and a young woman also of my acquaintance volunteered.

instructed to press the prospective students about their motivations: why were they so interested in learning *ilmu public speaking*? Asking people to explain the draw of Kahfi, point blank, served a valuable function for me in my capacity as a researcher, alongside its utility as an evaluative measure for discriminating amongst potential Kahfi students.

I interviewed eight prospective students over the course of about two and a half hours. The majority of the responses assumed a similar cast: she or he was interested in joining Kahfi because a) she or he had a friend who was a student; b) she or he was hoping to distinguish her or himself to future employers; c) she or he suffered from a lack of self-confidence (*kurang p.d. [percaya diri]*). However, there was one prominent exception: a distressed young woman who responded to my questions with an outpouring of tears and a tale of woe. She was estranged from her parents, responsible for the wellbeing of a younger sibling, and stuck working at an Internet café owned by a relative. Unable to pursue a formal education, she told me that she was drawn to the prospect of improving her financial circumstances through the night classes offered at Kahfi. When I reported our interview to the admission committee (made up of alumni and seniors at the institution), there was considerable excitement over this applicant. No one was interested in her explicit desire to develop a more marketable skill base and the associated career opportunity. That need was assumed to be met as a matter of course. Instead, the focus was on her spiritual ailments: the lack of affective composure, the estrangement from her family, the archness and volatility she evinced in conversation. Here was someone who really needed healing. This was someone who could benefit from “cleansing of the heart” (*pembersihan hati*). This was a candidate for the moral transformation envisioned by earnest Kahfi students. People changers need people to change, and maintaining a sufficient practice population is part of the admission strategy at Kahfi.



Although there was not set quota, a certain number of Kahfi students were expected to benefit from *pembersihan hati* more than others (roughly ten percent). These individuals might have backgrounds that involved substance abuse, they might have particularly abrasive personalities (a sign of left-brained dominance in the Kahfi idiom), or they might have a physical handicap (the disproportionate number of blind students). Alternately, they might bring a special enriching skill (exemplary recitation of the Qur'an, memorization of thousands of hadith, for instance). Balancing the different special needs and skills with the bulk of the student body (imagined to be motivated by the relatively straightforward desire to be a more persuasive public speaker) was the main task of the admission committee. On a practical level, almost everybody who applied would eventually get in – either as part of a regular cohort, or a “special” once-weekly cohort (with the opportunity to mainstream if she or he demonstrated special commitment to the program). Instead of winnowing out candidates, a lot of the application procedure was designed to balance the competing mandates within the institution: to encourage moral development; to facilitate the attainment of a (presumptively morally neutral) skill set; to make sure a critical mass of participants demonstrated sufficient focus (ie, could be hypnotized); and a commitment to realizing Islam in the lives and communities of the students. These interests required that each Kahfi class included a minimum number of individuals poised to be changed, but not so many needing a therapeutic intervention that steady progress through the curriculum was at risk of being derailed.

### **Kahfi Hypnosis Basics**

Before going too much further, there are a couple of points that need to be emphasized. The induction exercise described above was not unique to this particular assembly, but rather a standard script used in other contexts (for instance, for paying customers in the form of a

professional enhancement seminar conducted on behalf of Tupperware Indonesia™).<sup>158</sup> Along with separating those with high-focus from those without, it is the first step in a general program of “therapy” connected to the previously cited *pembersihan hati*. (Indeed, the file folder from which the photos displayed in this chapter were copied was named *terapi* by Om Bagus). To be a student at Kahfi is to undergo a therapeutic encounter, one designed to strip away self-doubt, dishonesty, laziness and any other hindrance to becoming an effective, morally-grounded public speaker. The initial step in this enterprise involved stroking the incredible cultural salience of guilt in the face of neglecting one's parents.<sup>159</sup> In other Kahfi materials as well, presumptive guilt at having mistreated one's parents is the door through which immediate affective experiences are accessed.<sup>160</sup> Over time, the simple mention of parents at Kahfi often provokes a strong emotional response as the features of this phenomenon are further honed. So all at once, a mass-hypnotic encounter described in the day's program as *cek fokus*, consisted of a first therapeutic step for future students, an assessment tool governing admittance to the Kahfi program and an outlet for an affective experience consonant with broader cultural patterns of guilt and repentance. That such an activity could take place openly, in the Student Center of the State Islamic University, was a testament to how much things had changed since Reformasi: there was no longer an authority concerned with monitoring the risks such an organization might represent (access to state institutions is now presumptively allowed). Emotion, and

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<sup>158</sup> A vignette from the Tupperware seminar forms the nucleus of the Afterward to this project.

<sup>159</sup> Here one recalls the hadith collected in Bukhari and elsewhere, on the authority of Abu Hurairah, that the Prophet responded to a query about who is deserving of the best treatment by answering “your mother” three times, followed by “your father.” Similarly, the oft-repeated hadith that states that paradise lies beneath the feet of one's mother – already seen in the prior chapter.

<sup>160</sup> I presented a very early version of this argument at the graduate program in anthropology at the University of Indonesia. I am grateful to Tony Rudyansyah for providing that opportunity. I asked the 50 attendees how many had participated in an event like the one described above. About three-quarters of them raised their hands, and when queried, pointed to ESQ as the venue for their exposure to both mass inductions and guided imagery. Tony Rudyansyah himself mentioned later that he had attended a similar seminar, but walked out – the repeated focus on the failings of the participants relative their parents felt emotionally manipulative to him. Very occasionally I heard of similar responses, although, as in the preceding chapter, they tended to involved non-Indonesians.

particularly mass emotion, was no longer the automatic target of regulation.

The encounter with hypnosis described above derives directly from the pedagogy of, and theories about, hypnosis in current circulation at Kahfi. IH at Kahfi provides a glimpse into enduring patterns of knowledge integration in Islam, as well as a picture of the kinds of change Kahfi participants imagine to be possible. Hypnosis as a classroom subject is introduced along multiple axes at Kahfi, but the principal focus of instruction is hypnotherapy, and for this reason I discuss IH almost exclusively.<sup>161</sup> As they pay respect to both parts of the construction “Islamic Hypnotherapy,” instructors at Kahfi are forced to grapple with the complicated politics of knowledge practices – reconciling an Islamic mission with materials developed within non-Islamic cultural and social contexts. This requires a kind of *adab*, in keeping with that discussed in the previous chapter. Understanding the ideal relationship between the different elements at play in the hypnotherapeutic classroom was a further application of *adab*. That such a negotiation was demanded is explicitly clear from the introductory slides in the course sequence on hypnosis. Although hypnosis is first introduced in the context of “stage hypnosis,” the course materials move quickly to hypnotherapy – the use of hypnotic techniques to aid in physical, emotional, mental and spiritual healing. I excerpt a slide directly from these course materials used at Kahfi by way of illustration:

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161 Other forms of hypnosis include “stage hypnosis,” or “entertainment hypnosis,” as frequently broadcast in popular media, forensic hypnosis, used in the criminal justice field, hypno-birthing, as an alternative to more medicalized child-birth as well as more nefarious applications of hypnotic techniques mentioned below.

**Target Kemampuan & Sistem Pengajaran**

**Target Kemampuan**

- 1 Pemahaman konsep dasar Hypnosis
- 2 Pemahaman fakta & mitos di sekitar Hypnosis
- 3 Pemahaman fungsi & peranan Sub-Conscious Mind (pikiran bawah sadar)
- 4 Pemahaman perbedaan serta persamaan Western Hypnosis & Traditional Hypnosis
- 5 Pemahaman prosedur Self Hypnosis
- 6 Pemahaman prosedur cara melakukan Hypnosis kepada orang lain secara benar
- 7 Apresiasi terhadap salah satu aplikasi Hypnosis, yaitu : Stage Hypnosis

**Sistem Pengajaran**

- 1 Sistem yang dipergunakan adalah Western Hypnosis, khususnya metodologi Hypnosis yang mengacu kepada kemampuan komunikasi Verbal dan Non Verbal.
- 2 Sistem yang dipergunakan bebas dari unsur Magic, Mistik, Esoterik, Telepathic, Mind Power, dll. Oleh karena itu dalam pelatihan ini tidak terdapat proses : Attunement, Initiation, Pengisian, Penyelarasan, atau istilah lain yang mengandung kemiripan arti, dan tidak diajarkan ritual-ritual mistik (termasuk doa & mantra).

**Figure 2 Targeted Abilities and System of Instruction**<sup>162</sup>

If hypnosis in the United States is primarily known through stage hypnosis, and perhaps to a lesser extent via weight-loss and smoking cessation, in Indonesia “hypnosis” is also closely associated with a range of dangerous practices, including black magic and mind control techniques designed to part people from their money. (On my way home from Kahfi my first night of attending class I passed a large banner posted by the police that stated “Beware of Hypnotists,” a warning I elected not to heed). Gregory Simon reports on this phenomenon in

<sup>162</sup> This slide lists seven learning goals for audience: 1) understanding the fundamental concepts of hypnosis; 2) understanding facts and myths concerning hypnosis; 3) understanding the function and roles of the subconscious; 4) understanding similarities and differences between western and traditional hypnosis; 5) understanding self-hypnosis procedures; 6) understanding the correct procedure for conducting hypnosis on another person; 7) appreciation for one application of hypnosis: stage hypnosis) the slide then reads,

- 1) The system used is Western Hypnosis, especially hypnotic methodologies that hinge on verbal and non-verbal communication skills.
- 2) The system used is free from magical, mystical, esoteric, telepathic, mind power and related elements. As a result, in these lessons you will not find processes of: Attunement, Initiation, “Filling,” Synchronization, or other terms designating similar meanings, and you won’t be instructed on mystic rituals (including prayers and mantra).

West Sumatra in *Caged in on the Outside*: “In stories that circulate widely in Bukittinggi, thieves in the *pasa* [*pasar*; market] are said to use hypnosis. The thieves initiated seemingly proper social interaction, engaging the victim in conversation. This interaction opens up the boundaries of the victim to penetration, thus making hypnosis possible” (153). In Simon’s account, the malicious penetration of hypnosis is achieved precisely through the mastery of social forms on the part of the hypnotist – through an attention to *adab*. In contradistinction, the slide included above confidently asserts that, “the system used is Western Hypnosis, especially hypnotic methodologies that hinge on verbal and non-verbal communication skills.” Instead of moral relationality, Western Hypnosis is imagined to rely on neutral technologies of intercourse. The very fact that hypnosis at Kahfi is “western,” like the use of English at IofC, is a way to guarantee the moral availability of a foreign practice: it can’t be implicated in dark arts, since it is scientific. Aspersions of *bidah* and *ilmu hitam* (black magic) are simultaneously neutralized.

Hypnosis and brain-washing figures prominently in popular accounts of religious exclusivist movement likes *Negara Islam Indonesia* (the Indonesian Islamic State, a successor of sorts to the political *Darul Islam* movement of the 1940s and 50s). Chiara Formichi writes persuasively in *Islam and the Making of the Nation* about the enduring influence of Kartsowiryo on the political aspirations of some Indonesian Muslims. The *Negara Islam Indonesia* (NII) she analyzes, however, is only loosely related to the journalist specter of NII repeatedly conjured in the popular press since the fall of Suharto.<sup>163</sup> In a *Jakarta Post* article from April 30, 2011, the journalist reports on the “Multi-Level Marketing” model of contemporary NII recruitment. The article cites an “intelligence expert”: “Wawan said the recruiters would utilize psychological tools commonly found in most communication strategies uses [*sic*] in product marketing, but

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<sup>163</sup> NII has emerged as an enduring bogeyman, and it is unclear what the links between the current organization and its predecessors actually are. In practice, NII now works more like a pyramid scheme for extracting donations from its recruits than like a political effort to overthrow the state.

added that the NII also used hypnosis.” This usage of hypnosis – the idea that one’s entire agency could be subverted to a malevolent cause – lurks in the margins of the Kahfi presentation of IH. To foreclose this possibility, every effort is made to emphasize the scientific (again, epistemically neutral) sources of hypnosis. Instead of these disreputable “traditional” hypnotic methods, Kahfi adopts the “western methods.” Thus even though NII is imagined to use the slick language of contemporary product marketing, as Kahfi presents it, the hypnosis it employs is “traditional,” evidenced by its capacity for mind-control.

Given some Kahfi students fluency with Sufi traditions and practices, *ilmu tasawuf* (the science of Sufism) was a familiar reference point for hypnosis (I knew of several students in the *tarekat Tijaniyah*, as well as several in *tarekat Qodiriyah wa Naqsyabandiyah*). Beyond formal participation, many students had a traditionalist academic background, where “ilmu tasawuf” is taught (including at the State Islamic University). The visually obvious parallels between trance-like states attained in hypnosis and Sufi devotional practices seemed to resonate, but there was also the general notion that Sufism can be directed towards healing spiritual ailments. I was privy to a number of conversations along this axis, including one conducted online in a Facebook chat on the Kahfi page. After a back-and-forth about these parallels, one Kahfi senior provided the following summation:

Whether it’s apparent [*disadari*] or not, at Kahfi we study a lot about Sufism, and the end point [*muara akhir*; headwaters; destination] of our studies at Kahfi lies in hypnosis and therapy. During the hypnosis material, the Sufi inflections [*nuansa tasawuf*] already present for several semesters (semester 1 already “propels” repeatedly [*digenjot habis*] towards unseen/interiority [*batin*], the brain/mind [*otak*] and heart [*hati*]) are very salient. As a result we can provisionally claim on the basis of experience and deep investigation of Kahfi materials, along with the phenomena found there, that Sufism and hypnosis are mutually related [*saling keterkaitan*] (of course with the deeper understanding of the term “hypnosis,” not just “mystic or entertainment” ritual but also its essence).<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Secara disadari maupun tidak, di Kahfi banyak sekali membahas tentang tasawuf, dan muara akhir dari pembelajaran di Kahfi terletak di Hypnosis dan terapi. Saat di materi hypnosis nuansa tasawuf yang selama beberapa semester (semester 1 sudah di “genjot” habis mengenai batin, otak, dan hati) sangat terasa sekali. Dengan demikian

This argument, as will become clear in greater depth below, looks not only to superficial resemblances between Sufi trances and hypnotic states. Beyond these points of contact, this Kahfi student discerns “essences” in hypnotherapeutic practices (the destination of a Kahfi education) within the Sufi canon. The connection between Sufism and hypnosis, then, is really about change. Both are understood as mediums of change that involve unseen agency – acting in the *batin*, affecting both the brain/mind (*otak*) and the heart (*hati*). Yet hypnosis, unlike Sufism, is understood as a meaningfully western scientific technology. This enables its adoption while also requiring its emplacement with the meaning-world most central to Kahfi: Islam. Adopting the western methods wholesale would pose major problems for an educational organization dedicated to developing the moral stature of effective communicators (the mission of Kahfi). It must also be demonstrated as already Islamic. So the introduction to hypnosis at Kahfi charts a careful course. After first framing the approach endorsed as Western and scientific –and thus presumptively morally neutral– hypnosis is quickly re-framed as authentically Islamic. This involves explicitly incorporating sources of thought from the Qur’an to validate the hypnotic state and the broader therapeutic methodology taught at Kahfi. I take up this operation below, but first I must situate IH at Kahfi in relation to the “scientific” genealogy of hypnosis presented at the institution.

### **The Science of Hypnosis**

In a journalistic history of hypnosis, Robin Waterfield defines hypnosis as, “the deliberate inducement or facilitation by one person in another person or number of people of a trance state. A trance state is (briefly) one in which a person’s usual means of orienting himself

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bisa ditarik poin sementara bahwa secara pengalaman dan pendalaman materi di Kahfi serta fenomena<sup>2</sup> yang ditemukan, tasawuf dan hypnosis saling keterkaitan (tentunya dengan pemahan istilah “hypnosis” yang lebih mendalam, tidak hanya ritual “mistik ataupun intertain” namun juga esensi.

in reality have faded” (xxvii). Struggling for a phenomenological definition of hypnosis, Waterfield is forced to move analogically into the language of “trance” and “trance state.” He expands further on this model, explaining “trance logic”: “The subject is highly compliant to incoming suggestions and capable of role-playing; he has focused, selective perception; he allows his imagination greater freedom than usual, and fantasies are experienced, or memories re-experienced, with vivid intensity...[he] tends to behave in a way he thinks appropriate to the role he is being asked to perform” (xxvii). Waterfield characterizes his history as an agnostic one – he is not interested in debunking hypnosis, so much as providing an accessible narrative that focuses primarily on famous practitioners and famous practices, from Frans Mesmer to his final chapter on “Self-Improvement and the New Age.” There is a lot to this story that sounds familiar – that is to say, in keeping with how materials were presented at Kahfi. But where Waterfield elsewhere in the text tends to emphasize the openness of the hypnotic subject to hypnosis, Om Bagus and Kahfi practitioners overwhelmingly emphasized the *focus* of the hypnotized subject. In both presentations, hypnosis is a co-production of the hypnotist and the hypnotized. However the Kahfi school promotes a strong notion of a “hypnotic state” as the explanatory model for what happened during hypnosis. (Waterfield eschews this characterization, electing to describe the hypnotized subject as “behaving” *as if* hypnotized in his Introduction). Kahfi’s implicit history of hypnosis reached not to the animal magnetism of Frans Mesmer, but to the much later 19<sup>th</sup> century “therapeutic” adoption of hypnotic practices in science, attributed to the Scottish physician James Braid.

Following the path taken by Braid’s re-introduction of the phenomenon, hypnotherapy as practiced at Kahfi is based primarily on Ericksonian hypnosis. The latter takes its name from Milton Erickson, a pioneering psychoanalyst and therapist whose work inspired a variety of



hypnosis-related modalities: guided imagery, Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) and hypnotherapy. Several years after Erickson's death in 1980, a round-table discussion on his work was published in *The Journal of Counseling and Development*. The moderator asked, "why do you suppose that Ericksonian hypnosis has become so popular in the last 10 years?" To which the author and hypnotherapist Mark King replied, "I'd like to rephrase the question. Hypnosis has become popular in the last decade because of Milton Erickson. Hypnosis became discredited medically because of Freud. Freud was a poor hypnotist, so he rejected it and developed free association instead" (87). If the posthumous narrative is that Erickson rescued hypnosis from disrepute, attributed to Freud, Erickson's own work suggested that his primary opposition was not to the Viennese master. Erickson was less concerned with the physicians who rejected hypnosis than with the charlatans who besmirched it. At Kahfi, the lingering battle over the scientific status of hypnosis is erased. With Erickson as a point of departure, this particular question is never acknowledged. Kahfi students never read verbatim Erickson, but many of the induction scripts and strategies are translated and adapted from his work.

Milton Erickson himself was very much invested in bringing scientific accuracy to the fraught world of hypnosis and hypnotherapy. While still a practicing clinician at Wayne County General Hospital and Infirmary, in Eloise, Michigan, Erickson reviewed a new book on hypnotherapy published in 1947. Writing in the pages of *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, Erickson castigated the authors of this new volume for their inattention to scientific accuracy. He attacks first their reference list: "For example, there are three listings of the discredited works of a well-known charlatan. The initial work of the clinically untrained and inexperienced amateur is given the same importance as that of well-trained, well-experienced clinicians" (409). The mid-century hypnotherapist must distinguish himself both from the

charlatans and the amateurs. Doing so is difficult, given the sorry state of the science: “Some references are no more than arm chair productions, based not on actual knowledge of or experience with hypnotherapy, sometimes not even with hypnosis in general, but on theoretical assumption and even misconceptions” (ibid). Into these conditions Erickson toiled to bring respectability and scientific reproducibility – although many of his most ardent students and followers remained on the margins of the psychological mainstream. When Om Bagus traces the method at Kahfi to Erickson, he asserts not only the authorization of this ennobled hypnotherapeutic lineage, but also its scientific aspirations. This is “western hypnosis,” and within the west, this is the scientific west.

Erickson’s understanding of hypnosis stretched back to the first discussion of the phenomenon in those terms: the pioneering work of the Scottish surgeon James Braid already mentioned above. James Braid has often been considered the “Parent of Hypnotism” as a result of the 1843 publication of *Neurypnology*, wherein he coined the term. Witnessing a performance by the mesmerist Charles Lafontaine in 1841, Braid became convinced that the phenomenon he was observing could be brought into clinical practice. Working at the forefront of nineteenth century medicine, James Braid was excited by the possibilities offered by the hypnotic state to affect changes otherwise inaccessible with existing methods.<sup>165</sup> Braid’s enthusiasm was partially

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<sup>165</sup> I cannot resist, at length, citing Braid’s treatment protocol, described in passing, as he suggested the possible utility of hypnosis for cases of insanity:

The day before I had been visiting an insane patient, who entertained the horrible idea, that she must murder every body she knew, and then murder herself also; that on placing my hand upon the organs of combativeness and destructiveness, in a few seconds, she gave a violent shudder, and seemed greatly excited, and becoming perfectly furious. On examining these parts, I found the integuments quite red. I ordered leeches, and cold lotion afterwards, but next day she remained equally violent, and the pulse between 140 and 150, which it had been for some time, notwithstanding medicines had been given to depress it. I now made an incision an inch and a half long through the integuments, and down to the bone, and in twelve hours after found her much calmer, and the pulse down to 100, and it remained there for several days. There was no such loss of blood as could have acted constitutionally on the heart directly by the quantity effused. On again rising, Belladonna plasters were applied – these not having the desired effect, recourse was again had to scarification. Behind both ears, and with great success, as in a few days she was so calm as not to require the strait jacket, and for two months has been sullen but harmless (121).

spurred by the affective dimension of this new practice. Writing in the preface of *Neurypnology*, Braid explains, “that during the nervous sleep, there is the power of exciting patients to manifest the passions and emotions, and certain mental functions, in a more striking manner than the same individuals are capable of in the *waking* condition, no one can doubt who has seen much of these experiments” (xvii). Already in Braid there is the notion that the hypnotist excites elements latent in the mind of the patient – a notion that the changes are already present, but trapped. The hypnotist unleashes these potentials. This understanding of hypnosis, in turn, figures prominently in the history of Freud’s adoption-and-rejection of the process. At Kahfi, however, this possibility is evacuated – the potential for change comes only from God.

Leon Chertok revisits the place of hypnosis in the conventional narrative of Freud’s development of psychoanalysis, writing in 1977’s “Freud and Hypnosis”: “although it was both the point of departure and a necessary detour, hypnosis is touched upon only the more effectively to recede into the background, on the emergence of the new science” (100). Chertok traces the (in keeping with the established account) influence of Jean-Martin Charcot and Hippolyte Bernheim, noting that “Charcot regarded hypnosis as a special somatic state induced by essentially physical causes, whereas Bernheim considered it to be a psychological process, to the point of actually confusing it with suggestion” (ibid). This distinction, albeit articulated in new idioms, still frustrates contemporary practitioners of hypnosis. Although somatic induction has largely fallen by the wayside (few would use the idiom of animal magnetism today), even the contemporary psychological establishment is unsure whether it is a “state” or an “imaginative experience.”<sup>166</sup> Yet Chertok identifies why this was so central for Freud’s

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<sup>166</sup> For a reference actually given to me by Om Bagus, see Nash, Michael R., Grant Benham, and Kyoko Hamada. “The truth and the hype of hypnosis.” *Scientific American Mind* 16.2 (2005): 46-53. This is a very accessible account synthesizing the (then) current state of psychological and cognitive neuroscience research on hypnosis. As the American Psychological Association has struggled to define hypnosis, there have been sharp polemics between

subsequent arguments: “he [Freud] apparently sensed that hypnosis implied a relationship between the psychic and the somatic, impossible to formulate in the theoretical terms available to him at that time. It was essential to liberate oneself from physiology, if it were desired to study freely psychological determinism” (108). Freud’s insistence on the psychical could not be maintained adjacent to practices with such resilient and observable physical features. In his challenging history of psychoanalysis, *Revolution in Mind*, George Makari writes about this conflict, noting an important feature of the critique of hypnosis from Freud’s abusive translation of Bernheim’s text: “Freud suggested Bernheim’s readers stop thinking of the hypnotic encounter as some interpersonal drama between a wide-eyed hypnotists and a swooning subject. Instead, they should turn their attention to the intrapsychic conditions that made a man prone to another’s suggestions” (33). This shift, away from the intersubjective character of the hypnotic encounter, had an important implication for the future development of Freud’s own theories: “This critical strategy allowed Freud to reduce the overwhelmingly complex problems of how two minds interacted, and limit his exploration to the workings of one mind, the patients...Freud argued that all suggestions were the result of prior, internal self-suggestions” (ibid.) By interpreting the achievements of hypnosis as reflective of already latent possibilities, Freud denied the very possibility of change originating outside the mind of the subject. This approach, of course, differs greatly from the highly intersubjective theory of hypnosis promulgated at Kahfi. Furthermore, the physical-psychical distinction does not represent such a stumbling block at Kahfi. Following a classically Islamic framework, the physical is subordinate to the mental,

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the “statist” interpretation of hypnosis and the “imaginative” position. Although thoroughly agnostic on the science of it all, I am persuaded by Erik Woody and Pamela Sadler when they write, citing themselves from a previous iteration of this same argument, “the belief that one is hypnotized is *itself* an altered state of consciousness—that is, a state of awareness that one clearly did not have prior to hypnosis.’ In other words, we argued that people’s belief that they are in a state of hypnosis is sufficient to infer that they are in an altered state” (112). The stakes of this debate – what is a state? – reveal the continued confusion endemic to poorly policed boundaries in the realm of science predicated on ever-eroding mind-body distinctions.

itself subordinate to the spiritual. Kahfi materials emphasized that hypnosis happens *in* the brain, but (potentially) *to* the soul. As the scientific character of Freud's work has receded (we no longer turn to Freud as the authority on brain science), hypnosis itself becomes more available to a rhetoric that emphasizes the morally neutral grounds of science. Thus Kahfi's wholesale embrace of Milton Erickson allows the institution to sidestep the *western* critique of the scientific validity of the practice.

There are further insights from Freud, despite his dismissal of hypnosis, which should give us pause. Of the "religious" dimension of hypnosis as practiced at Kahfi, we need not speculate too far to uncover the Freudian position, at least as expressed in *The Future of an Illusion*: "in how great detail the analogy between religion and obsessional neurosis can be followed out, and how many of the peculiarities and vicissitudes in the formation of religion can be understood in that light" (72). Freud then adds the knowing aside that, "it tallies well with this that devout believers are safeguarded in a high degree against the risk of certain neurotic illnesses; their acceptance of the universal neurosis spares them the task of constructing a personal one" (ibid). Yet if we turn away from the sneering tone here, Freud has accurately described an important feature of change as it is imagined at Kahfi. Insofar as a subject frames herself within universal logics, she is freed of the difficulties of the particularities of her situation. Hypnosis at Kahfi works, in part, because it allows the universal *fitra* (the "natural" state of created humans, which is to say, in submission to the divine, at peace with the rest of the creation) to be restored to the particular individual. Kahfi follows Sunni theology in teaching that humans are *originally* at peace, enveloped in Divine mercy. All manner of psychological and spiritual ailments are understood as corruptions of this natural state. The mechanism that Freud attaches to neurosis is part of the explicit conceptual machinery of IH at Kahfi.

## Islamizing Hypnosis

I introduce these materials in part to interject into a far-reaching discussion concerning the “Islamization of knowledge,” (*islamisasi ilmu*) an unhelpfully vague but very popular concept. At least since the Cairo reformers of the late nineteenth century, those laboring along with the modernist impulse in Islam have sought to integrate (or reintegrate) Islamic epistemologies with the physical and social sciences. At present, these efforts frequently are referred to under the catch-all phrase mentioned above – the Islamization of knowledge. This is a problematic construction, suggesting that already formed-and-static “knowledge” be subjected to the edifying (or threatening, depending on who is asked) operation of Islamization. In its simplest iteration, this is the earnest selection of a scriptural corollary for every scientific fact, a process dismissively known in Indonesia as *ayatisasi*, “ayatization.” The obvious implication is that where an *ayat* can’t be found, the unit of knowledge cannot be accepted. A slightly more sophisticated relative of this impulse finds a scriptural corollary in loose interpretation for any given fact – especially in the physical sciences. Those of a philosophical bent strive to integrate Islamic epistemologies with the physical and social sciences, accepting the findings of the latter as further evidence of the majesty of the former. There is considerably more complexity to the “Islamization of knowledge” than the brief sketch above suggests. Nevertheless the purpose of roughly characterizing “Islamization” is to suggest the extent to which the phenomenon I am describing does not fit easily under the term: Insofar as Kahfi “Islamizes” hypnosis, the result is meaningfully different from its ostensible original parts.

On its surface, the presentation of hypnosis at Kahfi would seem to participate in this trend, and indeed, some Kahfi functionaries reproduce the language of the Islamization of knowledge in their description of their work. However, what is happening with Islamic

Hypnotherapy at Kahfi is altogether more complicated. It is not the mere Islamic framing of standard hypnosis practices, adapted to suit local tastes and mores. When the hypnotic subjects are led to the holy lands, as in the hypnosis script described above, and later instructed how to do the same with others, the instrument of hypnosis is bent towards a novel end and accorded a novel genealogy in conjunction with that end. Counter to the assumptions buried in the rhetoric addressed to the Islamization of knowledge, the Kahfi instruction in hypnotherapy suggests that the knowledge derived from the (both instrumental and critical) encounter with sources outside the Islamic ecumene, yields a fundamentally new knowledge. This is hardly a new phenomenon: the intellectual legacy of the Islamic tradition provides strategies and templates for appropriating and incorporating diverse sources of knowledge into recognizably and meaningfully Islamic practices. Hypnotherapy becomes about the purification of the heart, about the disavowal of impulses stoked by Satan (this refers to a specific Quranic verse cited below), which is to say it becomes both something new and something very much within an established tradition, connected to a vast intellectual and spiritual lineage. In the process of synthesizing this new knowledge, the authors of Kahfi materials are forced to engage with the very different operating assumptions that motivate its sources. The unbounded “I,” the putative subject of much motivational and pop psychological literature, is forced into submission to an all-encompassing Divine. This is not just one more manifestation of the global specter of neo-liberalism. The results aren’t free from contradiction, but they defy the derivative status that adheres to the notion of Islamizing knowledge (and the conservative reading of Islamization practices that discovers secular liberal projects beneath every stone). Before returning to the philosophical stakes of this discussion, the practices of instruction bear extended treatment.

## **Pedagogy and Islamic Hypnotherapy: The Space of Instruction**

When I began at Kahfi in December 2010, classes were still conducted in the annex building of Masjid al-Karim, a medium-sized mosque (typically tens of worshippers for a morning service, low hundreds for an evening, and many hundreds for Friday worship) in a wealthier housing complex in Bintaro, southwest of Jakarta proper. The single-family dwellings making up the housing development were spacious although not opulent, and the residences were mostly occupied by white-collar workers and professionals. The mosque was recently built and very well maintained, although the annex itself was of more basic poured-concrete construction. Classes began following the *Isya* (nightfall) worship cycle, and so Kahfi students intermingled with worshippers on their way off of the grounds. Occasionally, when there was some event being held, the mosque remained in use during class hours, but almost invariably Kahfi students were the final people to leave the premises – typically around 11.00pm. Some students, commuting from across Jakarta, would remain overnight at the mosque, and students freely availed themselves of the opportunity to worship in congregation, either for *Isya* or the next morning at *Subuh* if they stayed overnight. Shortly after I started studying there, for ultimately opaque reasons, the position of the Kahfi School at Masjid al-Karim became untenable. This led to the cessation of classes at the mosque annex, and so the students met at the home of Om Bagus several blocks away.<sup>167</sup> Class times were shortened to two hours while a more permanent location was sought – somewhat of an obstacle, given the financial constraints of a free educational endeavor. This situation persisted for two months.

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<sup>167</sup> Although I heard several possible explanations, no one “in-the-know” ever communicated the actual reason behind Kahfi’s move. One mooted theory held that the students were disturbing other worshippers in the complex. It was also speculated that differences of opinion between Om Bagus and two other founders of the institution led to the move – by vacating the mosque compound, Om Bagus was thus able to retain control over the content and structure of Kahfi instruction. This latter possibility strikes me as most plausible, although again, it was never explicitly confirmed.



In March, 2011, Kahfi moved to a *ruko* about 10 minutes away from Masjid al-Karim (*ruko* is a contraction of *rumah toko*, a shopping complex characterized by a row of single-entry, usually open-faced stores, akin to a strip-mall). Coincident with this move, Kahfi underwent the first of its name changes, becoming temporarily the Kahfi School of Public Speaking (as opposed to Kahfi al-Karim, denoting its earlier residence at Masjid al-Karim). No longer operated on the grounds of a mosque, a variety of methods were employed to sacralize the space of classroom instruction. One of the first hangings to go up on the poured concrete wall was a small plastic sign reading *Musholla* (worship place; prayer hall), with an arrow pointing to the upstairs. In lieu of other carpeting, roll-out *sajadah* (prayer rugs) were employed for the first floor meeting space (Figure 3 below). The first floor bathroom was adorned with a piece of paper reading *tempat wudhu* (place to perform ablutions), instead of WC. The downstairs was further decorated with images from Kahfi events (see Figure 4), while the upstairs hosted several certificates and a wall hanging of *asmaul husna* (“The Beautiful Names of God,” pictured on the wall in Figure 5. The meeting pictured here is part of the admission planning process for the entrance of the 13<sup>th</sup> cohort of Kahfi students). The wall hangings, floor coverings and sartorial choices (more on the Kahfi uniform to follow) were part of a constellation of material practices and performances that marked Kahfi as a meaningfully Islamic institution while maintaining its distinct character. Some of these were donations from the former location, some were provided by current students and many were purchased directly by Om Bagus.



**Figure 3** Rolling out the Prayer Mats at Kahfi



**Figure 4** Decorating the Walls at Kahfi



**Figure 5 Planning Session Upstairs at Kahfi**

Shortly after moving to the ruko, in late April, Kahfi also held what they termed an *itikaf* (Ar. residence). Although conventionally understood to be a temporary residence or retreat in a mosque for the purposes of drawing closer to God (and with an accompanying fast and devotional activities), in the Kahfi context *itikaf* was understood as a collective effort at moral purification and renewed submission to God that would *bring blessings to the place of its performance*. *Itikaf* is an allowable practice on any of the days in the Islamic calendar that permit fasting (ie, not feast days), but it is highly recommended during the final ten days of Ramadhan. Certainly Om Bagus and the vast majority of the students understood the formal definition and practice of *itikaf* – by transforming it here, they were using devotional energies as a tool to *make* something Islamic.<sup>168</sup> Instead of beginning before dawn (and lasting 3 days, 2 nights), the *itikaf* at Kahfi began after *Isya*, the final obligatory worship cycle of the day. It lasted until *Subuh*, the morning worship, of the following day. The intervening hours included a *khatam al-Qur'an* – a

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<sup>168</sup> This recasting of *itikaf* was not unique to Kahfi. Timothy Daniels, in his multi-part ethnography *Islamic Spectrum in Java*, relates enduring Javanese practices of spiritual retreat in sacred forests: “People generally refer to this time spent camping out near these sacred sites as meditation or *semedi* but some people use the Arabic term *I'tikaf* which evokes the time recommended for Muslims to shut themselves inside mosques during the last ten days of the month of Ramadan seeking divine blessings on the Night of Power” (41).

complete recitation of the Qur'an. (The text was multiply divided and simultaneously vocalized so that the work of the 60 reciters accomplished a complete vocalization in around 20 minutes, see Figure 6 below). Supererogatory prayers were performed and a respectful atmosphere aggressively self-policed by the gathered students. Additionally, for several hours students undertook *puasa bicara* (abstention from speech), and wrote out the *basmalah* ( بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم; in the name of God the Beneficent, the Merciful) 300 times. Forsaking speech was intended to help students cultivate the quality of *khusyu'* (humble concentration) mentioned above. The goal was to be fully aware of oneself and one's debt to the Divine. Humble concentration, an attribute of correct performance of worship, was being used to sacralize physical space. In keeping with other activities at the Kahfi itikaf, it brought normative devotional regimes to the instructional space of the institution. The itikaf contrasted sharply with other Kahfi events, which frequently involved song, gaiety and hyper-social interactions. In part, this demonstrated to, and for, the students that when it really mattered, Kahfi members could aspire to meaningful consort with the Divine.



**Figure 6 Rapid Recitation of the Qur'an**

The performance of the itikaf at Kahfi served both rhetorical and practical functions. On a conceptual level, it elevated Kahfi to a position closer to a mosque than a school. Although no one made this claim in these terms (there are extensive juridical requirements for a space to be recognized as a mosque), the fact that a term densely associated with mosques was selected for this event lent added spiritual significance to the formerly profane environs of the ruko. On a more pragmatic level, the itikaf served to gather the students from diverse Kahfi cohorts into the newly acquired space at the same time. Most cohorts met twice a week and at different times, and thus a shared identity across cohorts was unlikely to coalesce naturally. The only other activity that would draw students from across the years was the staging of a General Class (*kuliah umum*), which was held if a special guest speaker had been booked. During the itikaf, the usual hierarchal structures of Kahfi were deemphasized, one more way to mark this moment and



place as special and significant. Instead of senior and junior, facilitators and students, there were just worshippers.

The Kahfi environment, through ritual practice and material emplacement, was actively curated. Curate seems especially appropriate since it smuggles in vestiges of its ecclesiastical connotations – responsibility for souls in a given domain, in addition to the senses familiar from cultivated environments like museums and libraries. At Kahfi, much attention was paid to the spiritual wellbeing of students, but the physical environs were also carefully manipulated and frequently re-calibrated in accord with the overall institutional mission. There was no outside authority responsible for the upkeep of the grounds or the internal establishment of decorum – these responsibilities were entrusted directly to the current students, the example set by the senior-most among them. The maintenance of relative social locations was part of the cultivation of space practiced at Kahfi. Irrespective of age, students referred to members of earlier cohorts as Kakak or Kak (older sibling), and the principal instructor, as mentioned, was Om (Uncle) Bagus as opposed to Pak (Father) Bagus. Younger cohorts were usually addressed by first name, with several exceptions.<sup>169</sup> This established a hierarchy, but one considerably flattened relative the outside Indonesian organization of sociality. As described above in the transition of a retail space into a devotional-instructional space, the curation of the Kahfi school relied on a structure of marking akin to the framing techniques used to nest secular-cum-Western instructional materials in the Kahfi curriculum. Just as mercantile space was accorded spiritual significance through carpeting and wall-hangings, an Islamic foundation was ascribed to the appropriated knowledge

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<sup>169</sup> This arrangement was not absolute – a special class was convened called “Kahfi Ustad,” and students of this class were either Islamic school teachers or “non-traditional students,” including faculty from UIN. Conveniently, this allowed all members of this class to be addressed as Ustad or Ustadzah. This maintained the social distance of individuals who were greatly older or more titled than their younger Kahfi fellows.

that formed the basis of instruction in hypnosis. The process by which hypnotherapy became Islamic is the subject of the following passages.

### **Pedagogy and Islamic Hypnotherapy: Classroom Practice**

Instruction of hypnosis and hypnotherapy at Kahfi was structured according to the routines established in earlier semesters at Kahfi. Although there were slight revisions concerning classroom decorum (assigned roles), there was remarkable continuity across the three spaces (Masjid al-Karim, Om Bagus's home, the ruko) in terms of classroom performance. Class began with a collective recitation of *asmaul husna*, "The [99] Beautiful Names [of God]" (this is one of the myriad ways one performs *zikir* (Ar. *dhikr*; remembrance [of God])). The recital was to be sung by all of the assembled students, whether sitting on the floor (at the Ruko), or previously in the chairs of the annex building at Masjid al-Karim.<sup>170</sup> Of the roughly thirty students in attendance at a typical class, the obligation to sing was carried unevenly. The recitation would frequently begin with near full participation, but somewhere between Al-Alim (the All-Knowing and the 19<sup>th</sup> name in this ordering) and Al-Khabir (the All-Aware and the 31<sup>st</sup> name) many of the voices would trail off. At this point, the burden to vocalize was borne by four or five students (often, but not always the same students). By the time we reached Al-Awaal (the Ultimately First and the 73<sup>rd</sup> name), the majority of the students would chime back in for the duration. This lent a familiar rhythm and volume to the recitation – a rise and fall of voice, a final crescendo maintained through the *sholawat* or praise hymn (directed towards the Prophet or earlier

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<sup>170</sup> There are two current popular patterns with which *asmaul husna* are recited in Indonesia – one closely associated with ESQ and one most familiar as performed by a Malaysian *nasheed* group Hijjaz (versions of both can be easily accessed on Youtube by searching for "asmaul husna" and "ESQ" or "Hijjaz" respectively). Kahfi employed the version used by Hijjaz, in which each name/attribute was preceded by the definite article. In this rendition, the initial part of the definite article (the alif-hamza, the "A" of "Al") is elided for the terminal vowel of the preceding attribute. So not "Al-Malik, Al-Qudus," but "ul-Maliku-lQudus," etc. The ESQ recitation employs the particle "ya" prior to each attribute: ya Malik, ya Qudus. This gives the recitation the distinct air of a supplication, the ya serving to beseech God-as-the-particular attribute for the reciter. Although too fine a point could be made of this, the ESQ version is *to* God and the Hijjaz *about* God.

emissaries of God) that followed the 99<sup>th</sup> name. The voicing of *asmaul husna* took about four minutes and marked the formal commencement of class, and usually heralded the end of side-talk and chatter that dominated the classroom prior to the recitation (this last point was heavily contingent on who the instructor was<sup>171</sup> – if it was Om Bagus, then full attention was paid. If it was one of his former students or deputies, classroom conduct was less uniformly attentive). Following *asmaul husna*, several verses from the Qur’an would be recited – first in Arabic, followed by an Indonesian interpretation read by a different student. The next class would begin from the verse on which the previous class had concluded, thus ensuring an eventual full recitation of the text. Often there would be a brief *doa* or supplication offered by the student responsible for opening the class, at which point the instructor (usually Om Bagus) would be introduced by the same designated student. Instruction in the theory and practice of hypnotherapy would then commence. Closing the class we would recite *sholawat nariyah* (this is a very popular praise hymn that beseeches God to bless the Prophet, but also to remove all earthly needs, agonies and difficulties from the supplicant).<sup>172</sup> These textual performances bracketed the presentation of materials that occurred between them. These frames helped mark the space of instruction, not merely the content, as legibly Islamic. This approach also occurred in dramatic fashion within the curriculum addressed to hypnosis itself.

As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, Kahfi was intent on presenting hypnosis as both a global phenomenon and a Western practice. With an eye to forestalling potential criticism of hypnotherapy as invoking dark magic, the intercession of djin or other fraught

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<sup>171</sup> As a member of the 9th Kahfi class, I was part of the last cohort to be instructed primarily by Om Bagus. There were 35 members of my cohort (by comparison, the 10th cohort had two groups of 40, the 11th and 12th had 5 groups of 40-50). Instruction, after the 9th cohort, was undertaken by graduates of the program, or in the case of later cohorts, by the most senior students still at the institution from earlier cohorts. Just as classes are conducted free from tuition, teaching was performed without remuneration.

<sup>172</sup> It has been criticized from modernist-salafist quarters due to the role of the Prophet as an intercessor within the text of the *salawat*



activity, the emphasis was repeatedly on the scientific nature of hypnosis. Additionally, similar to the processes observed at IofC, the fact that hypnosis was Western was on its face proof against the claim of *bidah*. At Kahfi, however, this ostensibly neutral or even secular practice was nested within an Islamic genealogy and directed towards ethico-spiritual ends. The healing that was intended by Kahfi hypnotherapy was a restoration of “right relations” with the Divine and the creation: one should have adab with God as well, and hypnosis became vehicle towards that adab. At the same time, by giving hypnosis a basis in the foundational knowledge of Islam, along with using hypnotherapy as a means for moral attainment, Kahfi aimed to repurpose this knowledge without falling prey to the accusation of corrupting the Islamic tradition (*bidah*). The repurposing was pursued in a literal fashion with the introductory materials on hypnosis: the PowerPoint presentation inaugurating the discussion of hypnosis was culled from a presentation belonging to a different, now defunct, organization, the Hypnosis Training Institute of Indonesia (HTII).<sup>173</sup> However, into the HTII slides (which nowhere mentioned Islam) were interpolated three slides titled *Sumber Fikir dari Al-Qur’an* [Sources of Thought from Al Qur’an] (Figure 7-12).

The original PowerPoint Slides are Figures 7; 9; 11; and my translations are Figures 8; 10; 12. The originals included an excerpted verse from the Qur’an (on the left), followed by an Indonesian translation of its contents (on the right). Rather than simply provide an English language interpretation (translation) of the scripture and assume that it corresponds to the Indonesian interpretation, I have elected to provide Muhsin Khan’s recent interpretation (on the left) along with my own gloss of the Indonesian language interpretation (on the right). Thus each

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<sup>173</sup> Om Bagus had been affiliated with this organization, and it is certainly plausible that he was also the original author of the slides. In the teaching files he generously handed over to me, I found both the Kahfi version and the HTII version, with no mention of Islam.

passage from the Qur'an appears four times – once in Arabic and Indonesian, twice in English. While cumbersome, this is an effort to respect the difficulties of engaging with scripture across translation, let alone re-doubled translation. It should further be noted that there are many criticisms of the Khan interpretation – especially as Khan relates to the Peoples of Book – but I have selected this particular option to provide the clearest contrast with the Indonesian versions (drawn from the Ministry of Religion approved translation). Khan's translation tends to “narrow” the meaning, whereas this particular Indonesian translation has a healthy respect for ambiguity.

In the Kahfi introduction to hypnosis class, the use of these slides with their Quranic citations is a little jarring. Coming after the first two slides which introduce the phenomenon of hypnosis as it will be studied (in very general terms), there is little context for these “sources of thought.” What follows these slides is a more neuro-mechanical explanation of hypnosis (again, with no reference to Islam). As such, the Quranic interpolation slides clearly stand alone across the presentation. They are not self-disclosing: they required interpretation by the instructor. The brief exegesis that follows is partially based on the classroom explanations I heard, with the addition of my own observations. Returning to the slides themselves, their contents are compelling. On each slide there is a spare interpretation provided by the heading (“About the existence of the Hypnotic State;” “about speaking to the soul”), followed by the citation itself. These headings, in the classroom, were part of a fascinating argument about the nature of hypnosis, the kinds of change it enables, and the processes of knowledge assimilation conducted within Kahfi.

## Sumber Fikir dari Al-Qur'an

### tentang keadaan Keadaan Hypno



*"(Ingatlah), ketika Allah menjadikan kamu mengantuk sebagai suatu penentraman daripadaNya, dan Allah menurunkan kepadamu hujan dari langit untuk menyucikan kamu dengan hujan itu dan menghilangkan dari kamu gangguan-gangguan syaitan dan untuk menguatkan hatimu dan memperseguh dengannya telapak kaki(mu)"*  
(QS. Al-Anfal : 11)

### tentang berbicara pada jiwa



*" Mereka itu adalah orang-orang yang Allah mengetahui apa yang ada dalam hati mereka Karena itu berpalinglah kamu dari mereka, dan berilah mereka pelajaran, dan katakanlah kepada mereka perkataan yang berbekas pada jiwa mereka "*  
(QS. An-Nisa : 63)

Figure 7 Sources of Thought from Al Qur'an (1A)

## Sources of Thought from Al Qur'an

### About the existence of the Hypnotic State

11. (Remember) when He covered you with a slumber as a security from Him, and He caused water (rain) to descend on you from the sky, to clean you thereby and to remove from you the *Rijz* (whispering, evil-suggestions, etc.) of *Shaitan* (Satan), and to strengthen your hearts, and make your feet firm thereby.

*(Remember), when Allah made you drowsy as a reassurance from Him, and Allah sent down rain upon you from the sky to purify you and with that rain to remove from you all the interferences of Satan and to strengthen your heart and with that to reinforce your stance.*

Al-Anfal: 11

### About speaking to the soul

63. They (hypocrites) are those of whom Allah knows what is in their hearts; so turn aside from them (do not punish them) but admonish them, and speak to them an effective word (i.e. to believe in Allah, worship Him, obey Him, and be afraid of Him) to reach their inner selves.

*They are the people who Allah knows what is in their hearts. As a result, turn from them, and give them lessons, and speak to them words that leave a mark on their souls*

An-Nisa: 63

Figure 8 Sources of Thought from Al Qur'an (1B)

The initial slide, Figures 7-8, contains two excerpted verses (8:11; 4:63) from the Qur'an, the first of which bears the heading "About the existence of the Hypnotic State." Rather than positioning hypnosis as merely lawful (that which is not forbidden is presumptively allowable), the author of this slide suggests that the phenomenon itself carries the impress of Divine design. Verse 8:11, concerning divine drowsiness, was revealed after the Battle of Badr, and describes Divine intervention in the course of that battle.<sup>174</sup> In the famed Quranic interpretation (*tafsir*) of al-Tustari (d. 896 CE)<sup>175</sup>, the elements of this verse are explained, "Drowsiness (nu'ās) descends from the brain while yet the heart remains awake [lit. alive]. Sleep (nawm) [only descends] on the heart outwardly. That is the rule (ḥukm) [for] sleep. However, the same rule [that applied to the heart] regarding drowsiness [applies to] the spirit (rūḥ)" (81). Al-Tustari argues that the outward appearance of drowsiness does not impede the internal function of the body and the same can be said for the spirit – and here spirit means the soul in both its conscious and unconscious dimensions. The author of the Kahfi slide endorses an interpretation akin to al-Tustari's, and carries this logic one step further. Just as God induced this state in the warriors facing their enemy at Badr, a state where one is open to the reassurances of the Divine and can be purified from the interruptions and disturbances of Satan can be achieved through hypnotherapy. Thus hypnotherapy is conceived as a Divinely authored state where impurities and fear can be stricken – the hypnotist acts not *as* the Divine, but within the fold of the Divinely sanctioned. In the Kahfi reading, it is as if God hypnotized the Muslim forces on the 17<sup>th</sup> of

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<sup>174</sup> The Battle of Badr was a decisive moment in the early history of Islam, where a Muslim force overcame a larger Meccan force – with Divine assistance as elaborated in the Qur'an.

<sup>175</sup> Sahl al-Tustari was an early Persian Sufi scholar of Islam, here translated by Annabel and Ali Keeler. In Ibn Kathir's *tafsir* of this verse, the distinction is made between sleep and slumber – sleep affects the body, whereas slumber affects the mind. That which overtook the greatly outnumbered Muslim forces in the battle of Badr was slumber, such that they could act without consciousness, ie, without fear.

Ramadhan when they faced their Meccan adversaries in the Battle of Badr. Hypnosis becomes a medium through which humans can be changed directly by the divine.

The second verse cited on this slide (4:63), which is provided with the heading “about speaking to the soul,” is somewhat more straightforward in its connotations. The Kahfi author (or compiler) distills from this a generalized principle. Whereas the fourth *surah*, An-Nisa, is commonly held to be revelation that addresses the ethical obligations incumbent on the Muslim community (matters of inheritance, treatment of orphans, performance of social roles), the specific verse is interpreted by the Kahfi author as a broad maxim concerning “speaking to the soul.” Given that the soul only adopts the appearance of sleep, in the hypnotic state of drowsiness the hypnotherapist is given license to speak directly to the soul, and is encouraged to do so in a manner that will “leave a mark” (or in Khan’s English interpretation of the Qur’an, to utilize “effective words”). Rather than the explicit content of this verse – how to address hypocrites and non-believers – the Kahfi author arrives at a basic operating principle for the conduct of hypnosis. It is assumed that insofar as an individual suffers from a spiritual ailment, there is an element of hypocrisy or non-belief within her, an element that can be addressed and ameliorated with marking words. This is clearly a theory of change that allows the agent of change to affect the changed from without: the intervention of the hypnotist leaves a mark on the soul of the person healed. The author of these slides moves on from this theory of hypnosis to its actual practice in the context of scripturally-sanctioned knowledge.

**Sumber Fikir dari Al-Qur'an**

**Terapi dengan Bahasa Lembut**

﴿قَوْلَاهُ قَوْلًا لَيًّا لَعَلَّهُ يَتَذَكَّرُ أَوْ يَخْشَى﴾

" maka berbicaralah kamu berdua kepadanya dengan kata-kata yang lemah lembut, mudah-mudahan ia ingat dan takut".  
(QS. Taha : 44)

**Allah menerima Taubat dengan sungguh-sungguh**

﴿وَيَذْهَبْ عَنَّا غَيْظَ قُلُوبِهِمْ وَيَتُوبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيَّ مِنْ نِشْأَةٍ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ﴾

" Dan menghilangkanpanz hati orang-orang mukmin. Dan Allah menerima Taubat orang yang dikehendakiNya. Allah Maha Mengetahui lagi Maha Bijaksana." (QS. At-Taubah : 15)

Figure 9 Sources of Thought from Al-Qur'an (2A)

**Sources of Thought from Al-Qur'an**

**Therapy with gentle speech**

44. "And speak to him mildly, perhaps he may accept admonition or fear Allah." "and so you two should speak to him with soft and gentle words, hopefully he will remember and fear"

Taha: 44

**Allah accepts earnest Repentance**

15. And remove the anger of their (believers') hearts. Allah accepts the repentance of whom He wills. Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise. "And remove the anger [and jealousy] of the believers. And Allah accepts the Repentance of those whom He wills. Allah is All-Knowing and All-Wise."

At-Taubah: 15

Figure 10 Sources of Thought from Al-Qur'an (2B)

The next slide, Figures 9-10, introduces further Quranic evidence. The first Quranic citation (20:44), provided the heading “Therapy with Gentle Speech,” is drawn from the story of Moses confronting Pharaoh detailed in the *Surat Ta-Ha*. As with the directives concerning the proper address of souls, here a specific instance is held up as a general exemplar of therapeutic practice. The soft speech of the hypnotist is ultimately directed towards helping the subject of hypnosis to remember and fear God – the all-important Islamic concept of God-consciousness or *takwa* (Ar. *taqwa*; sometimes piety). The *ayat* excerpted by the slide’s author contains that two-part definition of *takwa* – consciousness (memory) and awe (fear) with respect to God. In the Indonesian interpretation this is evidenced by the use of the terms *ingat* (remember) and *takut* (fear). Hypnosis is thus imagined to induce this quality in the subject. Soothing tones are enjoined on Moses in his efforts at proselytization. As a guiding principle then, even in more prosaic encounters, this principle is being enshrined in IH. And so this is also a claim about efficacy, about the possibility of spreading *takwa*. This slide enunciates the adab of hypnosis – the gentleness of speech – and by implicitly enlisting adab, the efficacy of IH as a conduit of change is further established. The subsequent verse appearing on this slide is also very much in keeping with the broader Kahfi mission, and helps make the transition from the particulars of practice to the universal objectives of change: the restoration of *fitra*.

Under the heading, “Allah accepts Earnest Repentance,” the slide’s author excerpts a verse (9:15) from the *surah* conventionally referred to as the “Surah of Repentance.” Despite the explicitly scientific methodology of hypnotherapy – its focus on brainwaves, theories of mind, and mechanics of induction – the ultimate etiology of the distress in the IH encounter is a spiritual malady. A core spiritual ailment is understood with the metaphor of space: distance from God. As such, the hypnotherapeutic encounter is designed to return the individual to right

relations with the Divine. The primary means for re-establishing right relations with God in Islam is the notion of sincere repentance: *istighfar*, or beseeching forgiveness, and *taubat* (Ar.*tawbah*), repentance, which in Arabic also denotes a return to the grace of God. Hypnosis allows the therapist to excite these operations, ideally assisting the hypnotized subject in re-submitting to Divine Will. However in making this point with the title, the author of this slide enters into dialogue with the verse itself, which clarifies the Divine authority of God to make reality (and repentance) in keeping with God's will. The verse *doesn't* state that earnest repentance is accepted (that is ultimately God's prerogative). In its titling, the author provides guidance on how to align the individual self with the Divine Will: God accepts repentance that is earnest, rather than earnest repentance is guaranteed to be accepted. Anger (*panas hati* or hot-headed in the Indonesian interpretation) are soul sicknesses, and given the absolute priority of humility within the scripture, removing the anger of the believers goes a long distance towards restoring the right relationship to the Divine. Change, here, is ultimately a matter of return.



## Sumber Fikir dari Al-Qur'an

### Penyakit hati obatnya Al-Qur'an



*"Hai manusia, sesungguhnya telah datang kepadamu pelajaran dari Tuhanmu dan penyembuh bagi penyakit-penyakit (yang berada) dalam dada dan petunjuk serta rahmat bagi orang-orang yang beriman"*

(QS. Yunus : 57)

### Hypnosis sebagai sebab, Allah yang menentukan



*"Perangilah mereka, niscaya Allah akan menyiksa mereka dengan (perantara) tangan-tanganmu dan Allah akan menghinakan mereka dan menelakkan kamu terhadap mereka, serta melegakan hati orang-orang beriman"* (QS. At-Taubah : 14)

Figure 11 Sources of Thought from Al-Qur'an (3A)

## Sources of Thought from Al-Qur'an

### Al-Qur'an is the medicine for illnesses of the heart

57. O mankind! There has come to you a good advice from your Lord (i.e. the Qur'an, ordering all that is good and forbidding all that is evil), and a healing for that (disease of ignorance, doubt, hypocrisy and differences, etc.) in your breasts, - a guidance and a mercy (explaining lawful and unlawful things, etc.) for the believers.

*"O humans, in truth there has come to you lessons from your Lord and healing for the illnesses (that exist) within your breasts and guidance and mercy for the people with faith."*

Yunus: 57

### Hypnosis as the cause, Allah as the Agent

14. Fight against them so that Allah will punish them by your hands and disgrace them and give you victory over them and heal the breasts of a believing people

*"Battle them, certainly Allah will persecute them with (the intermediary of) your hands and Allah will debase them and assist you in facing them, and will assuage the hearts of the people with faith"*

At-Taubah: 14

Figure 12 Sources of Thought from Al-Qur'an (3B)

The final slide, Figures 11-12, in the three-slide series providing Quranic legitimation of hypnosis as a healing practice begins with a citation of a verse that articulates the spiritual efficacy of scripture itself (10:57). Having established that the hypnotic state is divinely authored, and that (scientific) hypnotic practice is consonant with ideal moral suasion, the slide's compiler here asserts the role of scripture in affecting a healing of psycho-spiritual ailments. It's not obvious how this corresponds to hypnotherapy at Kahfi; other Kahfi practices help provide that context. In learning about hypnotherapy, we were instructed to begin sessions (at least those with Muslim clients), with a short recitation from the Qur'an (typically one of the so-called six healing verses [*ayat al-shifa*], including 9:14 above). These served to sanctify the procedures in much the way the recitations functioned in the classroom, but the specific verses we were encouraged to use were also attributed more particular efficacy. The healing properties of ethical speech can be seen in this verse as an endorsement of hypnotherapeutic technique.

The final verse (9:14) is given the title the title, "Hypnosis as the Cause, Allah as the Agent." In this last interpolation into the "introduction to hypnosis," the author again derives a general principle from a specific context. Though the explicit text of the scripture references battle, it is imagined to allude here to the capacity of the hypnotist to heal the heart of the believer. In keeping with the *Ash'ari* theological position (occasionalism), the injunction is to remember that the only independent cause in this process is God. Here the verse is less an explanation of the phenomenon of hypnosis and more an admonition to avoid misplaced attribution of causality – the hypnotist should avoid attributing any genuine spiritual efficacy to her own work, since it is effective only with the grace of God. The hypnotist is merely the vessel of Divine agency. Lest the practitioners of IH be confused on this point, they are reminded that the changes achieved within hypnosis are done not just by God's permission, but through God's

agency. Following this slide, the Kahfi author reverts to the materials as they were originally presented in their neutral, scientific format addressed to the not-necessarily Muslim audience of the Hypnosis Training Institute of Indonesia. Gone are Quranic citations, in their place extended discussion of the brain waves associated with different stages of hypnosis.

My exposition of these slides is indicative of the general educational strategy at work in Kahfi. Information is delivered piecemeal, until students are invited to draw correspondences between the separate elements and develop a coherent whole. Ostensibly secular materials are first introduced, and then systematically re-understood in light of scriptural authority and Divine design. Students are empowered to ask questions, and Om Bagus is a master crafter of “Aha” moments. The mild confusion, followed by the payoff of recognition and comprehension is an integral part of the learning experience cultivated within the school. Counter-intuitive linkages proliferate throughout Kahfi teaching materials. In a much less graceful manner, the exploration of the slides above parallels their use in practice, although the emphases placed here are my own rather than strictly representative of my exposure to these materials in the Kahfi environment.

The operation of the interpolated slides above, like the use of *zikir*, Quranic recitation and supplication, acts to nest diverse educational material at Kahfi within Islamic frames. Recall that every class begins with the Qur’an and ends with a praise hymn directed towards the Prophet. These framing practices further parallel the material and spiritual practices used to mark the religious probity of the Kahfi school’s facilities. Rather than an “Islamic veneer” or coating, the persistence of these efforts and their cascading effect transforms ostensibly secular scientific knowledge (hypnosis) into a meaningfully Islamic discipline. The appropriation that takes place here involves the attribution of an Islamic genealogy for this knowledge and the direction of its attendant practices towards Islamic ends (ultimately, submission to God). This is possible

precisely because the core materials for IH are attributed to western advancements in morally neutral scientific endeavor. Hypnosis, as a process, is re-cast as a universal capacity, divinely authored. The technology of accessing this God-given capacity, however, does not rely on polytheistic magic, misplaced causality, or any other internal threat to Islamic theological consistency. Instead it is imported from the west.

There is considerable creativity at stake in this endeavor, and the authors of these negotiations are explicit about the mental and spiritual work it requires. In the repurposing of hypnosis that takes place at Kahfi, very different subjectivities are imagined and cultivated from those formed in the promotion and study of motivational strategies that animates other Kahfi endeavors. This despite a consistent understanding of “change” as always ultimately the preserve of God. This is perhaps even more visible in terms of the application of IH techniques to non-Muslim audiences and clients. Here Om Bagus would delicately compromise between a nationalist-Indonesian impulse to (verbally at least) respect the diversity of faiths and the assumption of Islamic hypnotherapy that soul-sicknesses are ultimately understood as distance from God. This amounted to deconfessionalizing Islamic hypnotherapy. Om Bagus would perform this operation not, as one might imagine, by reverting to hypnotherapy as a morally neutral western science. Instead he would translate Islamic concepts into nationalist or ecumenical idioms. At a mass-induction for a mixed audience, Om Bagus directed those in attendance to fly their balloons to *tanah suci* (the holy lands), *dan bagi saudara-saudari yang non-Muslim, kepada tempat yang dianggap suci* (and for my non-Muslim brothers-and-sisters, towards a place considered holy). I was privy to several instances of this, and failed to discern a uniform approach; however, this topic will return adjacent to the more spectacular results (an

instance where the fraught character of hypnotherapy is exposed in a case of “near-possession”) at the close of this project.

### **Pedagogy and Islamic Hypnotherapy: The Subjects of the Educational Encounter**

As becomes the focus in the closing chapter of this project, some instruction at Kahfi is directed towards a particular sort of idealized subjectivity, consonant with American management strategy books and contemporary self-help literature (the *I* acts on the *I* in pursuit of worldly ends) – and resonant with the economic citizenship of the New Order imagination (work hard, pay who you need to, don’t make noise). Some recent scholarly observers have become accustomed to referring to these *consonant* subjectivities as “neo-liberal,” despite the suspect analytic utility of this category. And suspicion is warranted. This-worldly pursuits are not antithetical to devotional commitment in the Islamic tradition. To the extent that contemporary Indonesians continue to asceticize Islam, it is often through their participation in globalized discourses of religious purity. These efforts betray the political legacies introduced at the outset of this project: attempts to stabilize religion and culture. Both have long been subject to regulatory regimes. And so collapsing Islamic hypnotherapy into the secularized pursuit of bureaucratic efficiency or economic efficacy would seem to continue, uncritically, this tradition. Even where this argument makes most sense (and in places, it does), it doesn’t appear to account for IH. There was very little tension between hypnotherapy, as understood, practiced and discussed, and the constellation of self-consciously Islamic values privileged within Kahfi. The instruction in hypnotherapy contained other sorts of potentials, which lay beyond the claims of the national narrative or idealized notions of individual autonomy.

The subject of change at Kahfi is the recipient of a certain kind of education. Sometimes the hypnotist “educates” the subject directly, using words that “mark” her soul. In other

instances, it is the hypnotist who must be changed through an engagement with both the scientific technology of hypnosis and the authorizing tradition of Islam. To further explore some of the possibilities within the Kahfi model of education, I turn to the seminal work of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas. In “the Concept of Education in Islam,” revised and reprinted in *Islam, Secularism and the Philosophy of the Future*, al-Attas systematically develops a theory of Islamic knowledge. We have already considered a version of this text in the context of our discussion of *adab*, but al-Attas’s arguments also have insights into the general educational enterprise at Kahfi. Al-Attas provides a definition of “Islamic knowledge”:

That is why we have defined knowledge epistemologically as the arrival in the soul of the *meaning* of a thing, or the arrival of the soul at the *meaning* of a thing. The ‘meaning of a thing’ means the *right* meaning of it; and what is considered to be the ‘right’ meaning is in this context determined by the Islamic vision of reality and truth as projected by the Quranic conceptual system (178, ital. original).

Al-Attas is attempting to formulate a positive epistemology of Islamic knowledge – there are things to be known, and there are furthermore right ways to know the right things. This is the *adab* of knowledge. An enterprise like Kahfi conceives of itself as having the right meanings in hand, and sets out to discover the optimal methods by which other souls can arrive at those meanings – or that those meanings can arrive in those souls. Bypassing flawed rational consciousness, the hypnotherapist is able to deliver right meanings directly to suffering subjects. Knowledge, here, is relational as well as propositional. Acquiring this knowledge is a process of being changed.

Building on this understanding of knowledge, al-Attas elucidates its fuller implications before arriving at a definition of education germane to this project: “[R]ecognition *and acknowledgement, progressively instilled into man, of the proper places of things in the order of creation, such that it leads to the recognition and acknowledgement of the proper place of God*

*in the order of being and existence*” (182). Al-Attas earlier stipulates that the “proper place” entails on the one hand, “the ontological domain which includes man and the world of empirical things, and on the other to the theological domain which includes the religious and ethical aspects of human existence” (180). This multi-partite conceptualization is exceedingly useful for understanding the stakes of a Kahfi education, at least as practiced in semester addressed to the hypnotherapeutic materials. IH entails understanding the proper place and learning to recognize when things are “out-of-place,” and then re-situating them such that the individual undergoing hypnosis is left at the inescapable majesty of the Divine. These acts are thus also the operation of adab. Recognizing when things are out of place takes adab, and then the effort to remedy their placement requires its own adab. The instrumental knowledge necessary to hypnosis – the Western method, as it is described in Kahfi literature – is not the object of education. It is the means by which students are led to the recognition and acknowledgement of God and empowered to lead others, through their hypnotic practice, to the same recognition. This process, however, often involves considerable spiritual risk, even though Kahfi materials attempt to negate its fraught nature through the emphasis on scientific methodologies. The risk involves agency.

Influenced by Amira Mittermaier’s *Dreams that Matter*, I was struck with the parallels between spiritual efficacy in dreams and the Islamic hypnotherapeutic intervention. I also felt liberated from the relentless promotion of piety in recent analyses of Islam. Beyond the interpretive associations between sleep and the hypnotic state – interpretations that obtain at the Kahfi Motivator School – this is one more domain where “self-cultivation,” in the pietistic cast, is not really the model of change. Late in my training in hypnotherapy, I practiced on classmate. Having induced Syafiq, I established a link between touching his left leg and persistent negative

emotions (*trauma* in the Kahfi idiom). Touching his right knee, I directed him to recall feelings of satisfaction, accomplishment, joy, and acceptance. As I worked my way through the script supplied by Om Bagus, I was attempting to elicit and nullify traumatic experiences in Syafiq's life. Each time my hand clasped his left knee, his body quivered and his face contorted into a grimace. Sweat beaded along his forehead and he whimpered, barely audibly. Shifting my attention to his right knee, his entire body slackened, his breath slowed, and the lines around his mouth relaxed into a soft smile. Back and forth I alternated between eliciting pain and hailing its release. Then I grabbed both knees and allowed the affective contest to course through his body. He stiffened, wracked by sobs, until slowly his body stilled. Releasing his left, I retained my grip on his right, softly asserting a litany of positive experiences – several of which had been offered by Syafiq in the pre-hypnosis interview the practice demanded. The goal was to heal trauma, to rally positive affect and to neutralize persistent intrapersonal challenges. To the extent it worked, Syafiq was returned to a *fitra* of greater peace and spiritual equanimity. Indeed, after we finished he referred to himself as *tenang*, calm; serene; quieted. He achieved this not through diligent self-discipline, but through grace, occasioned by the application of a scientific technology. If the nesting theology of this encounter insists that, ultimately, it is only the Divine that acts upon the individual, that does nothing to dilute the importance and the explicit causal mechanism by which the hypnotist bends the subjectivity of her patient. Signs of success reverberate not only in the reflective understandings of Kahfi students, but in the profound affective experiences they induce in others. The tears of the repentant are the sign of the restoration of the right order of things, the lived instantiation of adab extending from God all the way down to the smallest detail of creation. This is something we do to, and for, each other with divine permission.



## Chapter 5

### Kahfi, Motivation, and Motivasi

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِنَّمَا بُعِثْتُ لِأَتَمِّمَ صَالِحَ الْأَخْلَاقِ<sup>176</sup>

Said the Messenger of God, Blessings of God and Peace upon Him: I was sent to perfect righteous character.

In the previous chapter on Islamic Hypnotherapy, I argued that the interventions of the hypnotherapist complicate recent analyses foregrounding ethical self-fashioning. Certainly a related operation is at work in Kahfi, with the important qualification that the technologies employed are frequently other-oriented. Earlier, in the context of IofC, I established how another ethical demand – to have *adab* – eludes the exclusive focus on the relationship between the worshipper and the Divine that features so prominently in many discussions of piety. Here, in an exploration of the motivational speaking curriculum at Kahfi Motivator School, I claim that “motivasi” is put to service in settings that may once have called for other models of intersubjective efficacy (especially magic), and that the motivator can be profitably understood in the light of the charismatic. Before advancing these claims, I detail the interpretive strategies through which a key motivational text was incorporated into the educational setting of Kahfi Motivator School, a process that involves the borrowed mantle of science, a scientific truth

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<sup>176</sup> Reported by Malik (“Muwatta Malik” 1643). This hadith is among those most frequently cited in moral exhortations during Friday sermons (*khutbah*). At Kahfi, this was the exemplary character to which the students were directed to aspire. The best way to emulate the Prophet, then, was to perfect one’s character – or, for the motivator, to perfect others’ character.

effect, as it were. This scientific truth effect recalls the neutral epistemology ascribed to “Western” hypnotherapeutic practice in the preceding chapter, as well as the instrumental use of English in the IofC context. Throughout this chapter I draw a distinction between “*motivasi*” and “motivation,” where the former is understood as an inspired iteration of the latter, denoting discrete if overlapping fields of desire, efficacy and action.

### **Motivation and the Self-Help Canon**

Recent literature addressed to self-help and motivational practices have begun to take seriously mass phenomena that have long eluded sustained scholarly inquiry.<sup>177</sup> Beyond the dismissive cultural assumptions embedded in common sense accounts, there are serious theoretical gaps that prevent careful analysis of motivation (and *motivasi*). One is a problem of specificity – twelve-step movements like Alcoholics Anonymous or Overeaters Anonymous, for instance, share a genealogy with the First Century Christian Fellowship and Oxford Groups discussed in Chapter 2. It makes little sense to talk about the practices of twelve-step group in concert with the recent meteoric rise (and equally rapid disappearance) of a self-help phenomenon like *the Secret*. *The Secret* is a 2006 film with a companion book written by Rhonda Byrne. The text posits natural laws that guarantee outcomes for an efficacious self. Borrowing a scientific idiom (quantum mechanics), the authors of *the Secret* promise to provide the conceptual tools to deliver their readers (or viewers) to the future they desire. This is a model of transformation premised on an agentic capacity for self-on-self change. Twelve step movements, by contrast, demand a posture of submission and surrender. Twelve-step theories of

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<sup>177</sup> See, for instance, Alison Falby’s biography of Gerald Heard, *Between the Pigeonholes*. Heard was an important figure in the development of many of these discourses. For perhaps the best recent general critical treatment, see Eva Illouz’s *Saving the Modern Soul*. The already frequently cited contributions by Howell, Rudnycky and Hoesterey are Indonesian-specific examples of this. A general social-science approach is advocated in McGee, “From Makeover Media to Remaking Culture.” For one of the most widely cited “dismissive” accounts (self-help as neo-liberal state control), see Rimke “Governing Citizens through Self-Help Literature.”

change (theologies?) rely on the fundamental incapacity of the individual, who lacks the power to re-order herself. As discussed with reference to Initiatives of Change Indonesia, which shares in the heritage of twelve-step movements, this means that the practitioner adopts a posture ideally configured to “host” divine agency. The active assumption of a passive position – willfully being acted upon – relies on practices and logics quite discrete from the self-on-self activity featured in other motivational materials. Yet both *The Secret* and Overeaters Anonymous are understood with reference to “self-help” and “popular psychology.”

In common usage and scholarly analyses alike, “self-help” refers to at least two related but discrete activities. In its broadest usage it denotes activities undertaken without the mediations of a state, an organization, a professional or an expert. In the Indonesian context, this has frequently involved research addressed to *arisan* (pooled finances) and *simpan pinjam* (save-borrow) schemes.<sup>178</sup> Because *arisan* are organized, typically, by neighborhood collectives, they are understood to be “self-help.” Thus Hotze Lont writes about these schemes in an essay entitled “Financial Self-Help Organizations in Indonesia,” collected in *Household Strategies for Survival 1600-2000*. In detailing the operations of *arisan*, Lont uses the common sense “self-help” to refer to the non-state character of these collective operations. Lont later turns a much more critical eye to these organizations in *Juggling Money*, demonstrating how membership is based on both conscription and exclusion and embedded within other structures and exercises of social powers. Lont is, understandably, unconcerned with the ascription of self-help since in this

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<sup>178</sup> Struggling for a convenient gloss for *arisan*, I turn to the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia*: “the activity of collecting money or equal valued belongings amongst multiple people, next a lottery amongst them determines who receives it, the lottery is held at regularly scheduled meeting until all members receive [the collected money or goods].” Thus *arisan* refers to the collected money, the meeting where it is collected and distributed as well as the entire process: kegiatan mengumpulkan uang atau barang yg bernilai sama oleh beberapa orang kemudian diundi di antara mereka untuk menentukan siapa yg memperolehnya, undian dilaksanakan di sebuah pertemuan secara berkala sampai semua anggota memperolehnya (“arisan”). Or, more succinctly as one critic explained it: “rotating credit scheme.”

analysis the term denotes bottom-up organization rather the constitution of the self-helping subjects. This “self-help” can be contrasted with the “self-help” that is imagined to be employed by the liberal individual: one emphasizes autonomous collectivities, the other autonomous individuals.

Other recent literature has focused on the (neo)liberal individual subject of “self-help.” In this work the neo-liberal subject is thought to be the autonomous agent at work in their own lives beneath the aegis of broad projects of economic liberalization. In this way individual performance is seen as a supplement to global corporate as well as state efforts to achieve efficiency, reduced drag on trade and end nationalized industries. In such literature, instead of the relationship to the state or formal non-state actors, “self-help” emphasizes the imagined self-efficacy of an intervention performed “by oneself,” where that self is a liberal agent. Daromir Rudnycky is most invested in these valences of “self-help” in his path-breaking study of ESQ, *Spiritual Economies*, first introduced in our discussion of hypnosis. Describing the enlistment of moral-improvement rhetoric into economic rationalization, Rudnycky writes, “ESQ and other manifestations of spiritual reform, such as life-coaching and self-help genres in North America, approached living a life as a technical problem that could be addressed through rational interventions” (121). For Rudnycky, the appeal of ESQ in Indonesia is structurally parallel to the attractiveness of life-coaching and self-help in North America. Not only are they parallel, they are really the same thing: Given Rudnycky’s frequent characterization of Manajemen Qolbu and ESQ as participating in self-help traditions,<sup>179</sup> it is unsurprising that the selves here

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<sup>179</sup> See also Hoesterey, “Figures of Modernity” and “Prophetic Cosmopolitanism.” In the latter essay, Hoesterey situates popular preachers as aspiring cosmopolitans, enunciating a vision of the Prophet as the ultimate cosmopolitan. They do so through their media savvy and technological literacy, often in service of “consumerist” aims. Hoesterey is ultimately much more cautious than Rudnycky. Whereas Rudnycky confidently collapses ESQ into already familiar phenomenon, Hoesterey flirts with the endoxa of neoliberal subjectivity without ever reducing the subjects of his research to mere “symptoms.”

helped are imagined to be the liberal subject of autonomous moral and economic intervention. Self-help, in this account, needs no introduction.

Taking a page from this widespread theorization, Lyn Parker and Pam Nilan, in *Adolescents in Contemporary Indonesia*, write about the “hybrid Muslim – the neoliberal discourse of personal improvement.” Under this heading, they discuss the ubiquity of the framing of personal improvement as an aspect of “human resource” (*sumber daya manusia*) development: “Young people have learned the *SDM* (human resource) discourse, and many talk the American talk of self-help or self-improvement, usually mixed with the discourse of Islamic personal development. Book stores are awash in Islam self-help books, many of them targeting youth” (170). The language of *sumber daya manusia* (human resources) is instructive, precisely because it echoes the language of material resources: *sumber daya* or *sumber daya alam* (natural resources). Yet this categorical collapse requires greater scrutiny – I am unfamiliar with the “American talk of self-help or self-improvement” that speaks of humans primarily as natural resources to be developed. In the rush to see the similarities, the humanistic idiom of Euro-American self-help is fully identified with the business epistemology of resource management. We should not be so certain that these are the same things: not just in Jakarta, but on the now silent stage of Oprah’s long-time Chicago studio as well. The ease with which disparate phenomena are grouped beneath the heading of “self-help” demands greater skepticism.

In an article that constructively enlists many of my key terms here, Muhammad Khan and Naeem Nisar Sheikh argue for an “Islamization” of human resource practice. Working under the title, “Human Resource Development, Motivation and Islam,” they argue, *apropos* my claims throughout this project, that “Before discussing Islam... we need to first discuss the nature of the present secular world (of science and matter). We understand that science and technology and its

knowledge and development are amoral in nature. Technology is not an end itself; it is means to an end and the nature of that end is determined by moral and spiritual character of human agents” (1025). The development of Islamic logics of personal empowerment, and their recruitment into business projects of economic efficiency, are truly global phenomena: these two scholars are writing about business strategy from a Moroccan university, although their words would resonate at Kahfi. But we should take seriously, if not the epistemic neutrality of science, at least the attempt to instrumentally employ science towards Islamic moral horizons. Why assume that a hybrid discourse of economic rationality and Islamic ethics is reducible to neo-liberalism? There is a strange hubris at work in the insistence that one’s home discourse is necessarily more fundamental.

Across highly differing accounts, part of the rationale for the collapse of “agency” with “resources” has to do with the instrumentality with which agency is imagined to be managed within these discourses. Rudnykyj, in *Spiritual Economies*, describes how ESQ practitioners targeted their interventions towards individuals to maximize economic efficiency: “proponents of spiritual reform sought to inculcate an ethic of self-management, which they termed ‘built-in control,’ to eliminate corruption and facilitate privatization by making the company more attractive to outside investment” (153). While reflective of the concerns at Krakatau Steel, no doubt, there is an attribution here that mistakes a technology for an end. Built-in control mechanisms – the servos of the psycho-cybernetics idiom below – are not, automatically, enlisted in Weberian projects of economic rationalization. Subjectivities other than liberal, too, imagine themselves as benefiting from a self-correcting process.<sup>180</sup> Establishing systems to

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<sup>180</sup> Early in *Christian Moderns*, Webb Keane mentions that what he terms the “moral narrative of modernity” has taken many forms – that although the liberal form is perhaps most influential, it is hardly exclusive (6). Too often,

modulate and moderate behavior were abiding areas of interest for medieval Muslim theologians, not to say anything of the Greek ethicists – neither tradition of which is easily characterized as neo-liberal.

In their work on Indonesian youth culture, Parker and Nilan give attention to both the Islamic motivations (these are not secular pursuits, they remind us) and the novel personal and intersubjective formations envisioned by participants and consumers of new media. Nevertheless, they remain fundamentally recognizable, or even derivative: “Islamic novels, articles, and self-help books share many aspects of the American discourse: a generally upbeat tone (you can become anything you like), the offering of encouragement, empathy and understanding, the generation of hope and insight, as well as practice advice and techniques for problem-solving” (174). In this account, Islam becomes merely the idiom for the expression of a fundamentally unchanged American discourse. On one hand, the valorization of efficacious individuals is definitely one dimension of these movements and literatures in Indonesia, and certainly doesn’t seem unfamiliar in the Kahfi context. On the other hand, there is a substantive excess unaccounted for by this somewhat too convenient reading. My interlocutors at Kahfi were very interested in enhancing their material prospects, but very seldom did it seem that their spiritual interventions were primarily subservient to those aspirations, or simply the working-out of a logical trajectory supplied by foreign discourse. Given the epistemological conceits that accompany the presentation and reception of “self-help” materials at Kahfi, it seems especially hasty to endorse either their chiefly derivative status or their supposed liberal objectives. Julia Day Howell, in “‘Calling’ and ‘Training,’” supports my intransigence on this matter. In her analysis of how Muslim lay preachers appropriate elements of “secular culture,” she describes a

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even in the exuberance of the literature addressed to the notion of multiple modernities, the idea that the liberal trajectory is but *one* configuration of modernity eludes recognition.

contemporary “eclecticism” defined as “the melding, worked by religious entrepreneur in new roles, of Islamic and denominationally neutralized religious communications with strategically selected secular elements of global culture, the immediate origins of which are primary in North Atlantic countries” (401). For Howell as for this analysis, the selectivity and strategy with which deconfessionalized discourse is appropriated and the aura of scientific neutrality marshaled, belies a simple characterization as derivative. There is something new here, and even where there is something old, it need not always be neoliberalism. Instead there are novel assemblages that borrow from available rhetorics to approach aims external to those rhetorics.

### **From Self-Help Literature to Motivator School**

In the following pages I critically examine a specific set of pedagogical practices and performances organized with respect to “motivation” and “motivasi” as they are understood and engaged in one community in contemporary Jakarta, Indonesia. My argument ultimately relies on leveraging these observations into a broader discussion about what is at stake in a motivational encounter. Doing so invites the standard furies of terminological imprecision. Many of the motivational texts discussed at Kahfi Motivator School recognizably belong to a tradition conventionally referred to as “self-help,” the imprecision of which is argued above. Additionally many of the strategies employed within the practices associated with these materials resemble “popular-psychology”: in both instances, the bulk of the materials consist of translated American texts. Contemporary self-help is heir to perhaps the Stoics but at least to Samuel Smiles’ 1859 text, *Self-Help*. It is, one finds, a wonderfully catchall designation. Suffice it to say, that over the course of the past century and a half, the moral and material improvement championed by Smiles has expanded to include a suite of personal enhancement procedures conducted without the mediating guidance of a socially, professionally or administratively sanctioned authority. The



selves helped via this supposed genre of texts and practices vary from one to another, as do the fundamental theories of agency and efficacy on which such interventions lie. Smiles, an ardent Scottish Liberal, shaped the conventions that so closely associate “self-help” with projects of liberal individualism. However, the wider notion of non-expert intervention has come to be employed in a host of illiberal and non-liberal activities.

During my time studying motivational speaking in Indonesia, one clear injunction was repeated across the various educational settings in which I was invited to intervene: “Motivate!” The forms of this injunction were myriad: *Dimotivasi! Kasih motivasi, ya! (Di)Beri motivasi!* Motivate, provide motivation, give motivation – whatever the form, my interlocutor assumed that motivation was a quality, a character, an affect or a substance that I possessed, and possessed in sufficient quantity to pass on to my audience – or perhaps, to impress upon them, if we invoke the therapeutic language of the Qur’an and the notion of “words that mark” introduced in the previous chapter on Islamic hypnotherapy. I was confronted with this command before addressing primary school English classes,<sup>181</sup> high school students facing their national exams,<sup>182</sup> worshippers beginning their post-dawn lives,<sup>183</sup> and state employees in the Taxation

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<sup>181</sup> Since a large part of my research was conducted with IofC Indonesia, which draws the core of its membership from the School of Education at the State Islamic University, I knew many English Language Education majors/graduates. This resulted in a steady stream of invitations to visit English classes at area schools. My protests that a singular performance of “native speaker” English was unlikely to advance students’ understanding of English were met with the counter-claim that, in fact, what was requested of me was not English but motivation.

<sup>182</sup> Motivational speakers do brisk business in the lead-up to the *Ujian Nasional*, or National Exams. A Kahfi Motivator School classmate invited me along to his paid seminars at a private Islamic school near where we both lived, where I was met with the now familiar injunction to motivate.

<sup>183</sup> There are multiple genres of post-worship speech popular at mosques and prayer halls. Two common Indonesian variants are the *kuliah subuh*, or *kulsub* (dawn class) and the *kuliah tujuh menit* or *kultum* (seven minute class). Whereas the *kulsub* may be a weekly or monthly didactic performance, the *kultum* is often a simple exhortation or testimony, and is a popular genre during the auspicious months of the Islamic calendar, in particular, during Ramadhan. Requested to offer a *kultum* at a small mosque in Pelabuhan Ratu, on the south coast of West Java, I proclaimed my (truthful) ignorance of the tradition. My inadequacies as a preacher were neatly discarded – just “motivate” those assembled, I was told by the young man inviting me to take hold of the microphone.

Directorate.<sup>184</sup> Perhaps most dramatically, the warden responsible for prisoner education at Lembaga Pemasyarakatan Cipinang (the Cipinang Penitentiary) asked me to motivate a foreign national awaiting a death sentence – a service I was unprepared and unwilling to provide.<sup>185</sup> In this particular setting, I pressed the warden about his desire: about what was I supposed to motivate the condemned man? The warden wasn't sure, but he was certain that the condemned needed motivation, whether to repent, to achieve acceptance of his lot, or towards some other unknowable aim. He voiced all of these possibilities, settling on none of them. What was clear was that everybody needs motivation.

My particular identity-pegs – as a foreigner, as a man, as white, as an enthusiastic practitioner of a faith tradition – certainly play a part in my potential recruitment as a motivator. The white foreigner, and especially the American, is a recognizable social figure in Indonesia. In addition to associations with wealth and privileged access, there are assumptions about linguistic mastery (English) along with highly valued cultural mastery (native comfort with eye contact, large gestural range, etc.) that recommend the white American as a public speaker and motivator. The convert, too, is considered a pregnant source of testimony, imagined to possess a narrative that reaches hearts. But the sheer fact of difference doesn't begin to account for the ubiquity of the request, nor, of course, for the existence of an institution with the name Kahfi Motivator School. The appetite for motivation is vast, and the demands upon the overloaded term extensive. In multiple speech settings in contemporary Indonesia, motivation is being enlisted to

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<sup>184</sup> I was part of the teaching entourage for a paid motivational seminar held at the central offices of the Finance Ministry's Directorate General of Taxation. Our seminar was part of in-service training in April, 2012 for a business taxation unit within the Directorate.

<sup>185</sup> As of this writing this individual has not been executed and is a likely candidate for a commutation – although the 2014 election of Joko Widodo has seen a renewed push for narcotics-related executions in Indonesia.

do a lot of different work. In charting some of that work, I don't pretend to begin to exhaust the term or its salience for Indonesian audiences.<sup>186</sup>

Motivational speaking in Indonesia is a local iteration of a globalized genre of discourse, a relationship I mark by the use of “motivasi” and “motivation” for the local and global respectively. But the actual motivational encounters I participated in belied a simply derivative status. The suites of practices imagined with reference to the term were quite heterogeneous. The range of texts employed in motivational work stretch from classic tomes of Euro-American (and really, American) self-help to the biography of the Prophet (*sirah nabi*). Canonical *hadith* and nationalist history are equally considered reservoirs of motivational learning. The methods adopted include PowerPoint presentations, illusionist performances and the careful management of collective affect around such salient experiences as guilt, shame, despair and forgiveness. A linear reading of the genealogy of self-help and motivation, given in its Euro-American context, could easily coalesce around market demands for certain kinds of rationality and business aesthetics, around particularistic work ethics and atomized alienated individuals. Accurate to a point, no doubt, such analyses lose the affective commitments that structure so many participants' engagement with these discourses (not just in Indonesia, motivation is a strange beast all over the place). And in Indonesia, the neo-liberal reading accounts for still less of the phenomena. Popular psychology remains that rare domain where the vulgar Marxist reading is presumptively accurate. The attention to the economic implications of motivation has much to recommend it – it alerts us to the possible motivations of both the industry that claims to supply

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<sup>186</sup> Part of this salience is probably accounted for by what H  l  ne Giroux terms “pragmatic ambiguity,” introduced in her article “It Was Such a Handy Term.” Pragmatic ambiguity, in her analysis, allows for the rapid uptake of a new management fashion over-and-above its efficacious utility. Synthesizing literature addressed to “strategic ambiguity,” “interpretive viability,” “boundary objects” and “umbrella constructs,” Giroux offers the minimal definition of pragmatic ambiguity as, “the condition of admitting more than one course of action” (1228). Thus terms like *motivasi spur action* without stipulating what that action entails – a feature of *motivasi* no doubt doubly true given its etymological linkage to motion.

it and the individuals who see, in motivation, the path to economic success. However to reduce it to pure false-consciousness is to blind oneself to what it *does*. A huge number of people, in diverse countries and languages, access these discourses to attain desired results in their lives, and with some success.

The Kahfi Motivator School, introduced in the preceding chapter, is one instance of a related, and vastly wider, movement addressed to moral interventions.<sup>187</sup> The hadith that is cited as an epigraph to this chapter was one of the key organizing texts for the Kahfi school community: emulating the life of the Prophet involved “perfecting” one’s moral stature. The motivational materials taught and studied at Kahfi were understood explicitly as the technologies through which character could be perfected. Thus the study of *motivasi* was also an attempt to conform to the exemplary behavior and personhood of the Prophet. There is a key distinction in the self-identity of the Kahfi school relative its moral activist peer institutions, however. This is its tuition structure: free, with the requirement that every student complete the five obligatory sequences of Muslim worship, *salat lima waktu*, in Indonesian.<sup>188</sup> As a result, the financial survival of the school depends on a sister organization (currently called Bagus Bina Cendekia) that offers many of the same materials in short course form, available for contract with corporations, schools, government offices and private individuals or parties. The support staffs for these paid events are made up of current Kahfi students, who donate their time in exchange for the valuable professional experience on offer. Many Kahfi students also moonlight as motivators on their own terms, often addressing school audiences in anticipation of exams.

Motivational materials are woven throughout the six (when I was a student, four) semesters of

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<sup>187</sup> This post-Reformasi trend has been extensively analyzed. In addition to the citation of Hoestery and Rudnyckij above, see Fealy 15-39; and Howell “Modulation of Active Piety,” 40-62.

<sup>188</sup> Manajemen Qolbu, ESQ, and many other “training” organizations all charge for their services. While televised performances are, of course, free of charge, actual seminars require participants to pay. Manajemen Qolbu, in its heyday, was so effectively monetized that it offered an entire accompanying suite of services and products.

the Kahfi curriculum. Motivasi is repeatedly enunciated in these various contexts. The penultimate semester, immediately following the semester on Islamic hypnotherapy, deals with a particular technology of motivasi: psycho-cybernetics.

### **Psycho-cybernetics, PowerPoint and the Mechanical Production of Truth**

The second-to-last semester of Kahfi instruction was dedicated to a careful collective reading, interpretation, and presentation of *Psycho-cybernetics Mutakhir* (“The Latest Psycho-cybernetics”). Psycho-cybernetics, as one might imagine, is the extension of cybernetic explanation to the realm of human behavior and consciousness. Cybernetics itself was first popularized by its pioneer Norbert Wiener in his 1948 volume, *Cybernetics: Or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine*. Broadly construed, cybernetics is the study of systems that incorporate regulatory mechanisms. It remains a field of experimentation and theory, separate and distinct from “psycho-cybernetics” as will be discussed here. In cybernetics, the particulars of the system are typically abstracted – whether neurological, mechanical or biological, the emphasis is on a system that changes in response to stimuli produced within the system. In the domain of psycho-cybernetics, however, practitioners articulate a mechanistic theory of consciousness that allows for programmability, re-programmability, and the systemization of human behavior. Psycho-cybernetics, despite employing the idiom of cybernetics, is uninterested in abstracting the particulars of the systems it describes – on the contrary, human behavioral identity is central to the discourse: Psycho-cybernetics doesn’t pretend to describe a general theory of operation; it is addressed to the specifics of human adjustment.

Psycho-cybernetics at Kahfi is understood chiefly through a revised and updated version of Maxwell Maltz’s seminal self-help (in both senses!) 1960 text: *Psycho-cybernetics*. At Kahfi,

we used a recent translation entitled *Psycho-cybernetics Mutakhir*, based on the revised and expanded 2002 version of Maltz's text authored by Dan Kennedy: *The New Psycho-cybernetics*.<sup>189</sup> Psycho-cybernetics, as envisioned by Maltz and practiced at Kahfi, represents the extension of cybernetic principles to human consciousness and behavior. For many authors working within this idiom, cybernetics represents precisely this: an idiom. Cybernetic metaphor, rather than cybernetic processes, governs the essentially agentic desire for adaptation and actualization of autonomous human selves. Maxwell Maltz, in the 1960 text, vacillates between the metaphoric position and a strong belief in the mechanisms he identifies. The Kennedy text, on which the Indonesian translation is based, falls more clearly in the cybernetics-as-metaphor camp. Arvin, the translator, writes, "If we imagine the human brain and nervous system as a sort of automatic control mechanism, that operates in accordance with cybernetic principles, we acquire new insight into the how and why of human behavior... I must repeat, Psycho-Cybernetics doesn't state that the human brain is a computer. Rather, it is that we possess a computer that we [can] use" (55). The brain contains a computational machine, but it also exceeds it. This model doesn't seem particularly strange on its face, and my Kahfi peers seemed to readily accept it. But there is a lurking anxiety concerning the computational model: who had access to the computer and how those agents could affect its processes. Clearly of divine design, the notion that its circuitry could be re-programmed created a possibility that called out for divine authorization. And that authorization was to be found in our application for the "computer-within-the-brain": to disseminate the elusive *motivasi*. *Motivasi*, at Kahfi, was a self-contained moral good, a precondition for the development of perfected character.

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<sup>189</sup> The Indonesian translation of the title is probably best glossed as "latest," as in, "The Latest Psycho-cybernetics": *mutakhir* (latest) is a presumptively stronger claim on the present than *baru* (new).

For Kennedy, human tendencies and habits can be understood as analogs to servo-mechanisms (error-sensing and incorporating systems). When we make a repeated mistake, that mistake becomes a looping process delivering us to ever more error. Guidance systems and “automatic mechanisms” (conveniently, in Indonesian *mekanisme otomatis*) represent points of access to fundamentally self-on-self activity. By activating already existing “mechanisms” such as the “success mechanism” and thwarting the “failure mechanism,” the willing (again, both senses) practitioner of psycho-cybernetics re-orient herself towards desired outcomes. In Kennedy’s framing, we (individually) hold the levers that govern our mechanisms. “Success” here is understood not simply as the smooth operation of the mechanism, but as an overarching goal. The success mechanism is a technology of realizing our dreams, that we ourselves possess the capacity to activate. This is a logical system put in service of decidedly human ends. All of this would seem to fit nicely with widespread notions of the striving subject<sup>190</sup> – except that at Kahfi, self-help texts were being mined for therapeutic insights designed to be directed at others. We weren’t studying *Psycho-cybernetics Mutakhir* just to realize our own dreams. We were learning about ourselves as models in the hopes of future intersubjective intervention.

Psycho-cybernetics, at Kahfi, was not just the fraught setting for new understandings of agentive action and efficacy. This material was also the center-piece of a seemingly unrelated challenge for the students: mastering PowerPoint. In the deft hands of the lead instructor, Om Bagus, facility with the popular presentational software was densely allied with the exegesis of *Psycho-cybernetics Mutakhir*. This twinned pedagogy initially struck me as strange, no doubt fueled partially by my unease with the hegemony of PowerPoint and the tendency of its users to

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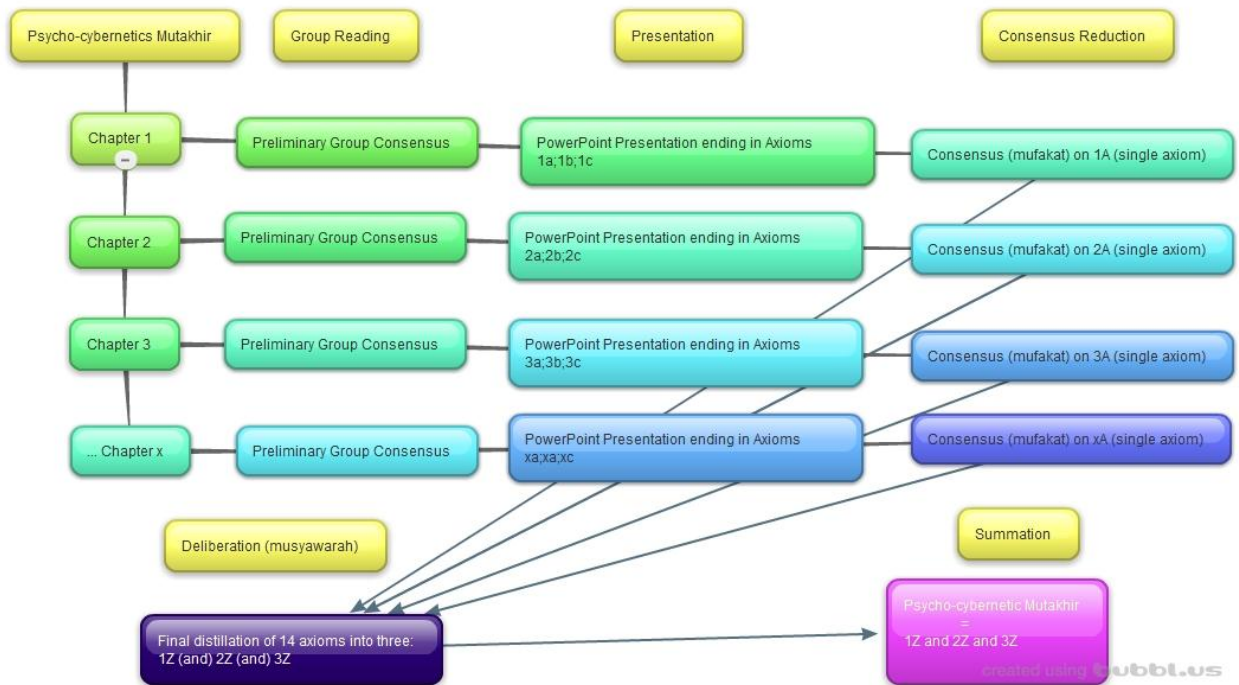
<sup>190</sup> It’s a mark of the interpretive strength of Saba Mahmood’s *Politics of Piety* and Charles Hirschkind’s *The Ethical Soundscape* that I think first and most resonantly about the self-fashioners of pietistic enterprise that they each describe. Nevertheless, Kahfi technologies are not typically directed at the self – after a trial-period of self-experimentation, these are fundamentally technologies to change others.

(or at least fall prey to the desire to) re-produce discrete units of easily digested knowledge, inevitably preceded by a bullet point and characterized as a take-away, or worse still, the take-home point. Misplaced snobbery aside, the sequential logics authored by PowerPoint and the mechanistic theories of consciousness imagined within psycho-cybernetics resonate. Before returning to a discussion of just what might be imagined under the sign of *motivasi*, and its relationship to charisma, I follow out the interpretive strategy addressed to psycho-cybernetics, its relationship with PowerPoint, and ultimately the re-intrusion of the Divine into processes of agentive change.

Psycho-cybernetics, at Kahfi, is inextricably bound to the media through which it is disseminated. The pairing of *Psycho-cybernetics Mutakhir* with classes on the effective use of PowerPoint was further solidified within the interpretive strategy to which the psycho-cybernetics text was subject. Figure 13, below, contains the formula through which the text was distilled from multiple chapter synopses down to three axioms. The sixteen chapters of *Psycho-cybernetics Mutakhir* were reduced by two (the final two chapters, according to Om Bagus, were repetitive). The remaining fourteen chapters were assigned to groups of two or three students. Each group was responsible for meeting and arriving at a shared understanding (consensus or *mufakat*) of their assigned chapter. This collaborative reading was then presented to the class as a whole, having first been rendered into a seven-slide PowerPoint presentation. Each presentation was allotted half of a class – slightly more than one hour. This was an opportunity to practice within the presentation software, but it was also a demand to articulate the contents of the chapter in a highly regimented fashion. The final slide of each presentation was required to contain a distillation of the chapter into three axioms. These three axioms were presented to the class and subjected to a process of *musyawarah*, or deliberation, to arrive again at consensus on a



single axiom to represent the contents of the chapter. After all chapters had been presented by their respective groups and distilled to single axioms by the class as a whole, another deliberation was convened. In this final deliberation, the axioms representing all fourteen chapters were reduced to three axioms that stood for the entirety of the texts. This interpretive strategy, as a process, bears the impress of the technology through which it was performed: PowerPoint.



**Figure 13 A PowerPoint-Mediated Interpretation of *Psycho-cybernetics Mutakhir***

PowerPoint structured not just the original presentations of the *Psycho-cybernetics Mutakhir* chapters, but also the subsequent deliberations. Using a whiteboard and a dry-erase marker, the students in my class replicated the bullet point format of PowerPoint within our discussions. If we take seriously Friedrich Kittler’s account in *Gramophone, film, typewriter* the systemization of information co-authors the information it stores. Media do not lag the cultural productions they record or transmit; rather there is a generative capacity and productive constraint at work in new technical means. PowerPoint is not just a repressive apparatus stifling

the infinite creativity of expression: it constitutes new domains of expression *and* knowledge production. Within a computational world, we are not dealing with the thinkable, or even the articulable, but the PowerPointable. PowerPoint exists first as a record of knowledge (as storage), only secondarily as the electronic means through which it enters intersubjective relations.<sup>191</sup> PowerPoint may be a part of a business epistemology that eschews ambiguity, valorizes efficiency, and privileges clarity over-and-above comprehensiveness. However it is not only that.

PowerPoint relies on aphorisms (the axiomatic readings of *Psycho-cybernetics Mutakhir* above) masquerading as propositional logic. Figure 13, despite its austere form, does not actually represent a logical process. As much as an effect of ordering, this is also an effect of a user interface that authors connections graphically that need not correspond logically. Instead, what is represented is a narrative or sequential process of knowledge production, adorned with the trappings of logical entailment. This is the scientific aesthetic of PowerPoint. The visual effect of bullet points, coupled with the sequential ordering of slides, suggests logical exigency where none need reside. Hardly a feature of PowerPoint exclusively (the same charge could be made of narrative writ large, where sequentiality obfuscates contingency), what is novel within this medium is the pseudo-scientific truth effect: we believe things because they follow, one after another, presented as discrete units of information. Unsupported assertions stand in austere relief

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<sup>191</sup> This is a key distinction for Kittler. Before PowerPoint can be used communicatively, it first records (unlike oral production, the primary articulation of which is already intersubjective and communicative). Kittler charts how the hegemony of writing was disrupted by technologies like the gramophone, which produced a material imprint (the grooves) of reality, instead of a linguistic relation. The visual presence of PowerPoint is digital – instead of a material impress knowledge is now one governed by numerical logics. The author of a PowerPoint slide creates a digital simulacrum of her ideas. That digital simulacrum is then copied –still digitally – to a magnetic spinning disk (if a hard-drive), or translated into electrical impulses (if a projector’s cord) and then displayed through the manipulation of light and shadow. Seeing the light instantiates yet an additional relation, this time with the visual copy of the electrical signal of the digital rendering of the physically typed mentally conceived notion. If Kahfi loves science for the prospect of pure communication, Kittler directs us to the ever-proliferating set of relations emerging from technological advancement.

to their background (in the default settings), ostensibly the units of truth leading towards necessary conclusions. PowerPoint, like English and psychological science before it, is morally neutral.

In the development of the exegesis of *Psycho-cybernetics Mutakhir*, PowerPoint did not constrain the interpretation; it produced the frame that rendered it legible to the audience in the first place. Psycho-cybernetics lets us be more like PowerPoint: positive input + positive process = positive outcome. Embedded links and sequential slides deliver us towards predetermined ends. Into this elegant system intrudes a rather large metaphysical wrench. The logically prior, in the Kahfi context, is God. The cybernetic frame, insofar as it occasions self-on-self efficacy, allows only for Divine design, not intervention. Kahfi students initially addressed this potential problem through a postural reading of psycho-cybernetics: positive input + positive process = positive outcome if and only if God wills it. But simply appending *insya Allah* was not sufficient. Further authorization was required.

Psycho-cybernetics, along with similar self-help derived materials, flirts with a threatening theological prospect for the community at Kahfi Motivator School. Namely, a slippery notion of agency that conflicts with the normative assumptions actively promulgated within the institution. Contemporary normative Sunni theology – both the Ash’ari school which dominates in Indonesia and the Maturidi school which prevails in South Asia and elsewhere – relies on an analysis of agency that can be fairly termed occasionalism. This is the notion that while humans have (contingently, ultimately illusory) free intentions, the singular independent cause is God. Majid Fakhry’s still classic *Islamic Occasionalism* defines this position at the very outset of the text: “the belief in the exclusive efficacy of God, of whose direct intervention the events of nature are alleged to be the overt manifestation or ‘occasion.’” (9). Changing oneself,

self-help in its liberal-garb, looks suspiciously like the misattribution of divine agency to a figure of the creation. In the immediate pragmatics of the motivational context, this isn't necessarily a problem, but if the efficacy of the self is increasingly valorized the conflict becomes unavoidable. There is no "I" that can change absent the Divine Will. Nesting educational materials at Kahfi within legibly Islamic frames (starting class with the recitation of the Divine attributes, closing with praise hymns directed to the personage of the Prophet) goes some distance towards easing this potential error, but these practices are not thought to reconcile the competing epistemes entirely – several student voiced objections to these technologies of the self. In some instances, Om Bagus had a ready answer, in others he deferred to the greater Islamic traditional learning of some of his advanced Kahfi students. It was in this role that Salih, introduced in the previous chapter, really shined. Into this context, psycho-cybernetics as a mechanical intervention assumes new potentials. The potential tension is further mediated by the direction of the psycho-cybernetic intervention towards others. The explicit intention of the original English-language authors notwithstanding, psycho-cybernetics is deployed as a technology for healing others, for channeling Divine efficacy (in the Kahfi context) into other humans' aspirational projects.

Psycho-cybernetics is understood as an other-oriented technology of agentive change. They are also repeatedly framed within a larger project of *motivasi*. The history of Kahfi, from its early days as Kahfi al-Karim Public Speaking School in 2003 to its eventual reincorporation as Kahfi Motivator School, is partially the history of the gathering solidity of its key term, *motivasi*. According to Om Bagus, as narrated for my benefit, the operation of the school led to a dawning awareness that what really distinguished an effective public speaker was *motivasi* – the ability to impart this precious quality to her or his listeners. Breaking from his explanation,

motivasi can be understood as having meaningful overlap with two categories of familiar social analysis: charisma and magic. Here we have the problem of compounded familiarity. I am proposing to understand “motivation,” which is seldom ascribed “depth” in academic literature, in light of “magic” which has been extensively charted. But motivasi isn’t motivation, and the anthropological categories of magic still permit further exploration. So what sort of verbal magic allows for the communication of motivasi?

### **Charisma and the Motivator’s Gift**

There is no substitute for watching the deft crowd-bending skills of an accomplished motivational speaker. Time and again, before highly varied audiences, I watched listeners acknowledge and accede to Om Bagus’s authority. At least in common usage, the quality that induces and compels the audience is charisma. For such an understanding, of course, we are indebted to Max Weber and his protracted engagements with notions of power, order, dominion, leadership and authority. The *Herrschaft* (leadership which induces obedience)<sup>192</sup> typified by charisma relies on that denoted in the Greek *kharisma*, which is to say, a gift of grace. Weber traces out these qualities most clearly in the Chapter Three of *Economy and Society* (212-254), although the classic translation suggests “domination” for “Herrschaft.” The gift of charisma, so accorded, is not easily transferred (Weber, 246): in the classic typology attempts to fix or solidify such a relational attribute slide either into ratio-juridical *Herrschaft* or traditional *Herrschaft*.

That does not mean, for Weber or many of his interlocutors, that this ostensibly Divinely-

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<sup>192</sup> I am grateful to Ira Allen, an accomplished German translator as well as a rhetorical theorist, for insisting on this particular sense of *Herrschaft* (compelling obedience). The search for corroborating evidence drove me back to David Warren Sabean’s *Power in the Blood*. Sabean explores Weber’s categories in early modern Germany, an examination that finds “an inner connection between the feudal forms of *Herrschaft* as concrete institutions and modern *Herrschaft* in industrial nation states” (24). Sabean continues this argument, writing, “Words such as ‘power’ are too amorphous to be of much analytical value for investing the relationships under consideration here. ‘Domination’ in turn expresses on the carrying through of one’s will. What Weber has offered as the central defining element of ‘*Herrschaft*’ at once gives the concept its analytical value and provides a program of research running through Western history – namely *Herrschaft* as the evocation of obedience” (ibid).

accorded capacity cannot be achieved through this-worldly actions – the key constitutive element is the assent and ascription, the relationship, between audience-cum-followers and the charismatic.

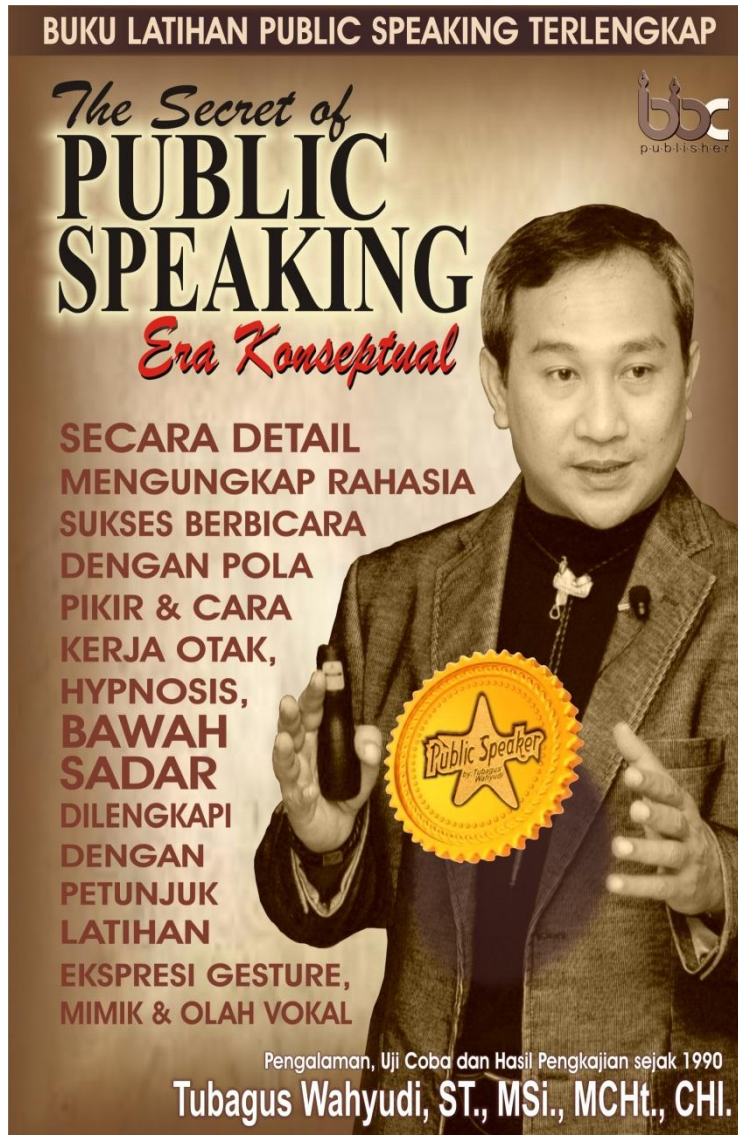


Figure 14<sup>193</sup> Om Bagus on Public Speaking in the Conceptual Era

Om Bagus, see above in Figure 14, crafted the coursework on motivation and public speaking, aiming to teach charisma, in order that his students may have the Herrschaft necessary to motivate. Cultivating Herrschaft, at Kahfi Motivator School, is a central objective animating the curriculum: the ability to produce authority that compels the audience to accede to the

<sup>193</sup> This image, used with permission from Om Bagus’s website, is a poster advertising his book, *Public Speaking in the Conceptual Era*. The poster promises that the text, “reveals, in a detailed fashion, the secret of successful speaking, [via] with frameworks of thought & the brain’s mechanism of operation, hypnosis, the unconscious, and is further augmented with guides to practicing gestural expression, mimicry and vocal training.”

speaker. During my time as a student at the school, studying public speaking, Islamic hypnotherapy and psycho-cybernetics, my particular assent to the charisma of Om Bagus was inextricably bound to the roles I was asked to perform within the institution. My recognition was a further demonstration of Om Bagus's Herrschaft (look, even the foreigner is in thrall!). I was also accorded a minor reservoir of prestige and potential charisma myself (the gestural range, English competency and racial privilege mentioned above), that nevertheless failed to coalesce into the Herrschaft capable of molding an audience to my whim. Although my focus here is not on how Kahfi pedagogy was filtered through my identity, it did come into play concerning *motivasi* – privileged difference produces an effect not unlike charisma, although it rapidly diminishes with familiarity. Charisma, however, is best understood with an enduring air of the enchanted. This sense shapes the concept, and helps explain how motivational speaking, despite its origins (filtered and translated American texts), continues to promise possibilities outside of, and irreducible to, liberal and/or secular projects.

As stated at the outset, the *motivasi*/motivation that I studied at Kahfi is hardly limited to the Indonesian archipelago. The materials we encountered in the classroom and the demonstrations to which we were privy participated in a globalized circulation of both text and concept that shaped the available practices and understandings of *motivasi*. Most of the core content at the Kahfi Motivator School was developed outside of Indonesia. The process through which it came to be meaningfully and recognizably accepted as locally appropriate is in keeping with the processes discussed earlier with reference to hypnotherapy. At Kahfi, *motivasi* was provided with novel genealogies that were read onto canonical Islamic texts. These were then coupled with new aspirational ends for motivational practice, also conceived in explicitly Islamic frames. These operations helped situate this domain of knowledge as acceptable, salient, and



worthy of study. Similar to James Hoesterey argument in “Prophetic Cosmopolitanism,” at Kahfi the Prophet was re-framed as a master motivator.

Working in a seemingly distant context – contemporary Sweden, characterized as extensively secularized – Anne-Christine Hornborg has described related phenomenon under the aegis of “re-enchanting secular society.” Hornborg traces this process in two linked articles, “Are We All Spiritual?” (bringing her native Sweden into conversation with her fieldwork with the Mi’kmaq Indians in Canada) and “Designing Rites to Re-enchant Secularized Society.” In the latter article she explores the proliferation of organizations and methods addressed to the desire for a “personally transformative experience” in contemporary Sweden. She constructs a list of key elements of these experiences, elements that seem familiar from the motivational practices I observed in Indonesia: “individual-centered rites; the imperative to realize one’s authentic Self; self-appointed leaders . . . and the radical transformation of one’s being as an intensely emotional experience” (403). Such a list resembles the attributes Parker and Nilan ascribed to the burgeoning market in “Islamic self-help,” which further accords with Hornborg’s focus on the “commercialization” of these practices as a key feature of their emergence. For Hornborg, these movements and practices are best understood against a backdrop of secularization – her chosen frame was the expanding Euro-American trend, organized around a self-definition by participants as “spiritual-not-religious.” Into these movements she recognized a desire that had been displaced from a more traditional religious framework onto an ostensibly secular goal of self-improvement. From Kahfi Motivator School in the outskirts of Jakarta, however, the secular backdrop strikes one as less germane. A densely interrelated set of desires and practices have

emerged precisely *within* the fold of what is considered the properly religious.<sup>194</sup> Kahfi, with its insistent Islamic self-framing, seems a poor candidate for “spiritual-not-religious,” yet it participates freely in related technologies of change.

One key element, as identified in Hornborg’s analysis, is the intense emotionality of the personal transformative experience. The affective dimension of change – how it is occasioned, how it is recognized, how it is subjectively experienced – is one of the well-scrutinized features of the Indonesian example. Rudnyckyj, in *Spiritual Economies* refers to these practices in concert with the notion of “governing through affect.” Rudnyckyj discerns in this affective modality the operations of neoliberal economic logics and social orderings. For Rudnyckyj, this amounts to a partially rationalized charisma: participants in management seminars experience the affective dimensions of the course but those experiences are leveraged towards rational economic goals (paramount among them, productivity). For James Hoesterey in the forthcoming *Sufis and Self-Help Gurus*, by contrast, the aims of these practices are perhaps not so obvious. He observes in the nexus of piety, civic engagement and popular psychology a novel phenomenon. The affective rewards to, as well as the affective commitments of, participants in these projects deserve greater and more careful attention. At the heart of motivational speaking is a rhetorical strategy relying on the affective modality of communication. Although common usage now suggests that rhetoric be understood in terms of cognition, at least since Aristotle *pathos* has been a part of the rhetorical canon. George Kennedy, in his translation of *Rhetoric*, lists the tripartite division of demonstrations (*pisteis*): “for some are in the character [*ethos*] of the speaker, and some in disposing the listener in some way, and some in the speech [*logos*]

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<sup>194</sup> Julia Day Howell made precisely this argument a decade ago in “Muslims, the New Age and Marginal Religions in Indonesia.” There she explored the adoption of “New Age” movements by urban Muslims, understood in the context of the new possibilities allowable in post-New Order Indonesia.

itself, by showing or seeming to show something” (38). The affective modality, at least according to Kennedy’s translation, consists not in a “base” appeal to emotion, but rather in the successful “disposing the listener in some way.” Motivasi, at Kahfi, is highly interested in an allied theory of efficacious speech. If political liberalism would level the charge of demagoguery at emotional reasoning, in the hands of a skilled motivator, the emotional register is the key to the audience’s heart; to real persuasion – to change.

Motivational speaking is illiberal speech. It crosses boundaries that the liberal political imaginary has erected between legitimate argumentation and demagoguery. Of course, motivational speaking is a technology, not an end in-and-of itself. Motivasi, on the tongue of the skilled practitioner, is morally neutral, or for Kahfi students perhaps even evocative of the moral example of the Prophet. Effective public speaking relies on an affective modality that invites the rebuke of charlatanry and manipulation – and then obviates it, by the assent of the audience. It *feels* true. Internal to motivational speaking discourse, the affective commitments of the speaker are markers of honesty and truth – not signs of manipulation at all. Furthermore, the rationality from which affect is criticized only makes sense within a framework of Cartesian dualism. Muslims in Indonesia have alternative epistemologies at their disposal. Kahfi Motivator School incorporates texts heavily marked by a Cartesian impress, but its actual engagements with these self-help materials do not always reflect their origins. In normative accounts of consciousness, Muslims often conceive of the mind as an organ subservient to the heart. Appeals to the heart, then, are potentially superior to purely ratio-cognitive argumentation. The locus of meaningful persuasion lies not in the brain, but in the quasi-sensory organ most receptive to the Divine and the divine attribute of truth: the heart (at once a seat of base emotion and refined spirit).

Where the rationalizing impulse appears in Indonesian motivational practice, it is not at the level of modality but rather strategy. We can see this strategy in the naming practices of moral transformation organizations. Consider the cases explored by Daromir Rudnykyj (ESQ: emotional spiritual quotient) and James Hoesterey (*Manajemen Qolbu*, management of the heart). Quotient, in the first instance, invites science to mediate between emotion and spirit, suggesting a technical relationship. Management of the heart, too, suggests that neutral (management) operations of relational mastery are germane to the governance of the heart. This naming strategy is visible in other, related enterprises. Just down the road from Kahfi, in Ciputat, a spiritual counseling business operates under the header *Bengkel Rohani* (spiritual maintenance, where maintenance is the same term used for an automotive repair garage). What these three examples suggest is not that affective changes are purely matters of mechanics, management or mathematics. Rather the naming strategy brings the scientific-truth effect, the reproducibility of their technologies, to the fore. The actual locus of the change, however, remains the heart: a realm close to the divine, subject to affect over-and-above logic.

Motivational materials, borrowing the mantle of scientific technologies, are disseminated with an eye towards reproducibility (which is to say, one version of rationalization). However, the targets of the materials at Kahfi, at least, are resolutely non-rational. This too is in keeping with the original Weberian typology. As one recent reader of Weber notes, “In fact, Weber refers to irrationality as ‘anti-rational’ and stresses that the charismatic leader believes and is believed in especially because it goes against what we know” (Adair-Toteff, 195). Because we need to be convinced, our belief is that much stronger once we are convinced. There is an instrumental adoption of this logic in currency at Kahfi: the “counter-intuitive reveal,” Subverting an audience’s logical expectations, in concert with an “affective appeal,” are key elements in the

motivator's arsenal. Charisma, as embodied and modeled at Kahfi Motivator School, frequently relies on counter-intuitive pronouncements, and even outright anti-rationality. The emphasis on "divine arithmetic" (the exhortation to expand one's aspirations in keeping with the power of an unlimited Divine) is an example of the latter, while the technical insight that the key part of a speech is best delivered at one-quarter volume (the sudden drop in volume compelling the audience to lean in, to focus) an example of the former. Charisma, in the exercise, must exceed the bounds of logic that may play a role in producing it. The heart can be managed, the spirit repaired, but despite the rationalization and reproducibility of these processes, their actual conduct depends on an affective modality. Mastery of that modality corresponds to the ultimately unquantifiable – to charisma, itself an after-image of the Divine. And so motivasi eludes the rational back to the safe reaches of the ineffable.

### **Motivation and Magic**

At Kahfi, as well as during the truncated lessons offered by *Bagus Bina Cendekia* (Bagus Makes Scholars, the for-profit sister enterprise) for paying customers, "ice-breakers" are an important tool in pursuit of motivasi. Ice-breakers are short performances, which engage, relax or convene an audience – demands for attention that win one's listeners to one's side. Examples practiced by Kahfi students included riddles, jokes, simple call-and-response patter, or entertainment magic, in particular, sleight-of-hand (*sulap*). In Kahfi classrooms, stage magic (*sulap*) was carefully distinguished from the illicit magic of sorcery (*sihir*). *Sulap* relied on mechanical dexterity and easily fooled perception, *sihir* on the enlistment of superhuman and malevolent energies – illicit agencies that broke the Divine demand to accord efficacy only to the Divine. Om Bagus is an accomplished master of sleight-of-hand and Kahfi students are instructed so as to become reasonable practitioners of several simple illusions. This was one

more avenue where I could only ever disappoint. Unable to carry a tune at karaoke (a common Kahfi decompression activity after stressful events), I could barely force my fumbling fingers over the concealed locking mechanism on a trick-box. But I saw the illusions work their magic, time and again.

Graham Jones, an anthropologist of Christian preaching, has observed similar phenomena. Writing in “Magic with a Message,” he describes a tradition he refers to as “Christian conjuring.” Jones writes about the special techniques employed by Christian stage magicians as they navigate the potentially fraught worlds of gospel evangelizing and magic entertainment. The effect of the novel syntheses they strike are intended to be more convincing to their audiences than other modalities of testimony. Towards that goal of persuasion, in their performances, Jones writes, “the magician hybridizes domains that may seem otherwise incompatible: spectacular entertainment and ritual speech, popular culture and religion, and—most impressively—magic and Christianity” (194). The performers ability to “hybridize domains,” identified by Jones, has real parallels in the Kahfi context.

Incorporating stage magic into Islamic motivational practice runs some of the same risks as Jones’s Christian conjuring because similar domains are interwoven in the encounter. This is perhaps less true for the first two opposed terms: Spectacular entertainment and ritual speech are not obviously in competition for Indonesian Muslims. Nor do popular culture and religion necessarily compete – at least, not at the present moment since the two domains are (imagined to be) densely interpenetrated. All of the efforts to purify *adat* and Islam (Chapter 1), conducted by successive political regimes, fail to defeat the creative assemblages that continue to employ them as available parts. However, the last opposition is more salient. Magic and Islam require careful negotiation – and often explicit disavowals. One of Jones’s interlocutors, speaking to the

normative ethics of Christian conjuring, insists before each performance that, “I’m an illusionist, not a miracle worker. I believe in miracles because I believe in God, but I don’t do miracles, I do tricks. I keep the secrets, but I tell you the truth” (203). At Kahfi, Om Bagus had no such compunction about the tradecraft. Although he shared the insistence on the illusory quality of his virtuosic performance, he happily divulged all of the secrets of their accomplishment. It was clearly important to Om Bagus in these performances that no one displaced special or extra-human efficacy onto the performer – preempting one potent reservoir of potential critique.

Jesse Shipley, writing about preachers, comedians, and logics of speech in contemporary Ghana, details how the, “threat of fakery both haunts and mobilizes pastoral authority” (534). Something akin to this is also at work with *motivasi*. The existence of charlatans, of fakes, is what secures the authenticity of the audience’s experience. Other people’s inauthentic experience adds to the richness of one’s own affectively testified authentic experience of motivation. In Shipley’s account, preachers’ response to this peril works on two registers. First, directly acknowledging that *others* may be faking inoculates the speaker against this charge. Then, by transgressing speech norms, the preachers demonstrate their authenticity: “charismatic preaching challenges the indirect speaking characteristic of Ghanaian public life, emphasizing immediacy, sincerity, and directness as metacodes for moral authority” (534). Both of these axes are pertinent to *motivasi* at Kahfi. “Fake” motivators offer hollow affective experiences that do not yield meaningful transformations in the lives of their listeners. This fact is admitted within a motivational performance. Additionally, as discussed in the context of IofC patterns of self-disclosure, Indonesian language ideologies privilege the supposed indirection of Indonesian speakers. By violating socially valorized indirection, Om Bagus asserts the moral urgency of his claim. We know this, because he is charismatic, thus his transgressions have communicative

content other than social failure. For Om Bagus and his Kahfi students, in addition to the rhetorical functions described below, candor about the *performance* of speaking, directly addressed to a fresh audience, confers moral authority.

Many of the illusions taught at Kahfi rely on simple props (boxes with counter-intuitive opening mechanisms, fake thumbs with a recessed storage area, marked cards). These props are for sale at most Kahfi speaking engagements, and business is usually brisk after Om Bagus has explained each of the illusions he performs. As an audience-engagement strategy, the magic-trick followed by the detailed explanation is near-genius. The audience is first impressed by the virtuosity of the illusionist, then flattered by their inclusion in the select company that understands “what’s really going on.” The broader effect is itself rhetorical sleight-of-hand: understanding is a poor proxy for capacity. The exposed mechanics of the illusion promise its reproducibility, but absent extensive practice, it’s a rare audience member who having acquired the necessary props can produce the same illusion. This realization, however, is usually precluded by a rapid transition into other material. Wow them with magic, invite them into the club, talk about something else. The point isn’t, of course, the sleight-of-hand. The point is *motivasi*.

The magic tricks taught and performed at Kahfi seem to operate in parallel to the broader notions of motivation-charisma. Motivational speaking training does not offer the transfer of the reproducible properties of charisma. Rather it traffics in the promise of charisma, and its success in this regard is an effect of the motivational speaker’s capacities. Motivation, as an object of desire, may be cast in procedural terms, demystified and rationalized. But the continued salience of the motivational speaker herself, of the embodied charisma holding an audience in thrall, belies its operationalization as a marketplace good. Magic, of course, is an enduring object of



scholarly inquiry.<sup>195</sup> In his captivating 2005 work, *Kupilikula*, Harry West describes the operations in the unseen realm through which malevolence is countered, the term for which is the title of the work: “Thus, power is an unending series of transcendent and transformative maneuvers, each one moving beyond, countering, inverting, overturning, and/or reversing the one preceding it” (7). This is part of West’s larger claim that none of his interlocutors would (or even could) admit to sorcery – rather, the magics they practiced were more properly understood as counter sorcery. This insight echoes the foundational analysis of E. Evans-Pritchard in *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande*: “we shall not understand Zande magic, and the differences between ritual behavior and empirical behavior in the lives of the Azande, unless we realize that its main purpose is to combat other mystical powers rather than to produce changes favourable to man in the objective world” (199). Evans-Pritchard concludes the chapter with twenty-two reasons why magic is not discounted – including the memorable observation that magic helps it rain in the rainy season, and prevents the rain in the dry season, ie, that magic augments empirically probable events. This does not limit magic to prophylaxis, nor to purely restorative interventions in the material world – but it does pose a vexing question for my suggestion that motivation be understood, in part, in its magical dimensions or aspirations. Magic, in the anthropological canon, becomes the discourse of power in the unseen realm, directed above all at other movements within the unseen realm. Towards what is motivation, in the unseen realm of intersubjective affect, directed? What is the other of motivation? Answers, such as they are, might be found in the kind of social encounters where *motivasi* is introduced –

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<sup>195</sup> Reading Randall Styers *Making Magic*, I was struck by the thought that if the truest *salafi* is the Euro-American scholar of Islam, the greatest magician is surely an anthropologist. By this I mean that the relentless focus on piety distinguishes scholars of Islam from even its most ardent practitioners, and a faith in the efficacy of magic (even if it’s an explanatory efficacy) probably predominates amongst anthropologists relative the magic using peoples they study.

where a failure to act on the part of the audience constitutes a moral failing, and thus galvanizing their action a moral victory.

A lot is being asked of *motivasi*. *Motivasi* comes to be the mark left on the selves, on the spirits, of the charismatic's audience. It is a plea for personal transformation: change me! It is felt with the affective intensity. It is a kind of verbal magic. And here we are back to the supernatural, the mystical, the irrational core of the charismatic *Herrschaft*. The gift, given by the Divine, of charisma cannot be understood exclusively on its material basis – and the demands made on motivation reveal an investment in it that exceeds the this-worldly goals of its instantiation. Perhaps motivation, seen in the North Atlantic as a salve for the disenchanting liberal subject, never fully dispelled the magic it is presumed to displace. Certainly in Indonesia, where “spiritual-but-not-religious” practice is directed towards Islamic personal aspirations, the situation is more complex than a linear theory of secularism can account for (and here I have inadvertently returned to Julia Day Howell's argument in “‘Calling’ and ‘Training,’” cited above).

### **The Source of *Motivasi***

Already we have seen that the tremendous appetite for *motivasi* appears in diverse Indonesian contexts. As an object of desire, it permeates educational and popular spiritual discourses. It appears to promise material advancement without sacrificing spiritual attainment. In addition to the speech settings that called for *motivasi* introduced at the outset of this chapter (primary school audiences, mosque-attendees, condemned prisoners), colleagues report similar injunctions whether invited to an undergraduate history course or guest lecturing at an Islamic seminary. *Motivasi*, in the face of these imperatives, is not simply enacted, but has a weight, a substance-like quality that can be imparted to a receptive audience. *Motivasi* is an affective

disposition, but also a transferable property. It is furthermore opaque – perhaps most of all to its enthusiastic promoters. Twice I asked, point-blank, how will I know when my audience has been motivated? In both instances, my interlocutor had no response but to repeat the injunction: *dimotivasi*. Motivasi is self-disclosing, and seeing it is knowing it

One of the great resources available to anyone interested in contemporary Indonesia is the rapidly proliferating repositories of undergraduate theses called *skripsi*. An institutional requirement for bachelor's degrees (*sarjana 1, S1*), *skripsi* vary in detail, original content and readability, much like their counterparts produced in American universities. Along with fascinating original research conducted for the production of these documents, they also provide a searchable snapshot of concerns broadly salient to college-aged students. Unsurprisingly, “motivasi” appears with great frequency in the titles of recently submitted *skripsi*. Two particular clusters emerge: *skripsi* detailing school-based instruction and *skripsi* concerned with Islamic teaching and learning. One particular *skripsi*, produced at Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) Walisongo Semarang in 2008 (now UIN Walisongo Semarang), provides an excellent point of departure into the recent etymology of “motivation.”

In completion of his S1 degree, Sholikul Hadi wrote a case study of “Children’s Religious Motivations,” (*Motivasi Keberagamaan pada Anak*) set at a mosque in a neighborhood adjacent to the IAIN Walisongo campus (Purwoyoso in Ngaliyan, just west of Semarang). Helpfully, he defined motivasi at the outset of his second chapter, drawing first on Indonesian educational researchers, and then from one of the most popular English-Indonesian dictionaries (Echols and Shadily). Sholikul writes, “motivasi originates from the word motive that means ‘everything that pushes [*mendorong*] someone to act to do something.’ In English, the word motivasi originates from the word “motivation” that means “inner [*batin*] power [*daya*] or urge

[*dorongan*]” (15). There are several compelling features of this circular definition. One is the adoption of the John Echols and Hassan Shadily gloss of motivation as *daya batin*. This particular translation smuggles in Indonesian connotations of interiority, esoteric knowledge, and of a suite of meditation practices already denoted by the compound *daya batin*. Additionally, the ubiquity of *dorong* (push) suggests just how much work is being done by motivation. In modern Indonesian, *mendorong* has come to possess manifold senses: to push; to impel; to encourage; to promote; to spur; to incite; to prompt; to exhort; to pressure; etc. There is a sense of physical propulsion through the material world alongside a vast range of psychological inducements to activity.

As Sholikul continues to elaborate his arguments in his skripsi, he further synthesizes available resources on motivasi:

From several existing understandings of motivasi we can conclude that literally [*secara harfiah*] motivasi means urges [*dorongan*], reasons [*alasan*], intentions or desires [*kehendak atau kemauan*], whereas as a technical term [*istilah*] motivasi is the power of mobilizing force [*daya penggerak kekuatan*] within a person that impels her [*mendorongnya*] to do a certain activity and provides direction towards the achievement of goals, both those compelled [*didorong*] or stimulated [*dirangsang*] from without as well as those from within (15-16).

Motivasi, for Sholikul, can be “stimulated” from outside, but fundamentally refers to an internal feature of a human. As he explains, “other people can provide inspiration [*ilham*], influence, or even order us to do something, but what becomes motivasi is decided within and by ourselves [*yang menjadi motivasi adalah diri kita sendiri yang menentukannya*]” (16). Reflecting the findings of a Pakistani scholar available in translation,<sup>196</sup> Sholikul distills the three qualities of motivasi as he intends to analyze it amongst the children at the mosque used in his case study.

Motivasi mobilizes (*menggerakkan*); gives direction (*mengarahkan*); and sustains (*menopang*)

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<sup>196</sup> Cited by Sholikul as Muhammad `Usman Najati, *Jiwa Manusia (Dalam Sorotan Al-Qur`an)*. Trans Ibnu Ibrahim. Jakarta: CV. Cendekia Sentra Muslim, 2001. Print.

(17). This cascade of argument to situate the key term for his study suggests yet another feature of *motivasi*: *Motivasi* is also an incitement to discourse – it demands explanation, elaboration, demonstration. Hundreds (if not thousands) of *skripsi* can be found that trace out the origin and meanings of *motivasi* in contemporary Indonesia.

### **The Nature and Use of Motivasi**

Motivation, in its psychological usage, is of very recent coinage in English and Indonesian alike. In the current *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesi*, the noun “*motivasi*” is, “the urge [*dorongan*] that emerges within someone consciously or unconsciously to take an action towards a specific goal.”<sup>197</sup> The verb, *memotivasi*, meanwhile, denotes “giving *motivasi*; creating fertile conditions for the emergence of motives.”<sup>198</sup> In the Oxford English Dictionary, the English-language history is not particularly long – following its translation from literary analysis into psychological interiority (a well-traversed 19<sup>th</sup> century argument), motivation picks up “[t]he general desire or willingness of someone to do something; drive, enthusiasm” only in post-World War II scholarship. Enthusiasm here is instructive. “*Beri motivasi*” has largely replaced the older Indonesian instruction to “*beri semangat*.” *Semangat*, or spirit; life force; enthusiasm, retains its potency as a marker of nationalist commitment. But *semangat revolusi*, or revolutionary fervor, now contains bloody remnants of the leftist entanglements the Indonesian nationalist cause became subject to in the latter years of Soekarno’s presidency. And so *motivasi* enters: deconfessionalized, de-nationalized, scientific-psychological, and politically neutral. *Motivasi* carries, strongly, the aura of epistemic neutrality. This makes the magic demanded of it all the more striking.

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<sup>197</sup> “Dorongan yg timbul pd diri seseorang secara sadar atau tidak sadar untuk melakukan suatu tindakan dng tujuan tertentu” (“*motivasi*”).

<sup>198</sup> “Memberikan *motivasi*; menciptakan suasana yg subur untuk lahirnya motif” (“*memotivasi*”).

From the perspective taught at Kahfi, Indonesian Muslims need *motivasi* because they are afflicted with a constellation of spiritual ailments that distance them from their Creator, from each other, and from an honest internal relationship with self. Distance from God is not a new affliction, but *motivasi* is a new remedy. *Motivasi* discourse maintains that it is continuous with the moral suasion practiced by the Prophet. Externally, as a tradition in these terms, it's about thirty-years old. Without *motivasi*, people are imagined to be consigned to a life characterized by stasis, misdirection (or lack of direction) and unsustainability. The verbal magic of the motivator ignites innate (ie, Divinely ordained, rather than self-possessed) capacities for action, guidance and stamina. Listen as Om Bagus exhorts a school-aged audience, from a lecture given in February 2014.<sup>199</sup> Having walked the audience through his argument on the necessity of “*motivasi pola pikir*,” (the *motivasi* of mindset, a *motivasi* paradigm), Om Bagus revives their flagging attention with a light-hearted illusionist display right around the hour mark. “[I] use[d] a device!” he exclaims,<sup>200</sup> breaking down the technique for seemingly changing a small bill into a larger unit of currency. Om Bagus then smoothly transitions to a larger message: “That used a device *ma'am*,” he tells a woman towards the front of the audience. “So we aren't stupid or deceived by people [as he removes the fake thumb through which the illusion was accomplished]. So that that Muslim communities (*masyarakat Islam*) won't be stupid. Because now Islam is opposed by, firstly, ignorance. Secondly, poverty. And the third enemy of Islam is conflict. So those three things. Stage magic (*sulap*)? Pull back the curtain! (*bocorin*, reveal it, release it).”<sup>201</sup> Om Bagus's rhetorical strategy authorizes the audience's enjoyment of his

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<sup>199</sup> Given at a mosque in the private housing development Bumi Serpong Damai (BSD), in Tangerang, southwest of Jakarta, this is a relatively representative lecture. Om Bagus is wearing the relaxed uniform appropriate to the venue (*batik* and *peci*) and speaks in a moderated form of his often highly-animated stage persona given the setting within a mosque.

<sup>200</sup> *Pakai alat!*

<sup>201</sup> Jadi dia pakai alat Bu, he tells a woman towards the front of the audience. Supaya kita nggak bodoh dan tidak ditipu orang [as he removes the fake thumb through which the illusion was accomplished]. Supaya masyarakat Islam

gratifying performance (laughter accompanies each illusion from the off-screen audience in this video posted to YouTube). Being amused, he asserts, is no threat to Islam – ignorance, poverty and conflict are the enemies. By closing this particular lecture with an “ice-breaker,” Om Bagus is able to send the audience home on a high, having witnessed and enjoyed the performance. The affective modality here is employed not in pursuit of a personally transformative experience, but rather in the anchoring of specific communicative material (the real threats to Islam) to a pleasing affective state (mirth). Mastery of affect is not just delivering an audience to wracking sobs and quivering tears – as in Aristotle, it is “disposing the listener in some way.” This, too, is *motivasi*. And this is change that originates from outside of the self.

### **Motivasi and the Military Aesthetic**

It was after 1:00am when we faced down the unit leaders of the fresh recruits. I was confronted by tired eyes, several looks of confusion, a stern gaze that might harbor defiance. The unit leaders, alongside their charges, had spent much of the past hour on the asphalt, staring up at the night sky, rolling over or enduring repeated bouts of verbal abuse. We had set out late: plowing through driving rain in dilapidated buses, heading for the hills that loomed past Bogor, venturing to Jakarta’s far south. I surveyed the makeshift camouflage uniforms of the eight young men standing before me. Their hair was rain-streaked, makeup and dirt smeared across their cheeks. I was tasked with further jarring them from their complacency, with instilling a sense of camaraderie and discipline. And so I went for the time-honored technique of the riddle, demanding from each of the unit leaders an account of what was wrong in their unit. I did so, as instructed, in English, with the aim of adding further confusion to their experience. Regardless of the response, I informed each of them that no, that was not what I had in mind. Two uniformed

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tidak bodoh. Karena sekarang Islam itu bermusuhan oleh pertama kebodohan, kedua kemiskinan, [pause]. Dan musuh Islam yang ketiga adalah conflict. Jadi tiga hal itu. Sulap? Bocorin...

compatriots, wearing black berets, stared over my shoulders, holding makeshift newspaper batons aloft, as if to strike. Everyone was tired. Everyone was wet. And it would be three more hours before permission to sleep was granted, itself brief respite for an hour terminated by the morning call to worship.

No, this was not paramilitary training – although it borrowed the aesthetic. We were not preparing to wage war. This was *Orientasi Studi dan Pengenalan Kampus* (Course Orientation and Campus Introduction), or *ospek* as the Indonesian acronym has it. Ospek is the now ubiquitous orientation for university students, conducted not only by departments, but also by extracurricular clubs and student organizations. Beyond “orientation” as it might be imagined in other university contexts, ospek has come to resemble the ritualized inductions of fraternity pledging or membership in secret societies. As subsequent generations of “seniors” devise ever-more exacting forms of hazing rituals, the practice has come in for widespread condemnation.<sup>202</sup> Maiming and even deaths have been attributed to ospek,<sup>203</sup> although the most recent controversy concerned a seemingly heretical “theme” for the ospek: *Tuhan Membusuk*,<sup>204</sup> or “Rotting God.” In Indonesia, as the fall semester begins, another season of sensationalist news accounts prepares to inform the wider public of the new horrors being perpetrated on university students. Along the

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<sup>202</sup> “Ospek Berbau Kekerasan di UNILA Terekam Video Amatir.” *Liputan6*. September 13, 2014. Web. March 15, 2015. This report is titled, “Ospek with a whiff of violence at University of Lampung is recorded in an amateur video.”

<sup>203</sup> Ramadhan, Mitra. “Balon Gas Meledak Saat Ospek, 4 Mahasiswa Unis Terluka.” *Merdeka*. September 13, 2014. Web. March 15, 2015. This headline, from *Merdeka*, reads “Gas balloon explodes during Ospek, 4 students of Islamic University of Shaykh Yusuf injured.”

<sup>204</sup> For an opinion piece explaining both the intentions of the organizers and the controversy, see Fikr, Ghazwal. “Perlukah Membela ‘Tuhan Membusuk’.” *Hidayatullah.com*. September 8, 2014. Web. March 12, 2015. For other coverage concerning the mobilized response to this theme, see “Usut Kasus Ospek Bertema “Tuhan Membusuk”, Polisi Periksa Sekjen FPI Jatim.” *Kompas*. September 22, 2014. Web. March 12, 2015.



way the term has jumped from its campus context to motorcycle gangs,<sup>205</sup> entering contemporary Indonesian as a broad designation of ritual induction into a group or organization.

Ospek at Kahfi Motivator School, according to interlocutors who were veterans of multiple ospek, wasn't especially excessive. There was a mud course, eight stations testing/promoting different features of the Kahfi curriculum, and an awful lot of yelling.<sup>206</sup> As a Kahfi student of the 9<sup>th</sup> cohort, I was partly responsible for organizing the Ospek for the 13<sup>th</sup> cohort. This, however, posed a number of problems for the Kahfi community. On one hand, I wasn't eligible to *mengospek* (subject others to ospek), since I had never been *diospek* (subjected to ospek). It seemed unfair that I would just waltz in and debase others without the tacit knowledge that I had been the recipient of ostensibly similar prior debasement. On the other hand, the Kahfi negotiation of status typically shunted high status individuals (established professionals, professors, religious instructors) into one of the special cohorts of Kahfi mentioned in the previous chapter on hypnotherapy: *Kahfi Ustadh*. If I seemed a poor candidate for *mengospek*, many members of the Kahfi community were equally uncomfortable with the notion that I might be *diospek*. And so, for one night only, I was inducted as an honorary member of *Kahfi Ustadh*. Along with two actual *Ustadh* (teacher, in Arabic, in Indonesian, Islamic studies instructor), I was tasked with manning one of the eight stations: the religion station (*pos keagamaan*). And so I spent the bulk of the ospek quizzing new students on *20 Sifat*

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<sup>205</sup> Nugraha, Candra. "Geng Motor XTC Bantah ada Ospek Kekerasan." *Tempo*. January 11, 2014. Web. March 12, 2015. This report, in *Tempo*, reads "Motorcycle Gang XTC denies [having] a violent ospek."

<sup>206</sup> There was also "pos nol," or "zero post." This post was attended only by those prospective students who were especially *oki*, or left-brained – that is, those who evinced skepticism or difficulty acceding to the social logics imposed on them. Here people were "broken down" (*dibonkar*; demolished, broken apart), such that they could be reassembled in configurations more conducive to the Kahfi curriculum.

*Wajib bagi Allah*,<sup>207</sup> *Shalawat Nariyah*,<sup>208</sup> and *Asmaul Husna*.<sup>209</sup> Perhaps I was given this role because of my presumed moral force (as a foreign Muslim convert), but it is just as likely that it was assumed I could do the least damage here. The fact that I myself had not, at the time, memorized the *20 Sifat Wajib* did nothing to dissuade the Kahfi facilitator who assigned me to the post.

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<sup>207</sup> *20 Sifat Wajib dan Mustahil bagi Allah*, or “The 20 Necessary and [20] Impossible Attributes of God” is a concise statement of Ashar`i doctrine: it is a highly condensed version of the “Sanusi creed.” (See Watt, *Islamic Creeds*, 90-97).

<sup>208</sup> *Shalawat Nariyah*, discussed in Chapter 4, is also referred to as *Shalawat Tafrijiyyah* and *Shalawat Kamilah*. It has been criticized for its invocation of the Prophet as an intercessor (instead of direct appeal to the Divine).

<sup>209</sup> As we have already established in the materials on Islamic Hypnotherapy, *Asmaul Husna* are a devotional litany of divine names/attributes. Their recitation is considered a performance of *zikir* (*dhikr*), remembrance of, and reflection on, God.



**Figure 15 Recruits and Facilitators at Kahfi Ospek 13**

The theme at Kahfi Osepik Angkatan 13, as it often is for ospek, was military (see Figure 15 above). Those wearing camouflage in the center of the image are the prospective students subjected to the ospek; the smiling women in the foreground are part of the team conducting the *ospek*. The military represents an enduringly popular visual idiom for collectivities as convened in Indonesia. The expression of this idiom can be found in myriad social settings. Uniforms are ubiquitous, whether for an in-service day at the office, spent removing litter from a public park, or for a public performance of praise songs recited by a choral group drawn from an orphanage. As Gregory Simon argues in *Caged in on the Outside* for Minang speakers, in terms of mannered performances and ritual speech (*basa basi*), there is a tremendous value placed on being part of a group (76-85). Simon is following an argument in Frederick Errington's *Manners and Meaning*,

also built around an analysis of Minang sociality. Both authors identify how erasing outward markers of individuality neutralize potential threats of intersubjective injury and corruption. The rewards are not purely defensive: both authors relate how the correct maintenance of surfaces – the adab of sociality – is a source of satisfaction, status and esteem. Similar claims have been made for Bugis speakers (Murni Mahmud, “Ritual of Politeness”), and could easily be advanced for Javanese and Indonesian as well. Not standing out, in language or appearance, is a meaningful commitment – whether motivated by objectified cultural norms, Islamic notions of adab, or attempts to protect the self. The military represents the apogee of this impulse: pure regimented collectivity. As such, the military may not represent itself. Martial organization suggests the fantasy of collectivity, but not necessarily investment in the particular structure of power and influence exercised by the Indonesian military. The willful embrace of this aesthetic offends many observers’ sensibilities (both domestic and foreign) because of the difficulty in parsing its instrumental use from other values assigned to the military, especially in light of a decades-long military-dominated dictatorship (some of the folks at IofC would have looked askance at military dress-up).

The visceral appeal of the military as a marker of not only collectivity but also efficacy can be seen in other aspects of Kahfi performances. Student leadership at Kahfi (appointed by Om Bagus rather than elected), in conjunction with Om Bagus, frequently re-designed the graphics used in promotional material for the school. For a brief period, the graphic employed was Figure 16 below. At the time, Bagus Bina Cendekia (the for-profit arm of Kahfi) was still “Bagus Brain Communication” (clearly seen in the image), but Kahfi School of Public Speaking had already become the “Kahfi Motivator School.” It’s a fascinating image; the exuberant outstretched hands of Om Bagus, bedecked in full Kahfi regalia, anchoring the left side of the

banner graphic. *Allah*, in Arabic, is central, flanked on each side by images of helicopters lifted from posters or marketing material from the film *Apocalypse Now*. The right side of the image is peopled with senior Kahfi figures, two from my cohort, one from the third cohort (holding the plastic model carbine) and one from the 11<sup>th</sup> cohort, wearing a headset as if somehow coordinating the movement of troops. The “block K” Kahfi logo is visible between the student/troops and the rightmost helicopter. Beneath the large print “Motivator School,” the poster reads in Indonesian, “The First Motivator Academy in Indonesia – D3 Plus” (D3 being a 3 year associates degree). From American shores, it may be difficult to imagine the audience for this particular poster.



**Figure 16** A Military Aesthetic at Kahfi

The picture selected of Om Bagus, perhaps trying to capture his charisma, in conjunction with the military aesthetic, calls to mind first Benedict Anderson’s critical revision of the concept of charisma, occasioned by his analyses of Soekarno’s speeches invoking Adolf Hitler.<sup>210</sup> There Anderson contests the utility of the category, particularly as it is stripped from

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<sup>210</sup> Apropos our discussion here, Anderson characterizes Soekarno’s regard for Hitler as “technical” in nature. After claiming that Soekarno had no use for the language of charisma, Anderson write, “It is exactly the same reason that an expert conjuror, speaking about another conjuror, may well talk about technique, new tricks, style of patter, manual dexterity, stage presence, and so on but will never talk about...magic” (*Language and Power*, 87-88). Om

Weber's emancipatory projects. Charisma survives in sociological analysis, Anderson claims, first because it allows anticolonial nationalism to "be given a socially pathological taint, and its vocal representatives figured as cynical or self-deluding charlatans" (*Language and Power*, 90-91). The second reason is because it allows Euro-American modernity to "other" its own exemplars as aberrations, to "highlight Hitler's 'uniqueness,' his demonic person, his teja... as opposed to his political skills, diplomatic dexterity, and intelligent support for the innovative economic policies of Hjalmar Schacht" (92-93). If Anderson feels the need to defend the "third world Big Man" from the derision of the post-World War II social scientific establishment (itself the vanguard of the new American liberal economic regime), we need maintain no such compunction. Om Bagus enjoys and employs the language of charisma. In practice and in representation, he marshals the *efficacious* associations of the military, widespread in Indonesia, to frame a project of largely moral renewal. Motivasi adheres not only to personal projects of moral transformation, but also to collective enterprises.

There are many in Indonesia who might be repelled by this image. But for many in Kahfi's primary audience the tools of military violence (the helicopters, the fake carbine) are interpreted first as symbols of adept orchestration. At the Kahfi Motivator School campus, in the *ruko* described in the previous chapter, the student volunteer responsible for the front desk (*pos keamanan*; security post) was obliged to wear a mock sheriff's badge and a large plastic revolver. These symbols did not evoke violent repression – instead they marked the subordination of their individual bearer into the role assigned to her. Ranks and insignia were imagined to mark hierarchy while erasing individuality. This adopted a military logic while

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Bagus, however, is a teacher of motivasi. He draws not on essentially Javanese (despite his nominal Javanese ethnicity) theories of power, but on globally circulating discourses of self-efficacy. And he is, of course, a conjuror himself.

directing it towards an Islamic ethical end. While these symbols could be read as threatening, the role assigned to the security post at the ruko was to answer phones and ensure that entering students lined up their shoes appropriately. Instead of a tool of domination, the military regalia were understood as props for performances – the security post was about idealized conduct, not about safety or enforced hierarchy. The military, too, was understood as a technology that could be employed towards novel ends.

### **The Graduates of Motivasi**

On May 19, 2013, Kahfi held the graduation ceremony for the 9<sup>th</sup> cohort (my classmates), the 10<sup>th</sup> cohort, and the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> cohorts of Kahfi Ustadh (the special classes of Kahfi offered once weekly for educators). As part of the ceremony, the assembled students (each wearing their black Kahfi uniform, having shed the graduation robes) were led in an oath (Figure 17 below is a still image from the video of the proceedings):

I testify that there is no god but God and I testify that Muhammad is the Messenger of God [the *shahada*, or testimony of faith for Muslims].

We, graduates of Kahfi Motivator School, swear to:

One, as alumni of Kahfi, we will always protect the good name of our alma mater. Strive to develop knowledge of Islam/Islamic knowledge and devote it to the interests of religion, the nation, the state and humanity.

Two, as Muslim graduates, we will be loyal and obedient in practicing the teachings of Islam and always aware of our responsibilities towards the welfare of the ummah [the community of the believers], the future of the nation and the Indonesian state based on the Qur'an and *sunna rasulullah* [the exemplary speech and actions of the Messenger of God].

Three, as good citizens of the Republic of Indonesia, we will carry out our tasks and obligations to the best of our ability, giving priority to the interests of religion and the



nation, beneath the protection of Allah *Subhanahu wa ta'ala* [all Glory to God the Most High].<sup>211</sup>



Figure 17 Kahfi Motivator School Graduation for Cohorts 9-10

Watching a video recording of the proceeding, listening to the martial air (recalling Figure 16 above, as well as Figure 17) with which the oath was read, it struck me as a quintessentially Kahfi moment. The oath foregrounded dual, and complementary, fealty to the nation and to Islam, articulated in such a manner as to pre-empt any possible conflict between these loyalties. This pattern is familiar from other mainstream Muslim organizations in Indonesia that make a habit of acknowledging the centrality of the state: a public argument that good citizenship is

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<sup>211</sup> The complete oath:

*Asyhadu alaa ilaaha illallaah wa asyhadu anna muhammadar rasuulullaah*

Kami, sarjana Kahfi Motivator School, bersumpah:

Satu, sebagai alumni Kahfi, kami akan selalu menjaga nama baik alma mater. Berusaha mengembangkan pengetahuan Islam dan mengabdikannya kepada kepentingan agama, bangsa, negara dan perikemanusiaan. Dua, sebagai sarjana Muslim, kami akan patuh dan setia melaksanakan ajaran-ajaran Islam dan selalu sadar akan tanggungjawab kami terhadap kesejahteraan umat, masa depan bangsa dan negara Indonesia yang dilandasi al-Qur'an dan sunna rasulullah

Tiga, sebagai warga negara republik Indonesia yang baik, kami akan menjalankan tugas dan kewajiban sebaik-baiknya, mengutamakan kepentingan agama dan bangsa, di bawah lindungan Allah *subhanahu wa ta'ala*



coterminous with religious performance. Here, this was coupled with the explicit injunction to preserve the reputation of Kahfi, a moral obligation to reflect kindly on one's teachers. The graduates of this ceremony had received *motivasi* and were charged with demonstrating that receipt in these key domains of public life. This oath, as a publicly undertaken commitment, doesn't just evince aspirations – it is designed to function as prescriptive reality. This is what having *motivasi* is supposed to look like.

The ambition of this oath – again, this was read for the graduation from a public speaking school – was in keeping with the lofty values encouraged at Kahfi, but geared towards an ethic of religious citizenship. This stands in opposition to an economic disposition that sometimes shapes other Kahfi enterprises – mastering public speaking in pursuit of a promotion or compensation. The goal of *motivasi* is not ultimately to improve material prospects (although that is one legitimate end). Instead the experiences of the students at Kahfi Motivator School are imagined to have delivered them to a certain *adab*. The repetition of elements within the oath, and the attention paid to the order of those elements, was about proper placement: the correct locations of action within the created world. Even during graduation Kahfi leaders were intent on advocating for correct notions of agency and the change it could provide. As such, reciters of this oath reserved the final invocation for God. “Within/Beneath the protection of God,” a stock formulation (*dalam perlindungan Allah/di bawah lindungan Allah*), occupies interesting rhetorical space in an oath. As a genre of speech, the oath is about accountability – an articulation of a public commitment. The supplication implicit in the formulation that closed the oath – akin to the generic “God Bless America” of American political discourse, or perhaps more aptly, “so help me God” of courtroom proceedings – sits somewhat uneasily in this context. It's not clear from the recording what is encompassed within God's protection. Given the pauses

necessary for accurate recitation (marked by the comma between “nation” and “beneath” above), as speech the protection of God rests uncertainly: it could be the nation which is under that protection, or the whole enterprise of fulfilling one’s civic responsibilities. But despite this, it still *feels* necessary. It comprises the recognition and acknowledgement of God and cements the ethical aims of a Kahfi education: to move through the world cognizant of the protection of God, and the rights and responsibilities that devolve from that protection. This, then, is the adab of *motivasi*.

## Afterward

### Closings

This dissertation has explored specific practices of moral intervention in Post-Suharto Indonesia. This has entailed tracing-out how “change” is imagined and attempted within two contemporary organizations, Initiatives of Change Indonesia (IofC) and Kahfi Motivator School (Kahfi). The practices within these communities are shaped by Muslim theological horizons and broad Indonesian socio-political possibilities. The relationships to the divine articulated in their moral projects reveal models of agency other than those implicated in analyses of pietistic self-fashioning. Pursuing this argument has meant interpreting the processes through which the “foreign” becomes accessible, acceptable, and familiar. The flexibility with which members of IofC and Kahfi incorporate diverse bodies of knowledge is, I have argued, partly an outcome of historical processes dating to Dutch colonialism. At the same time, current nationalist discourses with similar genealogies sharply constrain the prospects of change available to contemporary Indonesians. The prevalence of scientific and psychological models of change in these communities should not, I contend, suggest a derivative status – instead these discourses are employed as morally neutral vehicles for the expression of enduringly Islamic aspirations. Throughout this project remains attentive to the bi-directionality of change: as discourses of moral transformation are assimilated by novel communities they are necessarily changed, but the agents of that assimilation also undergo reciprocal re-alignments. Neither the knowledge nor the subject survives the encounter unaltered.

In the first chapter I offered a whirlwind history through a set of linked sketches. Tracing how Islam was imagined and managed in the Dutch colonial enterprise gave way to a broader conversation about administering, channeling and controlling change. The paired opposition, *adat* and Islam, central to post-Diponegoro War colonial knowledge production, became progressively more reified over the course of the nineteenth century. Faced with Muslim adversaries in Aceh, however, the Dutch East Indies administration was forced to re-examine its understanding of the Islamic tradition. Triangulating between the purified categories of religion and culture, foreign Islam and domestic *adat*, colonial administrators launched a third way, the so-called Ethical Policy. Directed towards moral uplift amongst the inhabitants of the archipelago, the Ethical Policy imagined a secularized Muslim elite, capable of thwarting Muslim political aspirations. By the twilight of colonial rule, these divisions were so well established as to render opaque the political demands advanced by Muslim activists in the ferment of the revolutionary period. The achievement of formal independence for Indonesia augured further revisions in the state's relationship to moral projects.

Independent Indonesia, constitutionally founded on a compromise between Islamic universals and pluralist demographics, has continued to re-assemble the core elements of policy left by the colonial legacy. From the outset, nationalist leaders sought a deconfessionalized middle-ground that nevertheless affirmed fundamental Islamic propositions. The result, an explicit state ideology called *Pancasila*, has shaped the horizons of religious expression and political participation ever since. In the shift from left-wing to right-wing totalitarianism, that state ideology was re-sacralized and granted transcendental properties. Conflicts between this rigid expression of the state's moral sovereignty and Islamic political actors resulted in a re-Islamization of the state (or the nationalization of Muslim politics, depending on one's

perspective). Meanwhile, the fate of other moral projects, like the foreign-based Moral Re-Armament Movement (banned in 1962), was subject to the shifting political winds in the archipelago. The collapse of Suharto's New Order government seemed to promise new possibilities for organizations and moral reform alike. Despite the new openings forged during the *Reformasi* window, state apparatuses have continued to exert their definitional proclivities. This tradition is exemplified by the Ministry of Religion and its ongoing efforts to bound and channel religious aspiration. This fraught history delivers us to the particular concerns, conceits and convictions of Initiatives of Change Indonesia and Kahfi Motivator School.

We turned to the first of these organizations, Initiatives of Change Indonesia, in the second chapter. This organization was founded in Ciputat, just outside of Jakarta, only after the regulatory reforms enacted during the presidency of Abdurrahman Wahid. It had changed substantially since its predecessor, the Moral Re-Armament Movement, was banned in 1962. Gone was the language of Christian evangelizing and gone too the almost monomaniacal focus on defeating communism. Instead the international Initiatives of Change movement promised its new Indonesian adherents the rhetorical technologies to achieve moral transformations. These awakenings were predicated on a deconfessionalized notion of agency and divine grace, theologically acceptable to the principally Muslim audience found in the shadows of the State Islamic University. Through sophisticated practices of translation and adaptation, the Indonesian members of the organization assimilated core practices taught by the broader movement. Throughout they were aided by the availability of a secularized discourse of change – Initiatives of Change Indonesia practitioners were heir not only to the presumed epistemic neutrality of modern science, but also to the hard-fought successes of Dutch efforts at categorical purification that introduced the concept of secular progress to the Indies.

The metapragmatic role of Islamically-inflected *adab*, the idealized “right-relations” structuring sociality, forms the heart of the third chapter. Eschewing the language of “piety,” I found that *adab* offered rich explanatory potential. Exploring right-relations revealed ongoing negotiations of competing ethical demands, conducted in plain view. In this, the social worlds convened within the walls of the Initiatives of Change Indonesia Secretariat were both unique and reflective of wider Indonesian possibilities. Gendered social interactions at Initiatives of Change Indonesia demonstrated the flexibility afforded by the moral stature of the organization alongside a shared flexibility offered by the notion of *adab*. Seemingly irreconcilable moral injunctions were responded to as discrete hailings, emphasizing subjective relationality. One core set of *adab*-relations is that which is expressed through the language of kinship. Familial idioms highlight the operation of broad Islamic imperatives (be merciful) in the context of particularistic intersubjective standards (maintain gender segregation). As individuals positioned themselves in accordance with idealized relations, *adab* became both a condition and a medium of change. The right *adab* must be possessed for meaningful change to occur, but the process of cultivating that *adab* delivers its own moral progress.

Islamic Hypnotherapy, its practice and pedagogy, comprises the fourth chapter of this dissertation. Moving from Initiatives of Change Indonesia to the Kahfi Motivator School, I elaborate some of the compelling features of the latter institution. Teaching “Western” hypnosis within the ambit of the Islamic imperatives structuring the Kahfi School entailed frequent epistemological navigation. Kahfi instructors accorded hypnotherapeutic technologies novel Islamic genealogies and ensured that their practice was directed towards explicitly Islamic spiritual ends. Suturing hypnosis to an Islamic past and an Islamic future emphasized the epistemic neutrality on which the science of hypnosis was imagined to rely. Through the

adoption and dissemination of hypnotherapy Kahfi Motivator School became a site for a different agentive model of change. Rather than a striving subject, Islamic Hypnotherapy reveals the abiding interest of individuals in the prospect of outside-in transformations. Using divine license, the practitioner of hypnosis at Kahfi is understood to affect change within the souls of their spiritual clients. The markers of that change are phenomenally apparent through affective performances: in the sweat and tears of the subjects of hypnosis.

The fifth chapter sets out to take seriously motivational practices organized beneath the sign of “motivasi.” Exploring the tortuous analytic status of “self-help,” I discuss some of the myriad settings in which motivasi is invited to intervene. I contend that a scientific truth effect, conceptually linked to both the computational models of psycho-cybernetics and the ubiquity of PowerPoint as a medium of expression, enables the deployment of motivasi as an efficacious discourse. Motivasi is directed at altering the interior conditions of an audience as much as that audience’s exterior behavior. Thus I advocate a reading of motivasi performances that decenters the scholarly focus on neo-liberal subjectivities. Instead of mere recruitment into processes of economic rationalization, the motivasi performances that capture my attention retain an illiberal, enchanted core. Islamic motivational practices continue to make agentive demands on the divine: asking for souls to be healed, relations restored, and disposition cultivated, not through effort but via grace. The continued relevance of God in motivasi practice, in turn, suggests that there is an adab, an idealized right relationality, to motivasi as well. Once more the conceptual separations bequeathed by successive political regimes have been re-assembled in novel configurations.

In this dissertation I have demonstrated some of the ways in which the foreign becomes local. Set in contemporary Indonesia, amongst small-scale Muslim organizations, this has often meant following out how knowledge becomes assimilable, Indonesian, and Islamic. Along the

way I have endeavored to dramatize the thinness of our collective familiarity – the ways in which “our” locals are also already foreign to “us.” Change, as a project of moral renewal and advancement, depends on leveraging the foreign and the local, the strange and the familiar. It happens in Jakarta, as everywhere, within history. The state management of religion, in its colonial and postcolonial iterations, shapes the horizons within which moral changes are conceived. The proponents of change rely on technologies assembled from rhetorically available discourse. These practices and knowledges include both those stabilized within Indonesian national projects and those imagined to be stable (morally neutral) from the outset. The results are far from uniform. In point of fact, the juxtaposition of the paths charted at IofC and Kahfi demonstrate the rich complexity of this conceptual terrain.

Technologies of change are adopted and adapted at Kahfi Motivator School and Initiatives of Change Indonesia via related modalities of appropriation. They are employed in the pursuit, however, of discrete ends. IofC, like the parent Initiatives of Change movement, encourages emancipatory politics of a particular sort. The language of “rights” is alive within the IofC Secretariat – especially as it concerns religious minorities, personal expression and individual moral accountability (as opposed to prescribed or enforced morality). The kinds of changes aspired to at IofC are expressly understood as the means to attain just leadership, social equality and peace. Personal moral awakenings are understood as the precondition for large-scale social health, and commitment to projects, however minor, of social improvement are key markers for moral enhancement: IofC members want to have change, but to make it too. The members of IofC want to be leaders in their society, but failing that they are content to be instruments for the achievement of the greater good. Despite diverse political and religious backgrounds, most IofC members come to express pluralist commitments – whether framed in



terms of “universal” rights or Islamically-inflected notions of fairness and justice. Although the language of Indonesian nationalism is frequently invoked, the overall orientation is simultaneously local (the neighborhood around the Secretariat, UIN, Ciputat) and international as well. Personal moral attainment is thus always understood as having extensive social ramifications.

During the course of my fieldwork, several members of IofC started classes at Kahfi. This overlap predated my arrival in Ciputat, but it accelerated at the urging of Mabe, a vocal proponent of both organizations. The IofC members taking Kahfi classes did not, in our conversations (Mabe excepted), think of Kahfi as a related enterprise to IofC. Whereas IofC was about leveraging personal moral awakenings into the attainment of social good, Kahfi was about individual mastery of persuasive arts. The moral character of a Kahfi education, from their perspective, was the generic cast of an Islamic institution – familiar to most of them from their formal education and prior organizational memberships. From this vantage Kahfi espoused Muslim norms, but moral transformation was not a key component of the curriculum. Just before I returned to the United States, two Kahfi students made the reverse journey. According to one of them, a young man who had recently graduated from the economics program at UIN, IofC was a good idea without a sufficiently strong Muslim identity. What I had marveled at as a demonstration of *adab* he interpreted as a lack of devotional commitment. Addressing a weekly gathering at the IofC Secretariat, he repeatedly began his remarks with a generic apology (*maaf ya*) followed by the invocation of *hadith* to support his personal observations attained during Quiet Time. Privately he related to me that the person who had invited him had misrepresented what IofC really was. Although this young man felt that IofC was too pluralist in its operation, for ardent IofC supporters this ecumenical orientation allowed for the marriage of their Muslim

identities to their often liberal politics. The organization was imagined as a vehicle for the realization of this ambition.

The circumstances at Kahfi do not reveal similar clarity of purpose. Kahfi Motivator School is a compelling environment. Its activities often privilege enjoyment alongside moral enhancement – moral exhortations early in the evening give way to karaoke late at night. The personal figure cut by Om Bagus is relentlessly charming and engaging, a consistent delight that was not at all lost on this author. The moral project at the heart of the school, to graduate Islamically-grounded effective public speakers, is of a piece with related enterprises dating to Indonesia's recent history. It is part of a tradition that aligns psychological discourse with Islamic practice. However the broader ends were never quite as explicit as the commitments voiced at IofC. Some students wished to have change, some to affect change, and some to invite both operations. The desired outcome of participation, in hayz outline, invited a couple of related questions: Was efficacy as a public speaker, while anchored to Muslim norms, mostly a project about economic advancement? Was Om Bagus's political caution (his refusal to support party politics) really an enduring form of quietism consonant with the political stasis demanded by the New Order? Om Bagus's, and thus Kahfi's, openness was considerably narrower than that of IofC. Embracing Sufi parallels to hypnosis, Om Bagus was just as willing to embrace Habib Rizieq, the leader of the *Front Pembela Islam*, the vigilante organization founded nearby in Ciputat (and of course, Habib Rizieq himself claims membership in a Sufi order). Om Bagus, in his very refusal to draw lines among Muslims, arguably occupied the political position most amenable to the entrenched interests of the old regime – and the status quo. If it wasn't just about enhanced job prospects, what was all this hybrid discourse really about? In place of a strong generalization, I turn to a startling anecdote, a sharp illustration of the complexity of change as it

is experienced and witnessed in contemporary Indonesia. This, too, is a story about continuity, although it stretches not to old political orders so much as to enduring spiritual possibility.

## **Eruptions**

Returning from Indonesia late in the fall of 2011, I was heartened and chastened, all at once, to read Daromir Rudnyckyj's *Spiritual Economies: Islam, Globalization and the Afterlife of Development*. In my observations, Tubagus Wahyudi, the spiritual entrepreneur behind Kahfi Motivator School, struggled to emerge from the shadow cast by Ary Ginanjar and ESQ (the organization at the center of *Spiritual Economies*). As it is in real life, now so too in doctoral dissertations. Rudnyckyj's argument about novel re-assemblages, about the spiritual extension of rational economic impulses, was compelling indeed. The Weberian contours of his project reconciled epistemes of Islamic self-efficacy and globalized circuits of capital. And then it was suddenly clear, of course, where our accounts diverged. My interlocutors in this dissertation are fiercely invested in material advancement. Efficiency is an important governing value, if a seldom-realized organizational attribute. Yet their this-worldly strivings are assumed to take place within the embrace of God. Repeatedly Divine Will interrupts their efforts at ordering themselves and the world about them. No mere detail, divine agency draws sharp edges on the changes imagined and attempted within the organizations I joined and studied. Subjects of a neo-liberal economy, they resolutely evince a variety of illiberal subjectivities.

Rudnyckyj, late in his volume, details a fascinating account of possession. Comprising the opening anecdote to his final chapter, Rudnyckyj relates how one participant in an ESQ training seminar was suddenly carried off by seemingly malevolent forces (189-190). The nature of this possession, however, is ultimately revealed to be an existential crisis forged by the sectarian ethnic politics of the New Order, as re-imagined in its aftermath. Over ten pages (200-

210), Rudnyckyj reveals how this participant, of partial Chinese descent, was acting out the irreconcilable demands of his Muslim faith and his Chinese ancestry. In the wake of uneven authoritarian pluralism, Rudnyckyj claims, this multiplicity of identities became untenable: “Individuals of plural identity such as Arfan were no longer publicly called on to proclaim their allegiance to the nation but rather to Islam” (211). The development rhetoric of the nation has been replaced by the economic rationalism of New Islam. Without disputing this cogent argument, I would like to introduce a markedly similar vignette and draw a vastly different conclusion: in lieu of explanation, I intend only perplexity.

In February 2011 I accompanied several of my Kahfi Motivator School peers, a few alumni, and Om Bagus to Glodok, a mercantile neighborhood in North Jakarta. I went to assist in a seminar commissioned by a paying customer, Tupperware™ Indonesia. Outside the not-for-profit activities of Kahfi, Om Bagus frequently held workshops and seminars for paying customers, usually business units or government offices. These workshops covered a range of materials from the Kahfi curriculum, but were generally oriented towards public speaking, motivation and business success. As such, hypnotherapy was seldom a major element of the presentations. Instead of teaching about hypnosis, hypnotic practice tended to be employed instrumentally: late in the typical seminar, Om Bagus would guide the attendees in a short hypnotic script designed to deliver them to a “sealing” affective experience – the personal proof that something had taken place within them, demonstrated in sweat and tears.

The location of the seminar was not accidental. Glodok is a traditionally Chinese neighborhood in Jakarta and plays host to a variety of shopping centers and emporia, in keeping with its fame as a major retail center for Indonesia. For three days we operated out of a midrange hotel; conducting our trainings in its banquet hall. The participants were from all across

Indonesia, flown in to Jakarta as a reward for their success in selling Tupperware™ products. This was both a prize for reaching sales quotas and designed as in-service that would facilitate future retail success. The materials covered each day were the same – only the participants changed. Thus every attendee was given the opportunity to avail herself of the neighboring malls and warehouses in addition to her receipt of inspirational training. There were roughly forty-five people per session. It's hard to imagine a setting in contemporary Indonesia more bedecked with middle-class sensibilities than a nice hotel playing host to a workshop for successful Tupperware™ merchants. However on the first day of the workshop this veneer was punctured in spectacular fashion in a manner casting considerable light on the still-fraught agentive terrain of Kahfi Motivator School practices.

Our audiences on all three days were primarily middle-aged women – two men, in total, took part in the training. These attendees were overwhelmingly Muslim, although several Christians and a Hindu or two also took part. Early in the afternoon of the first day, having covered a range of techniques and practices associated with public speaking, Om Bagus announced that he would like to check the focus of the assembled participants. *Cek fokus*, as it is neologized in Indonesian, is the process whereby one's level of focus (*tingkat fokus*) is assessed through the use of guided imagery or hypnotic induction. Once mass hypnosis is performed, it should be clear to observers who amongst the attendees has acceded to the guidance and who is unable to do so. On this occasion Om Bagus used the script discussed earlier in Chapter Four – a balloon flight to the holy lands. Given the religious composition of the audience, brief asides were made as an effort to include non-Muslims (*dan kepada saudara-saudari yang non-Muslim*), who were directed to travel to “places you consider holy” (*kepada tempat-tempat yang engkau*

*anggap suci*), as opposed to Mecca. The induction proceeded smoothly and a solid two-thirds of the room appeared to be in the sway of Om Bagus's guidance. All appeared to be well.

Having accomplished the flight to the holy lands, Om Bagus began to describe the cleansing of the soul enabled by the waters of Zamzam (performing ablutions at this most sacred well). At this point one woman began to shriek significantly louder than the others. While many wept, and a few wailed, there was a much shriller tone emanating from this particular participant. Her cries were urgent, insistent and demanding. Several of my fellow facilitators moved swiftly to her side and initiated the standard response to a pronounced affective experience during hypnosis (re-gaining control of the hypnosis through "deepening" followed by a swift-but-soothing "termination"). The wails of the distressed woman showed no sign of abating. Somewhat more abruptly than usual (without the extended opportunity for affective engagement with the prospect of forgiveness), Om Bagus terminated the mass-induction ("woke" everyone up), and moved to assist the facilitators who attended to the woman. By this point she had started cursing those around her (*anjing mu*, "you dog!" she howled, a phrase that bears significantly more violence than its English gloss suggests). Next she fell backwards out of her chair, writhing on the carpeted surface of the banquet hall. In a much louder voice she began to shout. Instead of the wails of earlier, now her voice took on a new timbre. "*Ini bukan aku, aku Allah,*" (This isn't me, I'm God) she proclaimed repeatedly. Murmurs of *kesurupan* and *kerasukan* (two of several terms for "possession") ricocheted across the room. Groggily, many of the participants turned their attention to the scene. After they recovered their full senses, they watched with visible alarm and earnest whispers. Om Bagus declared a short break (*istirahat sebentar*) and encouraged those assembled to adjourn, assuring them that the situation was under control. Several participants, ignoring this entreaty, discussed the nature of the woman's malady. One

went so far as to insert herself into the crowd surrounding the distressed figure, at which point she tried to palpate the body, trying to ascertain the location of the *djin* she assumed was possessing the body. Om Bagus interrupted her and sternly sent the rest of the watchers from the room.

As the Tupperware™ merchants filtered from the room the cries changed to the more succinct “*aku ini Allah*,” “I am God,” or perhaps more accurately, “This Me is God.” Along with the majority of the facilitators, I left the banquet hall. Steeped in the academic literature of Sufism, I was unable to resist the obvious connection to al-Hallaj.<sup>212</sup> I muttered something to this effect to my friend and co-facilitator Salih, hoping to impress him with my (admittedly very basic) Islamic bona fides. Our discussion was interrupted when another facilitator announced her intention to seek medical assistance for the distressed woman. Before anyone was dispatched, word came from the now quiet banquet hall. It was over. Shortly thereafter she exited under her own power. Fifteen minutes later, as the session was set to resume, Om Bagus was summoned – apparently the woman had relapsed into her prior state and his ministrations were needed in her room. He told us not to worry and left. A Kahfi alumni rose to continue the presentation. Half an hour later, Om Bagus returned and interrupted the discussion of vocal modulation to briefly acknowledge and explain what had happened. He spoke explicitly against the building consensus amongst the participants that the woman had been possessed (*kerasukan*). Instead, he insisted, the woman’s complaints were fundamentally psychological. In the relaxed state of hypnosis these ailments had surfaced from the woman’s subconscious. Om Bagus assured us that he had alleviated the symptoms by following them to their root. Someone started to question this

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<sup>212</sup> Mansur Al-Hallaj was a 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> century Persian Sufi, famously executed for his heresies, which tracked the logic of monotheism to its radical end. Although he is most famous for, in a state of ecstasy, announcing *Ana al-Haqq*, (I am the Reality/Real/Truth, where Reality is one of the 99 Beautiful Names of God), he was put to death after a lengthy trial that focused on his teachings and written output far in excess of this one remarkable pronouncement.

assessment, but Om Bagus reiterated his point, and launched into a short diatribe against the rapidity with which we, collectively and foolishly, ascribe malevolent supernatural forces to psychological ailments. It was clear that this diagnosis was not up for discussion. There were a few murmurs, and the seminar moved on. Later, without remark, the woman rejoined her cohort.

Later that evening the facilitators assembled in Om Bagus's room to re-cap the day's events, perform the evening worship cycle and engage in spirited games of dominoes. Om Bagus offered a fuller explanation of what had taken place. He walked us through the psychological narrative that accounted for all of the manifest symptoms. He related that he had performed "waking hypnosis," (akin to talk-therapy and accompanied by a chaperone to forestall *fitnah*). Once more Om Bagus was careful to discredit any notion of possession. He was clear that such possession can take place, but adamant that what is called possession is frequently just the misrecognition of an affliction originating in the subconscious or psyche of the individual. I mentioned al-Hallaj again, fishing, and someone else volunteered Siti Jenar, the equally (locally) famous mystic accused of many of the same crimes during the time of the *wali sanga*, the nine saints of Java credited with proselytizing Islam in pre-Colonial Java. If both al-Hallaj and Siti Jenar represent shades of heresy to many believers, it is also acknowledged, in certain quarters, that they spoke the truth – they simply spoke in inappropriate venues, without sufficient attention to audience. Their crime was not against reality, it was against adab.

In Om Bagus's room it was decided (or announced, really, by Om Bagus) that the unfortunate participant of that afternoon's session was not, in fact, in the grip of mystic revelation, just as she was not possessed. The alacrity with which this verdict was obtained was a little disappointing, at least for me. For Om Bagus, and thus for Kahfi, it was important to enunciate this experience within the safer confines of ostensibly neutral psychology. Of course,



however rationally this woman's suffering might be narrated, it was still understood within the framing context of a relationship with the Divine. Disavowing spirit possession was not an embrace of disenchanting psychology, but instead an ongoing negotiation between Divine agency and profane tools.

Only later did I realize that Om Bagus's reliance on a scientific discourse of psychology was not intended to be persuasive. Instead it was a defensive rhetorical maneuver. By isolating the eruption of enchantment, bounding it within the paradigmatic possibilities of morally neutral science, Om Bagus sought to defend the prospect of hypnotherapy from Islamic critique. Of course there were *djin*. And of course, sometimes, the hypnotherapist encountered them. However hypnosis relied not on *djin*-agency but on borrowed divine agency, on the Godly-authorization of moral intervention, pursued through the neutral technological means of Western hypnosis. As Kahfi students we were meant to understand this, indeed, our entire Kahfi education was designed to deliver us to the possibility of this and related insights. The relentless promotion of scientific methodology was a rearguard action, imagined to protect its practitioners not just from Islamic critique but from the grave possibility of introducing corruption into the tradition. These negotiations were part of an inaudible debate, raging within and among the ostensibly stable categories of religion and culture, Islam and adat, foreign and local. None of us knew what was really happening – that was the magic. We performed the scientific incantations and tears fell to the floor, souls re-assembled and relationships were restored. In a cultural-political world that still denied the very possibility of structural intervention, the authenticity of systemic critique, here was the medium for social transformation: changes, one heart at a time.

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