The Indonesian Dutch Consortium on Muslim-Christian Relations brought together academics, intellectuals as well as social activists from both countries, Christian and Muslim alike. While what is published here is the academic output, the impact of the consortium has therefore been much broader. The contributions are organized according to five generative themes: Identity, Religion and State, Gender, Hermeneutics and Theology of Dialogue. The book has attracted attention already before its publication. It is hoped that this project will inspire continuous efforts for interreligious dialogue.

»This interdisciplinary and comparative study of Muslim Christian relations in Indonesia and the Netherlands is a truly amazing collaborative effort. It provides rich empirical data, gender analysis, hermeneutical insights, and theological arguments that attend to the complexities on the ground and go far deeper than books I have read on interreligious dialogue. I highly recommend it.«
Kwek Pui-lan, Professor of Christian Theology and Spirituality at The Episcopal Divinity School, Cambridge, MA and author of Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology

»This is a very concrete, spirited and inspiring book! More than 25 mostly young scholars, Muslims and people from various Christian denominations, do not approach the old dichotomy between Pancasila versus the Islamic State, but discuss the micro-level: concrete observations how relations work (or not) outside political and religious authority. With a good deal of female authors and interest for the role of women.«
Karel Steenbrink, Prof. em. of Intercultural Theology, University of Utrecht (IIMO) and editor of A History of Christianity in Indonesia

»The impact of this fascinating book goes far beyond its focus on Muslim-Christian relations in Indonesia and the Netherlands: with strong impulses for both, dialogical practice in other contexts, e.g. Germany, and for research like ours on dialogical theology and interreligious dialogue in modern societies.«
Prof. Dr. Katajun Amirpur & Prof. Dr. Wolfram Weisse, Academy of World Religions, University of Hamburg

Muslim Christian Relations Observed
Comparative Studies from Indonesia and the Netherlands
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Edited by Volker Küster and Robert Setio
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Introduction

Volker Küster and Robert Setio

The Indonesian Dutch Consortium on Muslim-Christian Relations is in a certain sense a grass root initiative. Its foundations were laid at a meeting between representatives of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PKN) under the leadership of its mission organization Kerk in Actie (KIA) and the Indonesian Council of Churches in Kaliurang, the retreat center of Duta Wacana Christian University (UKDW) in the vicinity of Yogyakarta (6-8 October 2010). During the discussions about future cooperation Muslim-Christian relations were identified as one of the target areas if it comes to theological issues. PERSERTIA, the umbrella organization of the theological schools in Indonesia, chaired by Robert Setio, was co-opted on the spot. In the Netherlands the Protestant Theological University (PThU) as the official body of theological training for the pastors of the PKN was invited for cooperation. Finally colleagues from the Free University in Amsterdam (VU) and the Radboud University in Nijmegen (RUN) came aboard.

In some preliminary meetings between the editors in Yogyakarta and later with some of the Dutch participants in Utrecht, five sub-themes were agreed upon: Identity, Religion and State, Gender, Hermeneutics and Theology of Dialogue. A first consultation was held in Kampen on May 23-24, 2011 bringing together most of the Dutch participants in the research project with an Indonesian delegation. A crucial issue at this meeting was the controversial Islam nota that had recently been discussed at the synod of the PKN and was supposed to be revised in the light of the reactions of international partner churches. The major conference again took place in Kaliurang (March 26-30, 2012). The opening ceremony was celebrated on the UKDW campus.
in Yogya. The exhibition “Dialogue through the Arts” that was held in conjunction with the consortium meeting in the university court yard bringing together Christian and Muslim artists also inspired the music and dance performance prepared by lecturers and students of Duta Wacana. A cultural exposure program further introduced the participants to the rich cultural life of Java. The Indonesian hospitality alone made the conference an unforgettable experience.

The genuine feature of the consortium is that it brought together not only Christian academics from the Netherlands and Indonesia, which is already an accomplishment in itself but also Muslim academics from both countries as well as social activists, Christian and Muslim alike. While what is published here is the academic output, the impact of the conference has therefore been much broader. The present publication is organized into five parts following the subthemes identified at the very beginning of the journey. Each section has an individual introduction by its chair person. The book has attracted attention already before its publication. It is hoped that this initiative will be carried on.

While reading the last proofs of the manuscript the editors were reached by the sad news that Prof. Dr. Henk Vroom, one of the founding members of the consortium, passed away. Many of his colleagues in the Netherlands and Indonesia will remember his tireless engagement for interreligious dialogue.

The editors, who have had the pleasure of coordinating the endeavor since its inauguration, wish to sincerely thank Corie van der Ven from KIA for her support not only in financial matters. The PThU has covered logistic costs like airfares and hosted the preparatory consultation. The other participating Dutch Universities have also supported their representatives financially. Locherfonds and Stichting Zonneweeld have made this publication possible. We finally thank Dr. Annette Weidhas from the Evangelische Verlagsanstalt in Leipzig for the fast and uncomplicated realization of our first common project.
Identity
Introduction

Frans Wijsen

Muslim-Christian relations are often studied in terms of identity. For example, Singgih Nughoro and Nico Kana write about the role of the *pajatan* celebration in the resolution of potential or real conflict in the context of divisive elections in a multireligious location. They analyzed political dynamics as an arena that provoked people to express their identities as different from one another. The competition between political parties was related to an effort to build social identities in contrast to others. After the divisive elections, the *pajatan* ritual was a means to return to their daily routines.\(^1\)

However, the way ‘identity’ is conceptualized and translated into operational terms is highly contested. Sue Widdicombe distinguishes ‘traditional’, ‘social constructivist’ and ‘postmodern’ models of identity.\(^2\) According to Pierre Bourdieu, the confusion about the concept ‘identity’, whether ‘identities’ are understood in a ‘primordial’ (essentialist) or ‘circumstantial’ (constructivist) way, stems in part from the fact that scholars tend to forget that “cognitive classifications are always subordinated to practical functions and oriented towards the production of social effects”.\(^3\)

The way scholars conceptualize and operationalize ‘identity’ has huge consequences for the way they study intergroup relations, and

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conditions of the possibility for inter-religious (e.g. Muslim – Christian) communication and understanding. Whereas Singgih Nughoro and Nico Kana conceptualize identity in terms of group boundaries which potentially lead to clashes that can be reconciled by rituals, Jacqueline Knörr studies group identities in terms of creolization. She defines creolization as

a process whereby people of different ethnic backgrounds develop a new collective identity which gradually substitutes their respective identities of origin. The process of creolization includes interdependent processes of ethnogenis and indigenization.\(^4\)

According to Knörr “Creolization is likely to take place in environments where people of different – mostly foreign – origins come to live in close proximity to one another”.\(^5\) However, this is not necessarily the case as we know from various instances in Indonesia where people define narrow-minded boundaries excluding others.\(^6\) One of the challenges of studying identities is to acquire insight into conditions that explain why interrelatedness leads to retribilization in one case and to creolization in another case.\(^7\)

The authors in this section study construction of religious identities in the plural context in Indonesia and in relations between Muslims and Christians of Indonesian descent in The Netherlands. They use various methods of data collection (questionnaire, semistructured and open interviews, focus group discussion) and data analysis (statistics, contents analysis and discourse analysis). Together these contributions show that identity negotiation is crucial in maintaining harmony and avoiding conflict in Indonesia.


\(^6\) Carl Sterkens, Muhammad Machasin and Frans Wijsen (eds), *Religion, Civil Society and Conflict in Indonesia*. Münster 2009.

“This is how we are at home.”
Indonesian Muslims in The Hague

Frans Wijsen and Jennifer Vos

In his doctoral dissertation *The Open Society*, Paul Scheffer defines the multicultural society as a drama.¹ He says that the Dutch government policy of “integration retaining the own identity” has failed because it assumed that “society was a collection of subcultures”² and thus promoted a “segregation” of society³ and a “ghetto culture”.⁴ In his dissertation Scheffer urges the Dutch to move “beyond multiculturalism” with its “us” and “them” divide and to strive for “a new ‘us’,⁵ not an “us” against “them”, but an “us” that includes “them”.⁶

However, the need for a new ‘us’ applies also to immigrant communities. In the past there was too much emphasis on the majority group of Dutch citizens opening up to ethnic minority groups. This is onesided, says Scheffer. There is also a lot of prejudice within the immigrant communities, e.g., between ethnic groups such as Creoles and Hindustanis from Surinam,⁷ and between “Berbers” and “Arabs” from Morocco. Scheffer quotes at length a city councilor of The Hague who says that “there is no communality” among the immigrant

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⁶ Op. cit., 223. Scheffer refers to Sumner’s ethnocentrism theory and the in-group versus out-group classification which seems to inspire his thinking.
⁷ Scheffer, *The Open Society*, 223.
groups and who appeals for a “greater involvement in public affairs”.\(^8\) Moreover there is also “a strong polarization between a new middle class and a sizeable underclass”\(^9\) within these immigrant communities.

Scheffer maintains that “international conflicts can have direct consequences for relations between immigrant groups and native population”.\(^10\) International conflicts can lead to “hostility” and “conflict of loyalty”. For example, the Kurds’ struggle for independence in Turkey led to an attack on a Kurdish family in The Hague.\(^11\)

That is why many well-to-do immigrants don’t show sympathy for and solidarity with their compatriots. According to Scheffer, “members of the second generation often want to free themselves from their fellow countrymen or fellow believers”.\(^12\) And, “Many have only just created a place for themselves in a new land and for perfectly understandable reasons they don’t want to be equated with disadvantage”.\(^13\)

Against the background of the assumed lack of communality among immigrant groups and the appeal for their greater involvement in public affairs the authors conducted a research project on migrants as mediators in Dutch multicultural society, focussing on post-colonial migrants, particularly Muslims and Christians from Surinam and Indonesia. They seek to answer the following main questions: How do Muslim and Christian immigrants from Indonesia and Surinam remember Muslim-Christian relations in their country of origin? How do they identify and position themselves and others? How do they relate to and communicate with each other in the Netherlands? And how do they contribute to the debate on multicultural society in the Netherlands?

An underlying issue concerns the relation among national, ethnic and religious identities. It is often said that religion is a Western construct, hence non-Westerners are primarily Africans or Asians, and only secondarily Muslims or Christians. So national identity outweighs religious identity. Even if this is true for their country of origin, does it also apply to the diaspora situation? Or does religion become the overriding determinant of identity in that context? The

\(^12\) Op. cit., 147.
research project consists of four case studies of Surinamese Christians, Surinamese Muslims, Indonesian Muslims, and Indonesian Christians in The Hague.

For the purpose of this article we focus on Indonesian Muslims only. The material for this contribution is generated by collecting naturally occurring data through Indonesian organizations and by conducting interviews with eight key informants, all of whom were first generation migrants. Four of them were over fifty years old and four were younger than fifty. Four respondents were male and four female. Two respondents came to the Netherlands as embassy personnel, one respondent is an imam, and one is a student. Two came to the Netherlands due to marriage-migration, one came for work, and one came to study and never went back to Indonesia. The data is analyzed using the socio-cognitive model of discourse analysis developed by Norman Fairclough, among others. In this model, the cognitive refers to the ideational unit of analysis and the social refers to the relational unit of analysis. The relational unit is subdivided into subject positions and social relations. Subject positions are also called social identities. For the purpose of this article we focus on identities.

First, we make an analysis of the linguistic practice (description). Next, we analyze the discursive practice (interpretation) and the social practice (explanation). As interpretation and explanation go together, we combine these two steps. We explain the levels and stages of analysis by doing, and end with conclusions and discussion.

1. Analysis of linguistic practice

The first method is description – the analysis of the formal features of the text. “It is sometimes useful for analytic purposes to focus upon a single word” or on “culturally salient keywords”, says Fairclough.

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14 To the best of our knowledge, this group has not been extensively studied by others. There are a good number of studies of Indonesian Christians and Churches in The Netherlands, such as that by Mechteld Jansen, Indonesian and Moluccan Churches in The Netherlands, in: *Journal of Reformed Theology* 2, 2008, 168-187. A first report of our research was published (in Dutch) as Jennifer Vos and Sandra van Groningen, *Islam en Burgerschap sluiten elkaar niet uit. Indonesische Moslims in Nederland*, in: *Tijdschrift voor Religie* 3, 2012, 14-26.


16 Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change*, 76f.

Another focus for analysis is “alternative wordings and their political and ideological significance”.  

I feel very sad about it

To begin with it is helpful to summarize the life history of one of our interviewees, just to show the complexity of the situation that some Indonesian Muslims in the Netherlands experience. Our interviewee narrated how she came to the Netherlands for further studies twenty years ago. She came to the Netherlands because her brothers worked here as cooks in an Indonesian restaurant. “They just came as adventurers”, as so many Indonesian men and women did.

Our interviewee met her husband here. He is a Dutch man whose father was Indo Dutch. His father was born in the Netherlands but his grandfather was an Indonesian Muslim. He fought in the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army. “I know many Indo Dutch”. Our interviewee feels affinity with them. “They had a hard time”. She said that these Indo Dutch feel so happy when they can talk about Indonesia in the past. “It is nice to chat with them, about food or language”.

Our interviewee’s husband converted to Islam, as did several other Dutch men who married Indonesian Muslim women. The Dutch converts have their own Dutch group in the Indonesian mosque in The Hague. Our interviewee’s children have been raised in an Islamic way. “I am Indonesian”, she says, “and I am very happy to remain Indonesian”. “I have an Indonesian passport, and I will never take a Dutch passport”. “It is a feeling”, she says, “just a feeling”.

Our interviewee misses her family at home. Visiting the Indonesian mosque gives her the feeling of being in Indonesia for a short while. Her family-in-law is Catholic. Faith was not mentioned until they got married. Then her husband decided to convert to Islam. At independence his grandfather was given the choice to stay in Indonesia or to leave for the Netherlands, just like other Indonesians who fought with the Dutch. He chose the Netherlands because he thought that his children would have a better future there.

Our interviewee was raised as a nationalist. The story of her husband’s grandfather was very painful for her. He was homesick and never felt at home in the Netherlands; the fact that he was a Muslim was kept secret. He married a Catholic woman. Our interviewee’s family at home in Indonesia knows that she is married to an Indo

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Dutch man. They do not know the life history of her husband’s grandfather, and according to her, it is “not their business”. To them it is important that she married a Muslim.

*This is mini Indonesia*

The Indonesian Muslim community in The Hague and the Netherlands in general is *very diverse*, and the criteria for belonging and not belonging are fluid and depend on the social position that is taken by the speaker. For employees of the Indonesian embassy Indonesians are Indonesian passport holders. But there are Indonesians who have been here for forty or fifty years, whose Dutch language is very poor and who still hold an Indonesian passport because they dream of going back some day. There are others who consider themselves to be Indonesians but who have a Dutch passport because they have a Dutch spouse. And there are descendents of the Indo Dutch, some of whom converted to Islam, who celebrate their Indonesian roots but who are not considered to be Indonesian, at least not by embassy officials.

Also those who are considered to be ‘real’ Indonesian Muslims are very diverse in terms of social position and ethnic background, Sundanese, Javanese, Madurese, and so on. “Besides being Indonesians, we are also members of our ethnic group”. Some came here for study or work a long time ago and stayed here because of their children and grandchildren. Others are students or Indonesian government employees who are here for a short period of only four or five years. There are people from Jakarta, and people from Surabaya, Bandung or Malang. They all may have their private reasons for staying or leaving.

Despite their diversity and individuality there is a common feeling or affinity among them, which is “difficult to describe”. As one of them said, “Our customs do not disappear overnight”. Family ties are very strong. “We are all here as guests … This is not our homeland, so to speak …”. And “This mosque … this is a little piece of Indonesia. This is how we are at home”. An employee of the Indonesian embassy says, “This is our Indonesian philosophy … unity in diversity”.

*We are more flexible*

Asked to describe further “how we are at home”, the Indonesian Muslims say that they are “not like Arabs”, or Muslims of Moroccan or Turkish descent. They are different. Indonesian Muslims describe themselves as “moderate Muslims”. They are “more flexible”, “more
tolerant”, “and more open”. “Other Muslims”, who come from Turkey or Morocco, “are a bit strict” – for example in terms of food restrictions and gender relations. Indonesian Muslims say that they are “less strict”, “more modern”.

An imam of the Indonesian mosque, Al Hikmah, and the chairman of the Association of Muslim Youths in Europe (PPME) say, “We are the most accessible mosque … of the Netherlands”. “No scary things happen here”, “we don’t want to promote ourselves”. And they continue, “There is no coercion here”. “People come themselves”. “There are many Dutch men here. They marry an Indonesian woman, they meet us here, they talk, and then …[they convert]”. But “we do not propagate ourselves”. “It comes about quite naturally, through face-to-face contact”. In the past, when “women came in mini skirts, we did not say anything. We did not confront them”. These things “need time”.

An employee of the Indonesian embassy, who also is the vice-chairman of the Indonesian mosque, says, “We are mild”, “very peaceful”, “open for everybody”, “it is a very loose organization”, “very informal”, “very individualistic”. And he continues, “What we have in this mosque here in The Hague is just a reflection of what we have in Indonesia”. “This is mainstream [Islam]”.

With respect to halal food, “as long as it is not pork, for example beef or chicken, it is okay to eat, [even] if it is not slaughtered in the right way”. And, “we don’t separate men and women. In our mosque we are always mixed; it is just that the males are in front and the females are at the back [of the mosque]”. There are just differences in interpretation. Some are Muhammadiyah members; others are members of Nahdlatul Ulama.

We don’t walk fast

Asked how they relate to Dutch society, and if life has become more difficult for them as Muslims since 9/11, the Indonesian Muslims in The Hague say that this is not the case. Maybe for Christians it was and is easier to find their way here, as there were many Churches to help them. “Christians have good connections”. “There were churches everywhere”.

In a certain way, life has even become easier for Indonesian Muslims. In the beginning, everything was strange. When we [Indonesian Muslims] came here, “There were no mosques”. And, “There were no shops that sold halal meat. We had to go to a village, to a farmer and
slaughter the animals ourselves”. The interviewees say that “now there are mosques everywhere” and “you can get halal food easily”.

Thus, “Life has changed, yes, but in a positive way”. “Maybe we are a bit more reluctant to talk openly since 9/11”, says an interviewee, “But we don’t talk about politics [in the mosque] anyway”. Yes, “The media puts us in a box [with others]. Then they have something to write about. But in fact, we are not so different [from the Dutch]”.

If some Indonesian Muslims long to go back to Indonesia, this has nothing to do with the situation in the Netherlands becoming worse for Muslims. On the contrary, the Netherlands is better [than Islamic countries] as far as human relations are concerned. In the Netherlands “the treatment of the people is fair and just”. If Indonesian Muslims long to go back to Indonesia, this is “pure feeling”, “purely individual”. “The situation [in the Netherlands] has nothing to do with it”. Some send their children to Indonesia to study.

Asked why Indonesian Muslims are invisible or silent in Dutch society they say, “This is Indonesian culture”. “It is not our character to be outgoing”. “The Indonesian is a bit reserved by nature”. “We avoid confrontation”. The Indonesian Muslims describe themselves as “quiet” people. “We don’t walk fast”. We say, “Don’t hurry, take it easy”. Or “We are calm, imperturbable”.

[Indonesian] Islam is “rather individualistic” and it has a “loose organization”, it is “informal” and “inward”, not concerned with [halal] food or clothes [headscarves]. “We don’t care [about these things]. Some other (non-Indonesian) Muslims say, “We are a group and thus we speak on behalf of the group; we form a block”. “This is not what moderate Muslims say”.

“The Dutch are more direct [than the Indonesians].” “We are not afraid of Mr. Wilders”.

The interviewee refers to Geert Wilders, chairperson of the Freedom Party, who is accused of promoting Islamophobia.
greater than before”. “We discussed it in the Muslim community” and we said, [we should] “Just, take it easy” and, [we] “don’t take it personally”.

**We don’t talk about religion**

Asked how they relate to Indonesian Christians they say that relations are “good”, “flexible”, and “harmonious”. But relations between Muslims and Christians are more social than religious. Indonesian Muslims say that if they are at a marriage or a funeral [with Christians], they “celebrate together”, they “eat together”, as human beings. But “We do have certain boundaries”, says an imam of the Indonesian mosque, “We do not pray together”.

For some interviewees, religion is not so relevant, or may not be important at all in everyday life. For other interviewees, religion is “dangerous” and “too sensitive” to talk about. “We watch television and we see a lot of terrorism. We don’t talk about that”. “We don’t want to hurt each other”. Some people tend to think, “My belief is better than yours”. The interviewees feel uncomfortable with this thought.

A member of the Association of Indonesian Students (PPI) says that they “decided not to talk about religion”. “We just want to meet each other [as students] and we respect each other’s religion”. “We have members from all religions” and “we visit each other’s homes”. “It is not a big problem”. “We respect each other; this is my religion, this is your religion; that’s it”. “We don’t really care about different religions”. This is because: “We are from the same country. Only our religion is different”.

Thus, relations between Muslims and Christians are “harmonious”, “very harmonious”, just as in Indonesia. For Indonesian students, being an Indonesian is more important than being a Muslim or a Christian. Relations are spontaneous, natural. Interfaith dialogue is something that is organized by the embassy.

**Indonesia has pancasila**

Asked how the situation in Indonesia affects Indonesian Muslims in the Netherlands, some interviewees say that their experience of a mild and tolerant Islam in Indonesia makes them different from other Muslims. In Indonesia, “The Mosque stands next to the Church, as is the case in Jakarta.”
Asked if there were no problems, an imam of the Indonesian mosque answered that problems were “influenced by political interests”. But in the mosque, “we don’t talk about politics”, “we leave politics out”. Thus, “problems are not caused by religion” because “Islam as religion is peaceful, very peaceful”.

One of the interviewees is married to an Indonesian Christian woman. He describes his family as ‘chrislam.’ Both of the partners kept their own faith, although their daughters were raised as Christians. The respondent said that “Islam is good, Christianity is good. The important thing is how you do the things you do and how you behave”.

Asked if tensions between Muslims and Christians in the Moluccas affected Indonesians in the Netherlands, an employee of the Indonesian embassy answered that he had been “too short a time in the Netherlands” and that he had “no experience of tensions”. But, “We know that there are groups of Indonesians here who come to us to cope with that situation”. In this case, “We offer dialogue”. “This is the only thing we can do”. “We don’t take an active role in that kind of tension”. “Our role is to serve and to protect our citizens living in the Netherlands”.

The interviewees say that in Indonesia they were used to celebrating Christmas or Id-ul Fitri together, and that they went to each others’ marriages and funerals without any problem. And they still do that here. But relations between Muslims and Christians are on the interpersonal level, from human being to human being, not in the sense of interreligious dialogue, organized by the embassy.

Asked how they promote interfaith dialogue, an employee of the Indonesian embassy answered: “We invite an expert to give a speech”. “If we have a mild individual, we can have a very peaceful discussion.” And when the board of the mosque invites preachers and teachers they try to be balanced. “Sometimes we have a hardliner”. Then we have to discuss “how to control that”. “We need to bring someone with a very soft and peaceful kind of talk, not with a different view” [different from the mainline view].

“Our founding fathers said that even though the majority is Muslim we don’t base our nation on the teaching of Islam. The philosophy is based on diversity”. *Pancasila* means five principles: belief in God, respect for humanity, unity, prosperity and justice.

Some interviewees said, “it is a bit different here. People are more openminded here” [in the Netherlands]. A Muslim student said,
“When I first came here I thought that men and woman can’t shake hands”. I was told, “No, it is okay, it is normal here”. “Even in Indonesia they do it”. “The school I came from, though, was a Muslim School”. But, “finally I got used to it”.

The student, who was born on Sumatra but raised in Surabaya, also said that it depends on where you come from and how you were raised in the family. “People who are from Jakarta are more open … The way they live is too open, I think. They were smoking and drinking alcohol until they were drunk. I was surprised”.

Employees of the Indonesian embassy say that the Indonesian mosque in The Hague is just a reflection of how mosques are in Indonesia. It is “open to everybody as long as they don’t have their shoes on”.

**We don’t talk about politics**

There used to be one Moluccan imam in The Hague. But there are very few Moluccan Muslims in The Hague. Moluccan Muslims have their mosques in Waalwijk and Ridderkerk. The imam in The Hague has monthly contact with his colleagues in Waalwijk and Ridderkerk but they are independent.

According to the employees of the Indonesian embassy, there are three groups of Moluccans, those who consider themselves to be primarily Dutch; those who consider themselves to be primarily Indonesian, and those who consider themselves to be primarily Moluccan. The latter have the ideal of the Free Moluccan State (RMS).

Moluccans are “more direct”. But this is “no problem”. Showing diversity between Indonesians and Moluccans, two interviewees referred to a saying: Some Indonesians “are like rice”; others are like “rice with sambal”.

The mosque in Waalwijk has a reputation as pro RMS. The difference is not Islamic belief but politics. But, “we don’t talk about politics”. The unwritten rule seems to be, “leave politics out”. No politics in the mosque. Students of the PPI say: “We talk about our studies, about going out in the evening, about culture. We don’t talk about politics”.

**They are Dutch**

Asked how they relate to the Indo Dutch, participants’ answers depend on their social position and duration of stay in the Netherlands. For those who have been in the Netherlands for a long time, these re-
lations are ambiguous. On the one hand, the Indo Dutch share a common history with the Indonesians and many share family ties. On the other hand, confronted with the need to choose between the Netherlands and Indonesia, they chose the Netherlands. “This is difficult”; “very painful”.

For young people, colonial history seems completely irrelevant, and it did not play a role in their decision to come to the Netherlands. They are simply adventurers who tried their luck in Australia or the United States, as so many Indonesians do, and ended up in the Netherlands by chance, due to availability of sponsorships, and the pervasiveness of the English language, or just because of job opportunities.

For Indonesian embassy employees, the Indo Dutch “are Dutch”. Although they have a common history, and some of them long to return to Indonesia, they are not Indonesians. There is a desire to remain “pure” Indonesian. This is also reflected in the separation between Tong Tong Fair and Pasar Malam, the latter now being organized at the Indonesian School by the Indonesian embassy. “The Tong Tong Fair is no longer purely Indonesian”. According to the Indonesian embassy employees the Tong Tong Fair had become more broadly Asian, no longer purely serving Indonesian interests.

2. Analysis of discursive and social practice

The second and the third methods are interpretation and explanation. Although Fairclough sees them as different stages, he sometimes treats them together. When participants produce (communicate) and consume (interpret) texts they draw on their “cognitive apparatus” or “members’ resources” stored in their longterm memory. These resources are cognitive in the sense that they are in people’s heads; they are social in the sense that they are socially generated and socially effective. When participants draw on their mental model they are reproduced or transformed. For the purpose of this contribution we look at ideational and relational transformations, particularly concerning subject positions or social identities.

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20 Pasar Malam refers to the evening markets which are quite popular in Indonesia and which are also organized in The Netherlands.
22 Fairclough, Language and Power, 133 and 118.
Indonesia

Various interviewees remember harmonious and friendly relations between Muslims and Christians at home. They used to visit each other at Id-ul-Fitr or Christmas and celebrate together at marriages and funerals. But these relations were interpersonal in nature, from human being to human being, rather than interreligious.

This common background makes them different from Muslims of Moroccan or Turkish descent who used to live in more mono-religious countries where they hardly met non-Muslims. “This mosque in The Hague is just a reflection of what we have in Indonesia”. Indonesian Muslims position themselves as “moderate”, “mild”, “flexible” and “tolerant”. This makes them different from “Arabs” who are stricter.

In relation to Dutch society, Indonesian Muslims identify themselves as “quiet”, “silent”, “a bit reserved by nature”, “not outgoing”. As one interviewee says, “this belongs to Indonesian culture”.

Despite diversity, there is a common feeling. “Our customs do not disappear overnight”. But “Besides being Indonesians, we are also members of our ethnic groups”. Thus, apart from national identity there is an ethnic identity. But, “this is not adat. Adat is too complex”. “People [nowadays] want simple rituals”. Adat are unwritten pre-Islamic traditions in Indonesia.

Some informants draw on the pancasila concept, the five principles and the Indonesian philosophy of national unity, or unity in diversity. Other informants draw on the experience from the Association of Indonesian Students (PPI). This is not an organization of Muslims, but an organization of students of all faiths. They decided not to talk about religion. As one of them said, “We respect each other. This is my religion, this is your religion”, thereby implicitly reproducing a Qur’an verse, “to you be your religion, and to me my religion” (Sura 109: 6). Religion is not mentioned at embassy celebrations.

Islam

Indonesian Muslims identify Islam as a “peaceful, very peaceful” religion. It is rather “individualistic” and “inward”. Islam has a “loose organization” and it is very “informal”. Thus, Indonesian Muslims not only position themselves as “quiet” and “reserved” people which, according to them, is part of their culture, but also as “moderate” and “flexible” Muslims, which is their definition of Islam.

An imam of the Indonesian mosque draws on Umar to explain why Indonesian Muslims are not afraid of Mr. Wilders. “From the
time of the prophet till the end of the world there will always be people who are pro or contra Islam”, says the imam. Even Umar wanted to kill the prophet because he threatened the unity of the family [clan]. But when he heard his own sister reciting a Qur’an verse, he converted to Islam and became the second Caliph”. This example is used to demonstrate that hardliners such as Mr. Wilders are of all place and all times. They come and go. So Muslims need not to be afraid of Mr. Wilders.

Some informants draw on the experience of the Association of Muslim Youths in Europe (PPME). PPME aims to keep alive and strengthen Islamic faith in the Dutch context. It meets every Saturday in the Al Hikmah mosque, administered but not owned, by the Dutch embassy. According to PPME members, Muslim-Christian relations are disturbed by politics. Therefore, “we don’t talk about politics”; “we leave politics out”.

**Colonialism**

Some Indonesian Muslims draw on colonial history to create a common ground between them and the (Indo) Dutch, or to emphasize differences between them and Moluccans, depending on their social position and duration of stay in the Netherlands.

One interviewee, whose father-in-law was Indo Dutch and whose husband’s grandfather was an Indonesian Muslim, said that “the Indo Dutch had a hard time”. The interviewee, who said that she was raised as a nationalist, said that they did not know what happened in the Japanese Camps. She feels pity for the Indo Dutch who suffered. Yes, it is “part of our common history”.

When asked about the Moluccans, an employee of the Indonesian embassy referred to colonial history. “Yes, the Moluccan people are quite an interesting group”, he said. “They were promised their own free country, and some of them are still waiting for this promise to come true”. But, in his view, Indonesians are Indonesian passport holders. And since most Moluccans and most Indo Dutch are Dutch citizens, they are not part of the Indonesian community.

**Conclusions**

Looking back at the social identity construction of Indonesian Muslims in The Hague we first notice the huge variety of this immigrant population. As one informant said, this is “mini Indonesia”, so all distinctions from within Indonesia are also present in The Hague. But
they also have a “common feeling” of being Indonesians and they refer to the national philosophy of unity in diversity to describe “how we are at home”.

In answers to the question of how they identify and position themselves, we see that Indonesian Muslims in the Netherlands clearly distinguish themselves from Muslims of Turkish or Moroccan descent. The say that they are “more flexible” or “more open” and that they “are not like Arabs” who – according to them – are “a bit strict”.

When asked how Indonesian Muslims contribute to the debate on multiculturalism, we first notice that Indonesian Muslims are rather silent. According to one interviewee, “this is part of Indonesian culture”. Indonesians are reserved people “by nature”. But according to others it is also due to their interpretation of Islam, which is rather individual and inward. “As long as it is not pork, we don't care about [halal] food or clothes”.

Having experienced extremism in Indonesia, their contribution to the debate on the multicultural society in the Netherlands seems to be: “don’t panic”! Hardliners are of all time and all places. They come and go. So, “don’t be afraid”, just “take it easy”, and “go your own way”. Moreover they seem to favor “a silent policy”, not “interfaith dialogue”. Interfaith dialogue is something that is organized by the Indonesian embassy, institutionalized, more top-down than bottom-up. They seem to favor informal face-to-face contact, from human being to human being, thus more interpersonal than interreligious dialogue.
“I come from a Pancasila Family.”
Muslims and Christians in Indonesia

Frans Wijsen and Suhadi Cholil

Since the Reformation in Indonesia, there has been a return of religion to the public domain. During the New Order regime religion was relegated to private homes and religious institutions and inter-religious conflicts were covered by the *pancasila* ideology of national unity. At present, people speak openly about introduction of *syariah* law and Indonesia becoming an Islamic country, respecting the rights of religious minorities. The authors are involved in a common research project studying this socio-religious transformation process in Indonesia.

Social identity theorists tend to conceptualize and study identity and diversity in objectivist and positivist ways. They write about national, ethnic or religious identities as if identity is based on primordial properties that are shared by the members of a group. They both unite them and distinguish them from others. Consequently, national, ethnic or religious identities are exclusive and differences unbridgeable. This is the “cultured collide” or “clash of civilizations” perspec-

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Frans Wijsen and Suhadi Cholil

tive. ⁴ Seen as such, a multicultural society is a tragedy and intercultural communication an illusion. But inter-cultural communication, in a partial sense at least, is possible. Thus this way of looking at and studying identity is inappropriate.⁵

In our research we are interested in alternative ways of theorizing about and studying religious identity and interreligious relations. The main objectives are (1) to acquire insight into the relation between religious discourse and (the absence of) social cohesion (internal objective), and by doing so (2) to contribute to a theory and method of studying interreligious relations (external objective). We want to know whether and why people elevate their religious identities over other, e.g. ethnic, national, economic or gender identities; and whether or not this leads to social conflict. Or is it the other way round, do existing conflicts in the society express themselves in religious rhetoric and vocabulary?

Narrowed down, the main research questions are: (1) How do Muslims and Christians identify and position themselves and others, and (2) What are the socio-cognitive effects of their identification and positioning? Sub questions related to question (1) are (a) how do Muslims and Christians speak about each other? And (b) how do Muslims and Christians speak with each other? Sub questions related to question (2) are (a) what are conditions for understanding / misunderstanding? And (b) what are conditions for cohesion (convergence) or conflict (divergence)?

We tried to answer our questions and achieve our aims by conducting a case study in Surakarta. Surakarta has about 750,000 inhabitants, but could count 1.5 million daytime town dwellers. Surakarta’s population is mainly Javanese with Chinese and Arab minority groups. 77 percent are Muslims and 22 percent are Christians; others are Hindus, Buddhists or Javanese (indigenous) believers. Surakarta has had a series of outbursts of violence, culminating in the Solo Riots (Surakarta) in 1998.⁶

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We conducted twenty-four focus group discussions, eight groups of Muslims only, eight groups of Christians only and eight groups of Muslims and Christian together. Within each category we had groups of males and females who were subdivided on the basis of age (young and old) and profession (educated and uneducated). For the purpose of this article we focus on the groups of Muslims and Christians together.

We defined identity as “narrative of the self”\(^7\) and studied it from a social constructivist point of view, using social-cognitive discourse analysis as method. In the socio-cognitive model of discourse analysis, developed, among others, by Norman Fairclough,\(^8\) the cognitive refers to the ideational unit of analysis and the social refers to the relational unit of analysis. The relational unit is subdivided into subject positions and social relations. Subject positions are also called social identities and this is what we focus on in this article.

First, we make an analysis of the linguistic practice (description) at the micro, mezzo and macro level of social identity. Next we make an analysis of the discursive (interpretation) and the social practice (explanation). As interpretation and explanation go together, we combine these two steps. We explain the levels and stages of analysis by doing. We end with conclusions and discussion.

1. Analysis of linguistic practice

The first method is description; this is the analysis of the formal features of the text.\(^9\) “It is sometimes useful for analytic purposes to focus upon a single word” or on “culturally salient keywords”, says Fairclough.\(^10\) Another focus for analysis is “alternative wordings and their political and ideological significance”.\(^11\)

(1) Micro level

We speak about identity at the micro or individual level when people speak for themselves, as believers of their religion (Christianity or Islam) and as citizens of the nation (Indonesian).

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\(^9\) Fairclough, Discourse and Social Change, 76f.
My personal view is rather different
Participants clearly distinguish personal beliefs and institutional beliefs. For example, a male Muslim professional participant said,

My background is Muslim Muhammadiyah ... The people of Muhammadiyah are sometimes perceived as very, very puritan. If [they] meet Christians, [they are] rather ... harsh. But in everyday life I could not escape my personal view, which is rather different [from Muhammadiyah]. I am more open, not only in social affairs. I and my Catholic or Christian friends often talk about our belief, our faith. And of course, we look for a meeting point, not for differences [between us].

In this text, the speaker does three things. First, he says that he comes from Muhammadiyah background. Second, he describes Muhammadiyah members as “very, very puritan”, this is to say that they are rather harsh when meeting Christians. Third, he says that he is not like that. His “personal view” is “more open” than the views of Muhammadiyah members.

Another Muslim participant in the group of young females said, “I am Muslim, but (I) don’t wear jilbab (veil)”. By adding “but” the participant suggests that it is common for Muslim women to wear a veil. But she does not do that. So the participants suggest that there are shared (or social) identities but that individual variation exists.

I come from a pancasila family
Participants seldom refer to themselves as individuals. Instead, they refer to their family backgrounds. When they describe themselves as “progressive”, “open” and “tolerant persons”, this is to say that they are “not fanatic”; participants say that they come from a “pancasila family”, a “plural family” or a “democratic family”.

A Muslim participant said, “My extended family from my father’s line exists of Christians and Muslims”. Similarly a Christian participant said, “My father is Hindu, my mother is Muslim, their children are Christians”. A young Christian female participant said: “I grew up in and come from two different cultures and religions. Fortunately my family is a very democratic family that respects the principle of human dignity”. The speaker uses the phrase “democratic family” in relation to tolerance of religious differences in the family and respect for human dignity. Another female participant talks about “progressiveness” (maju) and the appreciation of religious plurality in a family. She says that nowadays people are “already quite progressive ... People do not really problematize the multireligious family”.

A Christian participant said, “in my extended family the two reli-
gions [Islam and Christianity] are mixed and our tolerance is very
extraordinary, very extraordinary”. She uses over-wording (“very ex-
traordinary, very extraordinary”) to emphasize religious “tolerance” in
her family. Another Christian participant makes the same point by
saying that “[my] relatives are Muslims and Christians. Moreover,
many uncles of mine are Muslim”.

Several participants use the label “Pancasila family” to say that
their families comprise different religions. A Christian participant in
the professional group discussion stated, “I grew up in a Pancasila
family... My father is Hindu, my mother is Muslim, [my father and
mother’s] children are Christians”. Another Christian participant in
the young male group also said, “I am from a Pancasila background
too. [My] extended family consists of Christians, Catholics and Mus-
lims”.

Relations between Muslims and Christians are good
When speaking about their family backgrounds and thus about them-
selves, the participants not only speak about relatives, but also about
Muslim and Christian neighbors in Solo who live in “harmony” and
“tolerance”. An elderly Christian female participant mentioned that
“harmony is very strong in the middle and lower classes of society”.
Another Christian participant in the same group described a moment
when she invited her Muslim neighbor to come to a Christian peace-
meal (slametan) in her house. She said that she informed her neighbor,
“I will be praying from ten to eleven o’clock. Please come at ten or
after the praying. [My neighbor replied] It is okay for me, I’ll come at
ten o’clock and join in by just sitting down”. A Muslim participant
describes a similar case. He said that “in Solo [the relations] between
Muslims and Christians are good, extremely good. For instance after
the fasting month, the Christians prepare the breaking of the fast with
enthusiasm. So tolerance is very high.” The speaker uses over-
wording (“good, extremely good”) to emphasize tolerance between
Muslims and Christians.

Plenty of examples of Muslim-Christian cooperation in religious
celebrations exist. A Muslim participant mentioned “idul adha (feast
of the sacrifice). Without being asked or invited, they [non-Muslims]
help [Muslims] in the mosque ... At Christmas time, usually non-
Muslims ask Muslims to help cook the food”. Similarly another Mus-
lim said, “Yesterday, there was a Christian who joined in the slaughter
of an animal [in *idul adha*] from beginning to end, and stayed until the
distribution [of the animal meat].” A Christian said “[the population] in
my place is diverse, but the harmony among people is also very
good. When the *halal bi halal* [Muslim feast day] is held, the village
members, both Muslim and non-Muslim, will come”. Another Chris-
tian participant mentioned that “in *idul adha*, there was a *rewangan*
(working together) in Javanese (culture). I and my family (Christians)
were invited… I was very happy, I was happy”.

The Christian and Muslim participants also speak about their co-
operation in social service. A Christian who is a member of the Java-
nese Christian Church said, “every year I organize health services. I
cooperate with [friends of] young Muslims from Nusukan… The first
year there was no response. The second year, we discussed it again
and then (we) reached a common understanding. Finally, now it
works. Indeed, [the place] is prepared [by Muslims]. [The Muslims
say] Sir, please [let it be] held in front of this mosque”. Another Mus-
lim participant gave an illustration: “the Javanese Church held a social
action in cooperation with a *pesantren* [Islamic boarding school] at
Mojosongo”. Both Muslim and Christian speakers describe “social”
cooperation between Christian and Muslim institutions such as “the
Javanese Christian Church” and “the mosque” or “the Javanese Chris-
tian Church” and “the *pesantren*”.

*Fortunately all are born Muslim*

Although our participants describe themselves as “tolerant”, “flexi-
ble”, “pluralist” and “progressive” people, some of them nevertheless
say that they are happy and proud to be Muslims or Christians. A fe-
male Christian participant said, “My parents were *abangan*, so only
Islam/Muslim by ID [identity card] (*Islam KTP*). Then I [became a
Christian] because of education. My kindergarten and the elementary
school were Christian [schools] … When I was in the third level of
High School [I] asked to be baptized… Fortunately my parents gave
permission”. A Muslim female participant said that “*alkhamdulillah*
(thank God), we were fortunately born all as Muslims”.

*(2) Meso level*

We speak about identity at meso or institutional level when partici-
pants identify at least partially with their religions, and speak as (par-
tial) representatives of their religions.
Islam is peace; Christianity is love
When speaking about their religions, Muslims say that “Islam is a religion of peace” and Christians say that “Christianity is a religion of love”. A female Muslim participant said that “the meaning of the word Islam is salam and salam means peace (selamat). So, actually (Islam) teaches beautifulness”. A Muslim male participant also remarked that “in Islam, we have a concept of rahmatan lil ‘alamin (a mercy to the worlds). Thus according to Islam, Islam is mercy for all creatures”.

In the same vein, a female Christian participant said that “the foundation (of Christianity) is love (kasih). Love your God with your heart totally and love others as yourself”. That is why a Christian participant said that “the Muslim is (our) brother/sister… So, [we] treat our Muslim brother/sister as we treat ourselves. If [you are] pinched [you] will hurt, [so] do not pinch [others].” A male Christian participant mentioned that “all religions have the same human values”. In the Christian participant’s utterance, the alternative wording of the words rahmat (mercy) is love (kasih).

Religions of the earth, religions of heaven
When speaking about Christianity and Islam the participants say that they are “religions of heaven” which means that they are “revealed by God”. This is a common ground between Christianity and Islam. The “religions of heaven” are contrasted with “religion of the earth”, i.e. those “created by human beings”. There is a practical classification at work here.

An elderly Muslim female participant said that “according to Islam, there are religions revealed by Allah to the prophets. [They are] called the religions of heaven (agama samawi)… The religions that are revealed by Allah are Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Each of them has the holy Book and the prophet … Those religions outside these three religions are not the religions of heaven, (but) the religions of earth (agama ardhi). Those religions are created by humans”. Thus, says the speaker, “the religions of heaven” namely Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are “revealed by Allah”, whereas the religions of earth are human creations.

There are sects in Islam and in Christianity
The adjectives “peaceful” and “heavenly” notwithstanding, some participants immediately add “but” – there are restrictions. There are divisions within Islam and within Christianity.
Some participants classify “nominal”, “devout” and “fanatic Muslims”. A Muslim participant said that “within Islam, there is Islam abangan [nominal], fanatic Islam, and Islam santri [devout]”. Another Muslim participant said, “those of the fanatic [type of Islam], are those who wear short trousers or large jilbab, and refuse to sit with people of a different religion”. Another Muslim participant said that “those who are not fanatic Christians, maintain cooperation [with Muslims].” A Christian participant said, “religious followers of all religions, if they are not too fanatic, segregating this and that, [would] respect and appreciate [each other]”. Thus participants describe fanatic Muslims as those who dress differently and refuse to sit with those of other religions. Fanatic Christians refuse to cooperate with Muslims, while fanatic Muslims favor segregation. The phrase “too fanatic” is an over-wording.

A Christian male participant who is a member of the Javanese Christian Church said, “there are sects in Islam, but also in Christianity. The sect of Pentecost... stimulates people to fly high [rouse]”. A young female Christian participant said that the liturgy in the charismatic church “is like that in the discotheque – noisy, like a concert”. Another Christian participant who is also a member of the Javanese Christian Church gave this example: “Sometimes a group of Mormons come to [my] house ... [They ask] Brother, please worship with me! Your Christianity is wrong. They want to correct [my faith].” Another Christian participant in the same focus group discussion said “[we] communicate easier with Muslims who are nationalist... But nowadays there is the LDII [Indonesia Islamic Dakwah Institution]”. Thus she classifies “nationalist” and “LDII” Muslims. Another Muslim was described as “… a (Muslim) person. Previously his Islam is common Islam... then he joined the MTA” [Qur’anic Exegesis Council]”. A Muslim participant said,

There is a group [in Islam] which says that he/she who has a different way of worship [though he/she is a Muslim], who has a different ritual, [he/she] is called as kafir... even if it is his/her father. Crazy!

Muhammad is the last prophet, salvation is only through Jesus
Participants of both religions speak of “fanatic”, “militant”, “puritan” and “extremist” Muslims and Christians who say that the other’s religion “is wrong” and who “want to correct” their faith. But they say that these “sects” are “not normal”, “not common”. They are “too fanatic”.

Our participants describe themselves as “devout”, “pious”, “moderate” and “faithful”, which in no way excludes being “tolerant” and “respectful” towards others. However, some of them also make restrictive claims. A Christian participant: “We believe in salvation that is only through the Lord Jesus. Since we are still in the world, our task is to spread that salvation”. A Muslim participant said, “each (prophet) has a teaching and his period is limited. Abraham and Moses were far ahead of Prophet Isa. Then [they were] substituted by Prophet Isa. After the Prophet Isa there is the Prophet Muhammad. He is the last prophet”.

(3) Macro level
We speak about the macro level or societal dimension when participants speak as citizens of the nation, or as members of an ethnic group.

*Since the Reformation, Pancasila is not mentioned*

Muslim and Christian participants describe Indonesia primarily as a “Pancasila country”, one that “respects religious freedom”. A young male participant used a metaphor to describe unity in diversity: “If we were a broom made of sticks, Pancasila is the string [that keeps them together]”. A Muslim participant pointed out that “in Pancasila, freedom of religion is much respected… If we really implement Pancasila, our tolerance toward other religions will be much stronger”.

Nevertheless some participants said that “since the Reformation, Pancasila is not mentioned again in societal interaction”. A female participant complained that “nowadays Pancasila has been lost, step by step”. Another participant mentioned that “after the Reformation … other [new] groups from abroad with all of their diversity… came [to Indonesia]”. A Muslim participant noted that “after the Reformation there are groups that are quite militant among Christians. So [according to them], if a Christian is not a militant, [he/she] is not [considered] to be a Christian. [They also] press [others] to become Christian. I think this also happened to Muslims.”

*New directions come from America and Korea*

Some participants speak about influences of globalization. One such influence is the increase of purification movements within Islam and Christianity that come from outside Indonesia. One Muslim participant said that “though these [Muslims] live in Solo, they have [new]
religious teachings which come from the Middle East”. And he added, “In Christianity [it is similar], I think. [The new directions] come from America, Korea.”

Another Muslim in a different group said, “formerly, Islam was only one stream. Islam was still [close to] Java, to the culture of Java. Then our life was so peaceful. [This is] not the case now. Now life is is more hot [fraught with tensions], even among [people of] the same religion.” Thus, formerly Javanese culture was a common ground, making life more peaceful than now. Another Muslim participant said:

[Someone can see him/herself] primarily as Muslim. For him/her, Java is only the place of birth, the language used in daily life. But there is also a person who sees [him/herself] as Muslim [and] at the same time Javanese. So, I am Muslim but also practicing the teachings of Java. The first [person] above does not practice the values and the culture of Java. He is a Muslim, a puritan Muslim. Java refers only to his daily language [and] place of birth. But there is also a Muslim who is also Javanese. I practice Islam. I also practice the values of Java. However there is (a person) who is more Javanese [then Muslim]. I am Javanese first, Muslim second. That is kejawen (Java-ness).

Although some participants say that because of globalization there is religious purification, other participants claim that there is a revival of Javanese culture.

The religious awareness of Indonesians has generally increased. [I] mean, compared to my childhood era … But I am suspicious. This is a fear … of the process of globalization. When [we are] unable to cope with that [globalization] … [we go] to religion, [to] culture. The Javanese culture currently is getting stronger. Now, people are willing to pay to learn the Javanese language. People want to learn how to be an MC (master of ceremony) in Javanese. [They] start to learn Javanese culture in the [Sultan’s] palace. This [Javanese language] seemingly is a new symbol for Solo people… On the other side, religiosity also increases… Then (as a consequence) the only way to control people is religion.

To build a Church is extremely difficult

Christian participants talked about the difficulties for Christians to build churches. A female Christian participant complained that “in the village of Banyuanyar, there is no church, not even one in the whole area of the village. [We] want to build a church, [but] it is extremely difficult”. Another Christian participant said,

When [Muslims] in a [certain] region want to build a mosque, seemingly it is very easy. But for the church… to get permission from the state… the process will be very long. So, [for Christians] it is more complicated. In Kota
Barat, [close to] the pharmacy, there is the Church of God Hope. It could not get permission [to build] until recently.

A Muslim participant in the first group said,

When the minority [Christian] group wanted to build a house of worship in the majority [Muslim] group area … the Christians encountered many refusals … There were no massive riots (or) acts of violence from people of the other faith. Many refusals [toward church building proposals] happen at the village [level].

Whereas the second (Christian) speaker contrasts “very easy” and “very long” to show that for Christians it is “more complicated” to get “permission from the state” to build a Church, the third [Muslim] speaker puts this text in a societal context. He says that getting permission depends on majority versus minority relations, that it does not lead to violence, and that refusals come from the village, not from the state.

The Solo Riot is a social problem
Some participants talked about the Solo riots in 1974, in 1981, and in 1998. A Christian participant said, “Accidentally I was involved [in the] 1981 riot … No curses were used that slandered religion. Not at all … [The curses were about] China, China, basically it was all about China, without mentioning religion”. This speaker said that the 1981 riots were “based on ethnicity”, not “based on religion”.

The same person said, “I also witnessed the 1974 riot… It was not about religion. It was about an Arabian versus a pedicab. As evidence, he added

The strongest symbols of religions are their houses of worship. These are their symbols. For Muslims it is the mosque, for Christians and Catholics the churches, and for Buddhists vihara. In fact, there was no vihara destroyed, no church was destroyed. If at a certain level of consciousness [the riots] were related to religion, at least some houses of worship would have been destroyed.

However, a male Muslim professional participant said that, “even though the victims were friends of Chinese descent, of the ethnicity of China, in fact Muslims of Chinese ethnic background were not among the victims”. Note that the word “friend” has a high level of politeness. Some participants said that during the riots people wrote labels such as “Muslim”, “Java”, or “Muslim Java” on banners and hung them in front of their houses to prevent attacks. One of them said,