

“Feels Like Home”: Understanding Indonesian Christians in Auckland

Andi Batara Al Isra

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts in Anthropology

University of Auckland

2021

Abstract

This ethnographic research explores how religion and nationality are significant for the lives of immigrants of Indonesian Christian Community in one of the Protestant Churches in Auckland, New Zealand. Some scholars have claimed that becoming a part of a religious community far from home can provide a needed sense of religiosity, group-identity, solidarity, and belonging. Such things make Indonesian Christians in Auckland perceive the church as a “home” and other congregants as “family”. In investigating these themes, I examine how religion, identity, rootedness, transnationalism, liminality, nostalgia, as well as theologizing and alienating experiences, intertwine each other.

The state of Indonesian Christians in Indonesia and in New Zealand is different: while they are a minority in both places, the nature of that minority is different in each case—members of a Christian minority in a Muslim-majority country in one place and members of a minority immigrant Christian community in a secular society, albeit with strong Christian history, in the second. In New Zealand, the reality that they live in this largely secular society makes the membership of national-religious based community extremely important to congregants’ identity and faith. With their multiple identities (as Indonesians and Christians and, for many, Chinese), they remain “rooted” in their home country and develop new “roots” in the host country at the same time. Despite this sense of rootedness, they often feel liminal: feeling nostalgia or experiencing the betwixt and between state regarding their belonging. In the strange place of New Zealand, most members of the community experienced what scholars describe as a theologizing experience (becoming more religious), arguing that some migrants experienced a faith-deepening process.

Many scholars mention the socially adaptive aspects of religious community in new environments. It is important to note that immigrant religious communities address people’s state of being: their attitudes towards others and the provision of material benefits such as networks, moral support, and food. By facilitating such things, the church community enables people to feel like they are at home by keeping (re)constructing familiar social and cultural practices and experiencing nostalgia about what home was (mythically) like. Ultimately, their concern about New Zealand is challenging and potentially undermines their and their children’s sense of being properly Christians and properly Indonesians. A fear of being uprooted from their “roots”.

Keywords: identity, nostalgia, religion, Christianity, rootedness, transnationalism, liminality, theologizing experience, alienating experience.

Acknowledgments

In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Gracious. All praise to Him.

I would say thank you very much to my supervisors, Dr Christine Dureau and Dr Nicholas Thompson for all the efforts and time given so that I could finish my research, and this thesis finally submitted. They gave me countless feedback and helped me both in the virtual and physical world. As a student who came from Indonesia, a country with a very different academic culture, I had difficulties. On that background, they did not only guide me academically in a path to be an enlightened scholar, but also supported me since I was far from home.

To all participants and the congregation of St James church where I conducted this research, I would say *terima kasih banyak*, thank you so much for accepting me in the Church. I enjoyed the time we spent together. I will never forget the smiles you all gave me the first time I passed the church door although I am a Muslim. And to my key participants, Agustina, Om Paul, Om Alex, Kak Lulu, dan Tante Annette, thanks a lot for showing the true face of Christianity: peace and love.

I also thank the Indonesian government and the LPDP scholarship for their support to study in this beautiful country. In New Zealand (Aotearoa), I met lots of new support systems: Indonesian Muslim communities, particularly HUMIA who really embraced me and involved as a volunteer in lots of their events – and in turns, they often give me food and invite me to their holiday – hobby communities (the fun side of Auckland), Indonesian students association that have lots of interesting programs, and other Indonesians as well as Indonesianist friends (they are amazing!).

I thank to all friends, colleagues, and lecturers in the anthropology department of the University of Auckland and at Hasanuddin University in Makassar. All of them are very helpful for my academic journey. Special thanks to Imogen, Ahmad, and Yuri who helped me in copy-editing my thesis. As a non-native English, I was quite struggle in academic writing, so they were very helpful. Also thank to SEAMS for becoming good colleagues and friends, and to AAI (Indonesian Anthropologist Association) as well as HUMAN for being a place where I started this journey. They are our future anthropologists.

I would also thank to my friends in Indonesia who are my support system even though we are in different parts of the world with different time zones: All friends in FLP (who keep guiding me to be a writer); Wijen Projects (waiting for the next project I guess?); my high-school friends who never change (end of school does not mean of us right?); and other friends and family who make me always remember my root.

Next, I thank to my family: my wife, Ulfi, a teacher, a best friend, a superwoman; my two little daughters, Yumna and Yura; my parents, Asma and Mahmud, and my siblings, Batari and Anand. I love you +3000.

Lastly, I believe that this thesis is far from perfect, but I will always try to revise this in the future for further publication. May this thesis serve as it is intended: giving information for those who seek; enriching literature in anthropology of religion and migration, particularly Christianity and Indonesia; addressing the lacuna of Muslim anthropologists researching other religions; providing the good example for the government for making policy regarding conflict and discrimination; and becoming a redemption for my ignorant childhood. In the end, thank you for all the readers.

Kyrie eleison. God, have mercy. Salam.

Glossary

<i>Akan</i> : will	<i>Kartu Tanda Penduduk (KTP)</i> : ID Card
Allah: God (Islam and Indonesian Christians term)	<i>Katolik</i> : Catholics
Allah SWT (<i>Subhanahau Wa Ta'ala</i>): Allah the Holy and Exalted (Islam)	<i>Kebaktian Minggu</i> : Sunday services
<i>Assalamualaikum</i> : peace be upon you (Islam)	<i>Keluarga</i> : family
<i>Bait Allah</i> : temple of God	<i>Kementerian Agama/Kemenag</i> : The Ministry of Religion
<i>Batik</i> : traditional Indonesian motives of fabric	<i>Khusyuk</i> : solemnity
<i>Bu</i> : Madam	<i>Kristen</i> : Christianity (particularly Protestantism)
<i>Bhinneka Tunggal Ika</i> : Unity in diversity	<i>Kristen KTP</i> : Christian on ID Card only
<i>Bule</i> : foreigners (refer to white people)	<i>Kristen Ortodoks</i> : Orthodox Christianity
<i>Cina Peranakan</i> : mixed-blood Chinese	<i>Makan-makan</i> : eating together
<i>Cina Totok</i> : pure-blood Chinese	<i>Malam Tahun Baru</i> : New Year's Eve
<i>Cuius regio eius religio</i> : Embracing the religion of the ruler	<i>Nakal</i> : bad boy
<i>Dinar</i> : gold	<i>NaPas or Natal-Paskah</i> : Christmas and Easter only
<i>Dirham</i> : silver	<i>Negara kami</i> : our nation
<i>Dipaksa</i> : forced	<i>Niqab</i> : long hijab which covers the face
<i>Dipersulit</i> : make something complicated	<i>Ngobrol</i> : chit chat
<i>Husnudzon</i> : positive thinking	<i>Ngumpul</i> : gathering
IFGF: International Full Gospel Fellowship	<i>Noni</i> : Indonesians with biologically Dutch fathers (for women)
<i>Insya Allah</i> : God willing (Islam)	<i>Om</i> : Uncle
<i>Kabar baik</i> : good news	<i>Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC)</i> : United East Indies Company
<i>Kak</i> : older brother or sister	<i>Orang gelap</i> : dark people

Orde baru: new order

Orde lama: old order

Pak: Sir

Pancasila: the five principles

Pria: male

Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI): Indonesia Communist Party

Pasti: definitely

Pengakuan Iman Rasuli: Apostle's Creed

Perjamuan Kudus: Holy Communion

Persekutuan Doa: Prayer fellowship

Persekutuan Pemuda: Youth Fellowship

Pria: male

Reformasi: reformation

Rumah: home/house (building)

Semoga: may

Sinyo: Indonesians with biologically Dutch fathers (for men)

Sudah seperti keluarga: like a family

Suudzon: judging/negative thinking

Syirik: Believing in the presence of another God (Islam)

Tanah airku: my homeland

Tante: Aunt

Teman: Friends

Teman kerja: Colleague

Tolong menolong: mutual help

Votum: a process when the congregation sing "amen, amen, amen," accompanied by music

Walaikumsalam: and upon you, be peace (Islam)

Wanita: female

Waria: shemale

Yesus or Tuhan Yesus: Jesus

Yesus Terang Dunia: Jesus is the light of the world

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgments	iii
Glossary	iv
Table of Contents	vi
List of Illustrations	viii
Religion and Transnationalism in the Garden of Culture: An Introduction	1
Indonesian Christians in Auckland: Key Questions and The Focus of the Research	3
From the Symbolic-Interpretive Definition of Religion to the Arborescent Metaphor of Rootedness: A Literature Review	8
Defining Religion and Tradition	8
The Issues of Transnationalism.....	12
Tying Together the Concepts.....	18
The Outline	22
“I’ll Meet You at the Church on Sunday, Insya Allah!”: Research Context	24
Christianity in Indonesia and New Zealand: Some Histories and Contemporary Issues	24
The Statistics.....	24
Historical Background.....	25
Christianity in Contemporary Indonesia: Tensions between Religions	29
A Brief History of Christianity and Secularisation in New Zealand	32
A Muslim Anthropologist Entering a Church and Joining a Service: Methods and Reflexivity	35
The Congregation – Why St James?	38
Participant Observation “Let’s Go!”	41
“When Will You Interview Me?” - The Interviews.....	46
“Where’s Batara?”: The Stories of Becoming (Partially) Part to the Community	48
“I Question Everything I Do in Indonesia”: Memories of Being Christians “at Home”	52
How Did They Practice Christianity in Indonesia?	52
“I Was Bullied by the Whole Class”: Stories of Discrimination, Conflicts, Reasons for Leaving, and Future Hope	58
The Good Memories – “Hmm, So Many”	64
Living as a “Minority 2.0”: Being Indonesian Christians in New Zealand	70
“It’s Safe Here at the Edge of the World”: Indonesian Christians’ Visions, Stereotypes, and Expectations of New Zealand	71
“I Couldn’t Stay Here If There’s no Indonesians in the City”: The First Arrival	73

Betrayed Expectation – Against Secularism!	80
Saturday Events	88
Sunday Services and the Holy Communion	90
Christmas (<i>Natal</i>) and New Year’s Eve (<i>Malam Tahun Baru</i>).....	94
The Easter Week (<i>Minggu Paskah</i>)	97
Other Online Activities (Bible Study and <i>Persekutuan Doa</i>).....	98
<i>“They Become Like My Extended Family”: The Membership of an Immigrant Religious Community</i>	102
The Church as a Place for Mutual Support	103
Recollections and Nostalgia: The Importance of <i>Ngobrol</i>	108
“A Safe Zone” for Identity and Faith (Rise Against Secularism!).....	115
<i>In (Re)Searching and (Re)Constructing “Home”: A Conclusion</i>	125
Nationality, Identity, and Rootedness.....	125
It Feels Like “Home”	126
In (Re)Searching for “Home”	129
Tearing Down the Boundaries – My Hopes	133
<i>References</i>	135
Other References:.....	143

List of Illustrations

Figure 1 Percentage of the total distribution of Christians in Indonesia in 201033

Chapter One

Religion and Transnationalism in the Garden of Culture: An Introduction

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth
– Genesis 1:1

It was a winter night in July 2019 when I arrived in New Zealand. It was cold. I am Indonesian and did not know anyone except a friend from Indonesia who arrived in Auckland a couple of days before. At the airport, the coordinator of my Indonesian scholarship and the leader of Indonesian Student Association (both students) told me to take a shuttle bus to my apartment.

“Where exactly is your apartment?” the driver asked.

“I don’t know. I’m new here,” I said.

After 40 minutes crossing Auckland, I saw a building with grand architecture. I did not know what exactly it was, but I assumed that it was a church because it had an ornate tower. The next day, following Google Maps, I passed the building again. I was pretty sure it was a very old church, probably built in the colonial era. It was very different from the urban landscape around it. By maintaining its original form, it seemed to refuse aging.

As I passed the building, I saw the signboard. I was correct! It was a Protestant church. “Indonesian service on Sunday at 12.00?” Really? In New Zealand? I asked myself. How is it possible for an old, magnificent church to have an Indonesian congregation? Are there so many Indonesians here that they can form a religious congregation with official facilities like this? These questions were hanging in my head. I had absolutely no idea about the situation of Indonesians here. While I knew some students through a WhatsApp group, I

presumed that we were a very small community. As a Muslim, I immediately thought that if there was a Christian Indonesian community here, there should also be an Indonesian Muslim community. I then surfed the internet and found two communities of Muslim Indonesians in Auckland. My current involvement in the Auckland Islamic community indirectly started with my interest in the Christian church.

Time passed; I wrote my first-year dissertation about the Islamic piety movement in Indonesia. In my second year, I planned to conduct thesis research in Indonesia. But when I could not return to Indonesia because of COVID-19, I requested permission to undertake research with the Indonesian congregation I noticed on my arrival. Beyond the fortuity of finding an Indonesian Christian community here, I had already researched my own religion (Islam) and felt it was time to learn more about those who constitute the religious other in Indonesia.

The church of St James has two Sunday services, an international service held at 10 a.m., and an Indonesian service at 12 p.m. I conducted my research in the Indonesian language service congregation which, I will refer to this as the “Indonesian congregation”. Its members come from different Indonesian regions and ethnic backgrounds, but most were phenotypically Chinese. They identified their region of origin such as Jakarta or Surabaya without claiming themselves as Chinese. Some did not understand Chinese language and simply identified themselves as Indonesian (Arifin, Hasbullah, Pramono 2017:312-313).

Although there were two kinds of services in this church, my participants emphasised that there was one congregation. They were clear that the only reason for the second service was because many Indonesians did not quite understand English. They also said that they feel closer to God and more spiritual when they could worship in their familiar language and with others who understood the liturgy in similar ways. Congregants often mentioned a term called

khusyuk (solemnity), a state in which they feel more spiritual. It was this that made worshipping in their own language more effective.

Indonesian Christians in Auckland: Key Questions and The Focus of the Research

This thesis deals with issues of migration and religion. Christians have long conceived the Christian ecumene as a “family”, meaning that they are all members of the same community, united through their shared fellowship and commitment to Christ. They invite other Christians to join this community. While this is common Christian parlance, the commonplace metaphor should not elide its significance: members of the Indonesian congregation at St James were committed to the idea of church as family. In a wider sense, they also made an Indonesian community through Christianity in the church space, in their shared worship, and in the way they linked their sociality to their church. And, in an even wider sense, the church also shaped and facilitated their sense of nationality.

I focus on how Indonesian Christians live their religious lives in Auckland and the church community as a family within which people support one another. It is also important to understand the lives of Christians in Indonesia, which, although a multicultural country, is increasingly dominated by Islamic values. Officially, the national slogan states “unity in diversity,” promising religious freedom for everyone, but along with harmonious co-existence, there is often tension, conflict, and sometimes violence (Aritonang & Steenbrink 2008; Al Qurtuby 2013, 2015; Chao 2014). Religious identities are taken seriously by Indonesians, both by individuals and by people in authority. Every person’s religion is listed on a *Kartu Tanda Penduduk* or KTP (ID Card) as a marker of identity. This is very important, especially after what is known as the “1965 Tragedy,” when communists, under the Indonesia Communist Party (PKI), considered as atheists, were declared enemies of the state (Hoon

2016). Beyond this, religion is extremely important for Indonesians, to the extent that they use it to judge, accuse and attack each other. However, apart from that negativity, religion is surely a basis on which Indonesians relate to each other, including people in St James.

This is in line with what Malkki explained: that religion is significant as a collective identity rooted within a person, as one of the most important needs for the human soul (1992:24), and binds a community. As a basic need, in this vast yet interconnected world, when people travel to another place, they carry their beliefs, identities, traditions, practices, and material cultures along with them: a religious transnationalism, in which particular aspects of their religion are believed and practiced across the globe (Bendixsen 2013:107; see also Garbin 2018).

So, when Indonesian Christians lived in a place such as in New Zealand, they brought all those things along with them, regarding both Christianity and Indonesian values as their roots and constituting themselves as Indonesian Christians. They often said that a particular tradition such as *ngumpul* (gathering) or *makan-makan* (eating together/fiesta celebration), practiced as members of the congregation, were what they usually did in Indonesia and saw bringing their traditions to New Zealand as ways to maintain their identity and to bind the community. It was also a way to distinguish themselves from non-Indonesians and/or non-Christians. They said that “this is what makes us different from other international or *bule* (foreigner; white man) congregations”.

Indeed, religion is not only related to sense of self, but also ideology, institutional structures, and clear definitions of the other (Al Qurtuby 2015:336). In a wider scheme, the feeling of subscribing to Christ meant that they perceive the non-religious (and non-Christians) as the other, as those who might not be saved in the afterlife.

On one occasion, when an *om*'s relative passed away in Indonesia, I conveyed a deep condolence.

“May (*semoga*) she rest in peace, gain a better place, and get salvation.”

“There is no may (*semoga*). She definitely (*pasti*) gets the salvation because she’s a believer,” some congregants said directly.

“If you’re a believer, you’ll definitely (*pasti*) be saved in afterlife,” said another.

I smiled to them and said, “yes, they will (*akan*) receive salvation.”

“It’s not just will (*akan*), it’s definitely (*pasti*), certainly, for sure, guaranteed.

Because they are believers,” said someone.

I was quite shocked at their strictness in such discussions. From here, we can see there was a huge gap that separated Protestant Christians and the non-Christians in the first place, namely the Doctrine of Assurance, the assurance of eternal salvation for Christians, and the uncertain fate for non-Christians. They built the process of othering clearly and strictly towards this understanding (Al-Qurtuby 2015).

While religion can fill a spiritual gap in the human heart, some Indonesians build walls between one another. Therefore, through this research, I discuss how Indonesian Christians live their religious lives in Auckland, looking at three significant aspects: the social and economic dimensions of their lives (and the church as a forum in which they deal with these things); the emotional and psychological state (needing to be grounded in worlds of meaning, senses of familiarity, and the comfort of being with others in the context of the discomforts and disjuncture of being immigrants); and their religious lives in and of themselves. Thus, I hope to shed light on the ways in which the church and congregation are meaningful for Indonesian Christians, the purposes they serve, how Indonesian Christians perceive their current secular and historically Christian environment in Aotearoa/New Zealand, and how they practice and understand their religion in wider social contexts.

Indonesian Christians in Auckland live in a largely secular context (cf., Engelke 2014). In Indonesia, they lived in a Muslim-majority environment. In contrast, how do they perceive their current secular and historically Christian environment? Studies have suggested

that immigrant religious communities serve social and cultural, as well as spiritual needs. How do these Auckland Indonesian Christians both practice their religion and understand it in wider social contexts?

For Liisa Malkki, to be rooted in community and homeland is human nature. And when people have left home or lost the homeland, they may be in a liminal state, not knowing where to go. It was as though they were uprooted from the land: lonely, detached, missing home, feeling nostalgia, and so on. In another land, they might start to look to plant new “roots”. But in most cases, people do not want to cut-off their network; their roots; their identities. So, belonging to a religious community far from home can provide a needed sense of solidarity and belonging (Malkki 1992; Hammons 2016) (see below). Migration scholars have noted that migrants turned to familiar religious practices, including using their native languages, to respond to their loneliness, difficult living situations, and discrimination (Karagiannis and Glick-Schiller 2006:139; Gomes 2017:38-39). But how and why do migrants prefer national or religious (or national-religious) based communities? In a distant place, far from home and compelled to deal with strangeness, and sometimes ethnocentrism, racism, and hardship on a daily basis, people tend to seek a place where they can comfortably belong, and often, they tend to seek familiarities in that distant place. Nationally-based communities are one of the important institutions that many migrants try to approach first, because of similarities in both and shared culture (Van Dijk and Botros 2009:193; Husson 2015:65, see also Adogame 2010; Zhang 2015; gomes 2017). And for those who are religiously minded, religious communities become a place to share in religious commonalities, as well.

My research and some scholars suggest that well-organised churches and congregations are very important for Christian immigrants in various countries (Johnson and Werbner 2010: 208). A congregation is a place where migrants refresh their faith, sacralise

their new homes, and reminisce about their old homes. The rituals they perform do not have to be exactly the same as those they performed in Indonesia, but along with familiar Indonesian practices, there are also adjustments to their new, local environment. In relation to that familiarity, immigrant religious communities may also foster or manage nostalgia for the members (Foyer 2006; Silva 2014, see also Bissel 2005; Bijl 2013), an issue that I also address. On a more specifically religious level, Indonesian Christians in Auckland must understand and cultivate devotion in this very different context? Many Indonesians are quite flexible in their personal religiosity (Seo 2012: 77, 85), but how significant is this in the Auckland context?

In order to address these questions, after receiving my ethics clearance, I undertook participant observations on congregational events and in-depth interviews with members. Participant observation involved attending congregational activities and engaging socially with members, as well as stepping back to observe the working of relationships and how people negotiated issues. I took part in church events, services, and meetings (on invitation), and generally socialized after Sunday services and other events. After about a month, I began semi-structured interviews, focusing on questions regarding their experiences and feelings about being Indonesian Christians in New Zealand. These lasted between 30 – 120 minutes, depending on individuals. The interviews were audio-recorded and held in a place that the interviewee chose. Some were interviewed more than once, considering important topics and themes that they brought to the interview and/or because of particularly relevant aspects of their life story. I did not originally envisage significant ethical problems with this research. However, some people felt anxious about being identified in the thesis and publications regarding what they said, so confidentiality has become extremely important. That is one of the reasons why I use pseudonyms both for the church and for my participants, and, at the request of the church executive, do not specifically identify the denomination or location of St James.

From the Symbolic-Interpretive Definition of Religion to the Arborescent Metaphor of Rootedness: A Literature Review

Defining Religion and Tradition

Some people may consider religion to be nothing more than an individual's beliefs or emotions. In response to this kind of over-generalisation, Bowen (2014) proposes the definition of religion should be constructed in two stages. First, using an extremely broad definition, including “ideas and practices that postulate reality beyond that which is immediately available to the sense” and second by asking how, in every society we study, people construct their world. This approach means that researchers can find out different definitions of religion depending on the community that they are studying. In this particular situation, fieldwork in ethnography matters.

Apart from Bowen's practical definition of religion, in this research, I also refer to Geertz's definition of religion towards his interpretative approach of anthropology. In his famous chapter, “Religion as a Cultural System”, Geertz (2000 [1973]) defines religion as:

(1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic. (2000 [1973]:90).

According to Geertz's definition, religion, in symbolic and interpretive anthropology, is a cultural system rather than, specifically, a theological or belief system. Thus, religion provides a “model for”, as Geertz puts it, a guideline for social life based on what they believe to be true, a “model of” the cosmos and world (cf., Belanawane 2011:83).

People always give meanings to their experiences and reality through culturally established symbols and behaviours. St James congregants, for example, did not only see the church as a building made by stone and concrete for ritual purposes: it was also interpreted as “home”, a place where the “family” gathered and warmed each other. One of the important

elements at home was food. It was not only about food but, beyond that, food, particularly traditional Indonesian dishes, could be interpreted as a mnemonic that stimulates nostalgia.

Geertz further explains that religion is a process that often creates change, progress, and growth. Therefore, as an element of culture, religion continues to change (and be changed) over time – that is one reason why we can find many denominations and understandings within Christianity. The core symbols are interpreted differently by some people to explain contemporary phenomena and to answer modern problems (Geertz 2000 [1973]; see also Micheelsen and Geertz 2002 and Belanawanae 2011). In my study, for instance, different people attached different meanings to Holy Communion. Some had liberal views regarding the nature of sacredness or holiness, allowing me to take part in the Communion if “I believe” without specifying what I believed in. As a Muslim, I believe in God, and we worship the same God that Indonesian Christians call “Allah”.¹ Although others had a more traditional view and stopped me from drinking the grape juice and eating the shredded bread. Here, we can see that for some, Holy Communion is “just” a symbol while for others, it is the heart and soul of being a Christian.

Holy Communion has always signified, and continues to signify membership, commitment and, for some, a state of sanctity. I understand that for almost all churches, the process of Holy Communion today is not as complex it was. Certainly, the administration of Communion in modern New Zealand Protestant denominations, such as the Presbyterian Church, is not as rigorous as it was in the 19th century. *Om Alex*², the minister, told me that in the past the communion was rarely administered and accompanied by fasting and special sermons (see also Clarke 2002).

¹ Although the word Allah is similar to the Islamic term for God, Christians pronounce it differently. Christians pronounce it as “*Alah*” while Muslims say “*Allah*”.

² *Om* means “uncle” in Bahasa Indonesia, absorbed from Dutch “Oom”

In that sense, communion was used to distinguish committed members of the community, from non-members and those who occupied an intermediate status on the margins of the community. However, in modern pluralistic societies, this is extremely hard to do. Being cut off from the community can be hard, but an excommunicated person can likely still have contact with community members, or they can join another community. Thus, in a community in which the membership keeps shrinking, the church needed to change by negotiating the meaning of the communion. This was one of the reasons why St James church did not excommunicate members anymore just because they did not come to the Holy Communion. They needed to invite more people to come to the church and having this kind of strict regulation just made it hard for them to grow the community. Along with the historical changes to theological and institutional expectations of church members, congregants' understandings and the practices change in different places and times, both because of practical constraints and necessities, and because the new circumstances in which people find themselves prompt reflection and novel possibilities.

Christians in Indonesia are different from Indonesian Christians in New Zealand (Chapter 3). Indonesian Christians gave different meanings to attending Church in Auckland and in Indonesia. Some felt that in Indonesia it was just a weekly obligation, enforced (*dipaksa*) by parents and family members, distracting from their fun weekend. In Auckland, it meant something different. For most, the Indonesian language service became an anticipated weekly family gathering; a safe zone from a dangerous secular environment, and an answer in searching for God. This suggests that to some extent, searching for God is intensified in the host country for some migrants, an example of what scholars have conceptualized as theologizing experiences (Smith 1978; Warner and Wittner 1998; Van Dijk and Botros 2009; Corrie 2014; Cho 2018).

Tradition is also important to discuss as it is another form through which people build collective identity, and it is worthwhile to the members of particular communities and to outsiders (Abranches and Hasselberg 2018:4). Many studies have investigated the significant relationship between religion and tradition in maintaining solidarity and group identity, especially for immigrants (see, for instance, Winland1994; Peek 2005; Reimer et al 2016). Like religion, tradition, as a form of cultural self-consciousness, is one of the roots of a community. When people move to a different place, they bring their tradition with them. In the new place, they will perceive their traditions as something that connects them with both their community in the host country and their roots in the homeland (Webb 1986:339; Bubandt 2004:253). Abdullah (2010), for example, shows how African Muslims in Harlem make a point of maintaining traditions linked to a particular Muslim cleric. Tondo (2012) also exemplifies this with her research about Filipino Catholic communities in New Zealand and Singapore. She argues that when they migrated to these countries, they continued practicing the rituals as they typically did back home as significant expressions of their identity: social and historical memory, food, iconic symbols, and fiesta celebrations (2012:24).

By maintaining or reviving traditions, religious institutions provide a sense of home to migrants. For example, feasting together in Church during Christmas, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Easter Week, and New Year's Eve is a particular Indonesian Christian community custom. The traditions of *makan-makan* (eating together/fiesta celebration) and *ngumpul* (gathering), with their shared meaning and significance stress gathering everyone, sharing everything, fondly remembering home and solidifying the community. Such conscious practices made them feel like home and surrounded by their family. Other scholars, such as Gomes, reported similar findings on Indonesian migrants in Australia and Singapore: some Indonesian Christians attend church primarily to meet fellow Indonesians, emphasising the importance of church friends (2017:38-39).

Religious traditions consist of beliefs (including doctrine), social institutions (Church, Christian schools, and so on), and practices (including rituals) (Bowen 2014:3). These three ever-changing complexes make every religion in different places and different times. For instance, Protestantism in Indonesia might be similar to what we find in New Zealand, but to some extent, Indonesian congregations in Auckland are different in amalgamating traditions from both Indonesia and New Zealand (Chapter Four).

The Issues of Transnationalism

I conducted fieldwork with a self-consciously immigrant community in a congregation deliberately constructed in such terms. While being able to participate in services in a language they could understand was significant, it would be reductionist to explain the congregation solely in such terms. People found it spoke to other aspects of their lives in New Zealand as a place for sharing memories of home and for social gathering with other Indonesian family. Many studies note that immigrants experience both social and cultural problems (Husson 2015; Malkki 1995; Gomes 2017).

Clarke (2003) in her study about New Zealand Protestants (focusing on Otago) in 19th century reports that migration can bring problems for the migrants in their process of adjustment in a new society. Besides those from Western countries such as Britain and Ireland, migrants in her research also refers to Chinese that represented more than 4% of the non-Maori population at that time. She argues that for practical reasons, migrants cannot survive in the colonial society if they continue their distinctive patterned ways of life (2003:8). They may find themselves displaced or alienated in a strange land, experience cultural shock about the differences in the new environment, may disconnect with family and friends, miss families and home resulting in feeling nostalgia about their homeland, and may

feel alienated when the host country does not welcome their involvement (Berger 2004:492; see also Malkki 1995; Ammarell 2002; Gomes 2017)

In these circumstances, immigrant religious communities provide a shelter for those stranded in an alien place full of uncertainty (Tondo 2012; Gomes 2017). Associations, such as congregations, become places to find people they can understand, that they can count on each other and feel comfortable together (Karagiannis and Glick-Schiller 2006:139; Johnson and Werbner 2011:205; Gomes 2017:111. See also Hammons 2016). They bring sedimented memories to the host country, trying to reconstruct what they remember from the homeland (Tondo 2012:19). Gomes for example, notes that expatriate Indonesians attend churches to meet fellows Indonesians, remind each other about their faith and reaffirm their identity as both Christians and Indonesians (2017:38-39). In the host countries, they feel they should take care of each other by becoming members of communities that expand their social network and benefit and contribute to the strength of community and its solidarity (Husson 2015:65 and Gomes 2017:187).

Husson (2015) further argues that this solid community may diminish their wish to return home by providing the supports that they need. I partly agree with this claim. My study suggests that although migrants received moral and social support from the community, making it easier to live in New Zealand, some still pondered returning to Indonesia frequently (such as once a year) and a few even felt did not belong here.

In a new environment, far from their home countries, immigrants adapt to their new environment in various ways. Indeed, if they are to manage, they must find means of doing so (Berger 2004:492; see also Ammarell 2002). One such adaptation involves partially reconstructing the socio-cultural orders of their homeland. Such practices immerse them in a circle of people with similar beliefs and practices, lending the ease and comfort of familiarity

while maintaining relationships with their home country, creating a hybrid environment based on their old circumstances in a new and unfamiliar place (Ammarell 2002:52).

Malkki notes that to be rooted within a community and homeland is one of the most important human needs (1992:24). She uses root and rootedness as an arborescent metaphor. It is common for ethnic and national identities to be represented as trees (family trees for instance), roots, origins, racial lines, and other familiar images (1992:27). Such images evoke the sense of strong connections with places, like roots embedded deep into the ground. Like trees, people grow in the cultural place where they are planted. The longer they grow there, the more they embedded in their land, making it costly to leave, be uprooted or moved from their place, even when voluntary. And the world itself, said Johannes Fabian (cited in Malkki 1992:28), is a garden of cultures full of different trees, rooted in specific plots of land.

Indonesians in New Zealand maintain their roots in Indonesia such as by communicating with their families and friends, sending money home, and regularly visiting Indonesia. At the same time, while some of the congregants are settled here, some of them develop further roots in New Zealand, their new home, a place where they now live, permanently or temporarily.

The metaphors of home and homeland are similar forms of territorializing, ways to link a person or a group of people through a place to which they are closely tied (Anderson 1983:131). People construct their identities through this idea of belonging and rootedness (Malkki 1992:27). So, despite migrating, most remain tied to the land in which they grew up, a transnational belonging (Glick-Schiller 2001; Levitt 2003; Fournon and Glick-Schiller 2006; Kivisto 2006). To return to Malkki's metaphor, imagine a tree with branches spreading in any direction, or maybe growing sideways and entering the space of another tree. The tree is still firmly rooted in their specific land. Or, imagine a big tree with branches that reach the ground, like a fig or banyan tree. When these hanging branches touch the soil, they develop new roots. In other words, the tree itself has other roots apart from its main one. This is a

perfect metaphor to explain the state of the migrants. They have very strong roots in their (home)land, but they also grow and maintain other roots in other lands without losing its main roots.

The concept of home has strong connections with Malkki's metaphor of land and roots. Abranches and Hasselberg (2018), argue that home is usually constructed as a cognitive as well as physical cosmos, including symbolic and material elements. People make home through the movement of individuals, groups, societies, relations, identities and so on. The concept contains a set of memories and practices that always changing. Therefore, home is to be understood as a process rather than a particular place (2018:5). People may perceive a certain place as their home, but in moving through space and time, another place can become their new home, sometimes leaving behind their old ones; sometimes re-creating home in their journey and nurturing both homes simultaneously; others cannot find the new home no matter how hard they try.

Geographers, sociologists, and anthropologists studying migration in the early of 1990s developed transnationalism as a new approach to human migration (Glick-Schiller, Basch, and Blanc 1992; Glick-Shiller 2001; Fouron and Glick-Schiller 2006). Since then, the concept has become ubiquitous. For Glick-Schiller and others, transnational migration is a movement and settlement process beyond international borders characterized by simultaneously building and/or maintaining multiple, networked connection to their home country such as economic, organisational, familial, social, and religious ties and settling in a host country, fundamentally developing and maintaining close relationships there. Often, it entails connections in multiple countries across great distances (Fouron and Glick-Schiller 2006:60; Guarnizo 1997; Waldinger 2008; Abranches & Hasselberg 2018:2).

Most anthropologists working on the transnationalism focus on large issues, such as functions of the institutions which manage the society and economy in migrant's home and

host countries (Abeles 2018:4). But, as Malkki (1995) such approaches tend to take the functionalist approach, reducing particular institutions, organisations, or society, to questions of how they function in migrants' life, such as helping them in the adaptation process. While acknowledging the significant pragmatic, functional aspects of the congregation, I seek to go beyond them to include a sense of how this migrant religious institution, with its relationship to both their home and host, links them with God.

Early on, Glick-Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton (1992) observed that using ethnography to study migration reveals how transnational processes are located within the life experience “of daily activities, concerns, fears, and achievements” of individuals and families (1992:50). As Levitt (1998) put it, migrations link the religious social space to other global social spheres on the macro as well the micro level. Thus, although transnationalism evokes massive global interconnections, it is, in fact, accompanied by something close to us; something that seems simpler than the global political affair; something that comes from the life experience of people: family problems and exchanges.

Although the concept of transnationalism was not developed until the 1990s, some scholars note that what it describes is not new phenomenon, but takes place on a larger and quicker scale compared to the previous periods. Certainly, in the past, people were often uprooted from their home countries and lost ties to those places and communities. But, as many scholars have noted such ties were rarely fully erased, despite appearances to the contrary (e.g., Gilroy 1993; Abranches and Hasselberg 2008:1). Further, some migration scholars had already highlighted the transnational involvement of what they called “old immigrants” who came to the USA in the industrial era between 1865 – 1900 (Levitt and Jaworsky 2007:133). Although many of the old immigrants stayed in the USA, they were still connected to their homeland; others returned home after accomplishing what they needed to or finding the USA an unviable place to remain.

Guarnizo (1997), following Glick Schiller, describes transnationals as regularly connected to their lives in their homelands and their host country. Guarnizo's added a concept of expanded transnationalism, referring to a declining involvement with one's homeland. Although transnationals maintain their ties with their homelands (Fouron & Glick-Schiller 2001; Guarnizo 1997; Waldinger 2008), over time they more rarely engage in its activities, sometimes only for major matters, for instance when responding to natural disasters or political events. In my research, I found just a very few people loosening their ties like this, knowing the big issues only without involving further with their old lives. It was mostly experienced by those who did not have family or close friends in Indonesia anymore. The inability to identify their relatives or friends meant they did not really belong and might feel socially marginalised with their networks in the home country (Gomes 2017:64).

Transnational migration scholars argue that migrants in their host country, experience significant changes in their social life, family structure, gender, class, and race (Levitt and Jaworsky 2007:136; Muhidin and Utomo 2015; see also Yharrola 2012). Therefore, we need to consider their entanglement in networks, activities, and life-patterns both contexts. Among Auckland Indonesians, for instance, a network in the home country may be helpful in the settling process in the host country. People had acquaintances who introduced them to someone in the church, and through this they established a new network both in the host and in the home countries. In other words, the newly established network in the host country links back to home So, for example, one of the St James elders, sent aid to Indonesia during the COVID-19 pandemic. Here we can also see how religious belonging ties migrants to both homeland and host country through their joint membership of in a global religion (Bowen 2004).

As this suggests, immigrants are simultaneously in "here and there" and, paradoxically, "neither here nor there" when they do not feel that they properly belong in

their new environment. The latter condition means that migrants are liminal (Turner 1974, 1981, 2017 [1969]) in process of becoming, bridging “what is” and “what can/will be”.

Indonesian Christian immigrants in Auckland find themselves betwixt and between: far away from homeland and still not really feeling that they belong in New Zealand.

They might try to maintain their lives in two places, but still, the process of settling in a new environment is never easy, often entailing long periods of wondering about where they belong (Gomes 2017:38-39). Some of my interlocutors told me that they experienced hard times, in New Zealand, such as feeling shocked about its secular environment (when they expected it to be Christian environment or feeling homesick, both of which led many to turn to God (Chapter 5).

Tying Together the Concepts

It has only been in the last few decades that scholars have discussed the significant links between religion and transnationalism (Kivisto 2016). Peggy Levitt is a key scholar in the field of religion and transnationalism. She notes that research mostly focuses on specific religious groups at specific moments. Longitudinal research is very rare. Thus, researching religious groups that have connection with other religious groups in different places fills this gap (Levitt 2003, 2004, 2007, 2009). She focuses on the complex factors contributing to migrant religious identity and practice, and the significance of religion in constructing and sustaining ties (2004).

One example of such links has been “gatherings in the diaspora” or the desire of immigrants to gather and to build a community in the host country with people who share similar identities such as ethnicity, nationalism, and religion (Van Dijk and Botros 2009:193; Winland 1994:39). Scholars working on these phenomena have developed two contending hypotheses: on the one hand, claiming that international migration is characterized by a

theologizing experience and, on the other, countering with the concept of migration as an alienating experience, that sees individuals increasingly divorced from their religious commitments.

Smith (1978) pioneered the argument that migration is a theologizing experience. According to Smith, this refers to the process in which migrants become more religious and discover God in a new way in the host country. He wrote that migrants may find “everything was new”, from architecture to language, to everyday matters. They may find themselves free from the moral constraints that exist in their home countries and having decide how to conduct themselves in this new environment (1978:1175). While Smith does not explicitly define theologizing experience, it is clear that it refers migrants becoming more religious in their host countries. Many scholars have supported Smith’s hypothesis (for example Cho 2018, Corrie 2014, Van Dijk and Botros 2009, Leek 2005, and Warner and Wittner 1998). From the theologizing point of view, religion becomes significant in the aspects and processes of the diaspora that migrants experience, starting from the journey (when they were still in the home country), the process of settlement (for example, turning to God in their transitional phase of settling), and the transnational and ethnic ties (when they have succeeded in maintaining the network) (Levitt and Jaworsky 2007; Johnson and Werbner 2010; Yharrola 2012).

The alienating experience hypothesis on the other hand, argues the contrary: that migrants tend to be alienated from religion. This is particularly so of underprivileged migrants such as illegal immigrants or refugees, those who feel that they do not belong in the host country; other, ordinary migrants, who are focused on their activities in the host country, such as studying or working, may also be alienated from religion by virtue of their new or more compelling possibilities or preoccupations. For proponents of the alienating experience argument, immigrants are too preoccupied with hardship, practical concerns, and leisure at

the weekend to engage with religion (Massey and Higgins 2010:1387, see also Corrie 2014 and Cho 2018).

The reality of migration is varyingly experienced and interpreted, and hence, migration affects people's religiosity. For some of my research participants, their secular environment was seen as God's attempt to draw them closer to Him, as a candle that burns bright in the dark. They interpret this reality as a divine intervention beyond their control, that affected their life as migrants and their families (Garbin 2018:2). By contrast, others, found their migration more likely to alienate them from their religion or at least distance them from regular practice although in some cases, it was more likely to simply be changed practice (Chapter 5). But, because I focused exclusively on a religious community, I am unable to significantly explore the theme of alienation since, by definition, those who became irreligious did not attend the congregation. But something like alienation was a concern for some of my interlocutors particularly for temporary migrants, who worried about losing their faith, or the parents who worried that living in New Zealand would see their children becoming indifferent to religion or overly secularized.

A key issue was that of becoming distracted by other matters and just slipping away from religion, focusing on doing things which they considered more important and urgent than worshipping God. Such worries suggest something akin to the theologizing process, with individuals interpreting their experiences through religion. Religion is significant to migrants and their children to protect their faith from a world that they perceive as becoming godless (Warner and Wittner 1998; Smith 1978; Vand Dijk and Botros 2009). Even if they sometimes did not pray, they explained themselves in terms of their relationship to God.

As, Van Dijk and Botros (2009) explain, migrant churches become vessels of faith, nostalgic and emotional places for migrants; places for negotiating their identity in the new society; and places for facilitating integration. In their comparative study of Coptic and

Calvinist churches in Canada, they argue that religion, rather than ethnicity or other forms of identity, is sometimes the most important identity that unites immigrant societies (2009:191). This is also displayed by the people of St James who placed little emphasis on ethnicity, despite there being more than a thousand ethnic groups in Indonesia. People often said that “as long as you’re Christians or Indonesians, you’re most welcome here”. It is curious that it took so long for scholars of transnationalism to attend to religion, which can be one of the most significant factors in uniting a community, for example, as a medium for gathering in diaspora, strengthening senses of belonging to the community, and rejuvenating their nostalgia and sense of persistent ties to home (2009:191-193; see also Reimer 2016:500).

In the host country, immigrants are involved in diverse kinds of communities (Nagata 2005). Immigrants engage with communities that share ideas of familiarity, comfort, and acceptance. For instance, among the reasons why people joined this congregation was their familiarity with the liturgy and religious worship, albeit it was not exactly the same. People who share a kind of familiarity such as similar identities (being from the same country, same region, same ethnic group, or experience the same problem by being far from home) tend to accept each other, building an intimate relationship in which people may feel comfortable (Johnson and Werbner 2011:205).

In this study, the feelings of familiarity and comfort with religious institutions are one of the reasons that nostalgia emerges: senses of longing to return to where (or what) it is impossible to return to (Foyer 2006; Silva 2014). Nostalgia could arise when an individual feels tied to a particular place memory of which haunts them. From here it can be seen how immigrants give meaning to their membership of the Indonesian congregation as place that evokes this longing, a memory constituted out of a sense of loss (Chapter 5).

In conclusion, I explore how identities such as religions and tradition move with the migrants. When they travel to another place, religious-minded people bring particular aspects

of their religion, identities, traditions, practices, and material cultures to the host country. They may travel to different places far from home, but they are still rooted in the homeland, as shown by becoming members of a national-based religious community providing a sense of religiosity, identity, solidarity, and belonging. Here we can see how rootedness, transnationalism, liminality, nostalgia, as well as theologizing experiences intertwine each other. For Auckland Indonesian Christians, it is shown in how they understand the church as a home and other fellow congregants as family.

The Outline

This thesis has six chapters. Chapter Two describes the history of Christianity in Indonesia, the contemporary landscape of religion in New Zealand, tensions between Christianity and Islam in Indonesia. I also outline and discuss my methodology and provide a brief reflexive account of my involvement in this project.

In Chapter Three, I explore accounts or memories of the Indonesian Christians when they were still at home, living as a Christian minority in an Islamic majority country. I describe how they practiced their Christianity in Indonesia and understood (or made sense of) their lives in Indonesia. Christians face discrimination in Indonesia, and this is particularly the case for those who are members of the double minority of both Christian and Chinese in a country where ethnicity and religion are axes of power and discrimination. This chapter explores their feelings and experiences, covering both positive (good memories and future hope) and negative experiences, such as stories of discrimination and conflict that become their reasons for leaving, for example the 1998 tragedy where Chinese Indonesians became scapegoats for political turmoil).

Chapter Four explores issues concerned with being a religious minority in secular New Zealand (again, they are double minorities as foreigners). To some people, this situation

ran counter to their expectations. They expected to be living in a Christian-majority country but found out that this was unrealistic. So, bringing their accounts about visions, stereotypes, and expectations of New Zealand to the forefront is important. The chapter tells the stories of their first arrival and how they encountered local Christians and ended up in St James. The chapter also covers how Indonesian religiosity and rituals become a way for gathering and strengthening the sense of belonging to the Indonesian community, and their attempts to understand some of the New Zealand law that they consider to be against God's Law. Chapter Five explores membership of an immigrant religious community by explaining how people support each other in the Church, describing the memories, nostalgia, and their desire to go back to Indonesia. Then I discuss how this kind of institution becomes their home and the members become family, helping them to protect their identity and faith. The chapter discusses the state of migrants' faith in the host country, which they might experience as a theologizing process, although to some extent, they also fear of being secularised by their new environment and alienated from their own religion. To cover all these issues, this chapter introduces several stories from participants about how the Indonesian Congregation helped them.

In Chapter Six, the Conclusion, I bring together dimensions of self-awareness as a researcher, reflexivity, and issues related to nationality, identity, and metaphors about rootedness, including the understanding and construction of "home". At the end of this chapter, I once again discuss reflexivity, how significant this research is to me: something that is the core of this thesis, ethnography that leads to critical knowledge and the growth of imaginative sympathy.

Chapter Two

“I’ll Meet You at the Church on Sunday, Insya Allah!”: Research Context

*Who gave human beings their mouths? Who makes them deaf or mute?
Who gives them sight or makes them blind? Is it not I, the LORD?*
-Exodus 1:11

Christianity in Indonesia and New Zealand: Some Histories and Contemporary Issues

The Statistics

Currently, in Indonesia, Islam has the most followers, followed by Protestants and Catholics in the second (7%) and third positions (3%) respectively (Hoon 2013:458). Colloquially, there is an increasing number of Christians in Indonesia over time. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) of Indonesia, there were only 16,528,513 Protestants in 2010. Meanwhile in 2018, The Ministry of Religion (*Kementerian Agama*) reported that there were already 20,246,267 Protestants in Indonesia. Christianity is not evenly located in all regions of Indonesia, but is concentrated in several regions with certain ethnicities, such as in North Sumatra (Batak people), North Sulawesi (directly adjacent to the Philippines), and in Eastern regions, like Maluku, Papua and East Nusa Tenggara (more than 6 million in totals, with more than 3 million in Papua alone) (Figure 1; Engelke 2010: S300; Hoon 2013:460; Intan 2015:327-343).

Christianity can also be found scattered throughout the most populous island of Java, although it is not the major religion in the island. In 2018, Jakarta had the largest population of Christians in Java with 949,894 people (Kemenag 2018), an increase from 724,232 in 2010

(see also, Aritonang and Steenbrink 2008). Apart from Jakarta (where most of my participants coming from), Central Java and Jogjakarta also have large Christian populations.

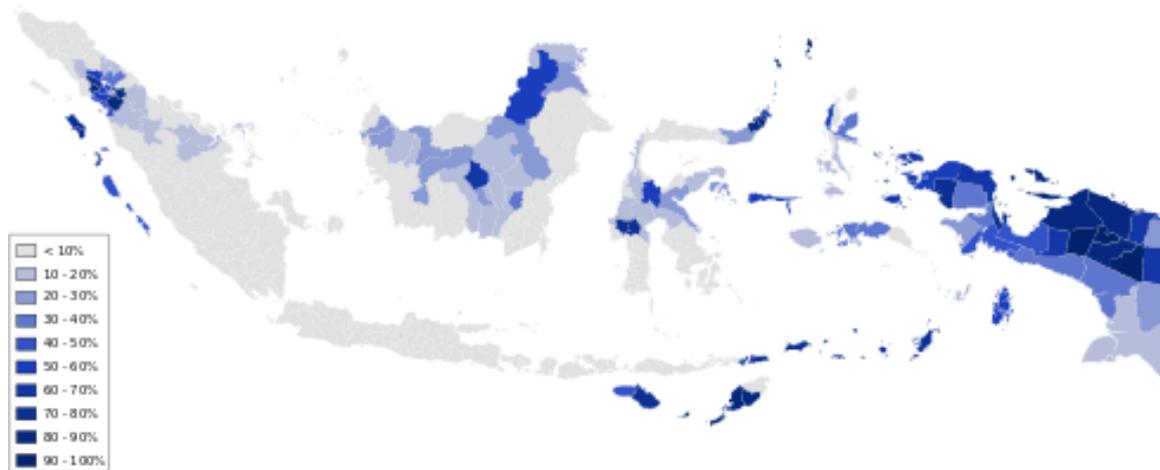


Figure 1 Percentage of the total distribution of Christians in Indonesia in 2010 (Source: BPS Indonesia)

This regional distribution partly overlaps with particular ethnicities. Although many Chinese Indonesians adhere to Islam, Confucianism or Buddhism, most practice Christianity. In fact, Indonesians often claim that Christian schools are Chinese schools. In my personal experience growing up in Indonesia, especially in Makassar, I often visited Christian schools, and indeed, almost all the students had Chinese origins (see also Aritonang and Steenbrink 2008; Hoon 2014).

Historical Background

Before Islam became the majority religion in Indonesia, Christian missionaries brought Christianity to areas where Islam had either not yet entered or had failed to take hold, such as in several districts of Sumatra, Java, Kalimantan, Sulawesi and most parts of eastern Indonesia like Maluku and Timor. Compared to Islam and Hinduism-Buddhism which had spread hundreds of years earlier, Christianity is quite new (Rais 1995; Bubandt 2004; Lewis 2013; Intan 2015). Christianity began with the spread of Catholicism by the Portuguese

during the 16th century, followed by the Dutch who brought Protestantism in the early 17th century (Kruger 1966; Aritonang and Steenbrink 2008; Farhadian 2015; Intan 2015).

Historians and Christian theologians divide the phases of Christianity in Indonesia into several parts; Dutch colonialism (including the era of the Dutch East India Company) and Japanese colonialism, the Old Order (*Orde Lama*, 1945 – 1966), the New Order (*Orde Baru*, 1966 – 1998), and Reformation (*reformasi*, after 1998) (Hoon 2013; Intan 2015).

Historians classify the spread of Protestantism under Dutch colonialism into a further two stages, first through the *Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* (VOC, United East Indies Company) (1602 – 1799) and then through the Dutch East Indies (1800-1942).

In the first stage, the VOC was the driving force behind the spread of Protestantism. In 1623 the Dutch government required the VOC to spread the Christian missions under the principle of *cuius regio eius religio* (embracing the religion of the ruler), formulated by the highest authority in Netherlands (Aritonang and Steenbrink 2008:99). After destroying Portuguese power in several regions, the Dutch promoted conversion from Catholicism to Protestantism (Kruger 1966; Simatupang 1982; Bubandt 2004; Intan 2015). After the VOC was dissolved, the Dutch East Indies government took over the area, invited various missionary organisations from Europe, and established local ethnic churches. The government allowed Indonesian Christians to be involved in ecclesiastical positions such as pastor assistants, gospel teachers, and even as pastors by the end of the 19th century. This meant that the Protestant Church opened up to indigenous theology. When Japan took over the Dutch East Indies for three years (1942 – 1945), the church leadership saw a shift from Dutch to local ministers. Subsequently, the occupation led to the moratorium of Indonesian churches, with all assistance and contact between churches and their mission agencies in Europe were cut off (Intan 2015).

An interesting issue in the early days of Indonesian independence has a profound impact on the face of Indonesia's religious environment today. At that time, several figures affiliated with major Islamic organisations sought for Islamic law to be included as a pivotal point in the foundation of the state called The Five Principles (*Pancasila*). However, non-Muslims, particularly Christians, firmly opposed this idea. They argued that explicit mention of Islam or sharia must be replaced with the expression of *Believe in One God* (inherently monotheistic in orientation). Moreover, the eastern part of Indonesia asserted that they would secede if the sentence was not changed. Therefore, there have been tensions between the two religions since, at least, the early days of independence (Simatupang 1982; Intan 2015).

During the Old Order (1945 – 1966), some Christians (particularly Catholics) believed that the Ministry of Religion was an outpost for an Islamic state because at first, this ministry only focused on serving Muslims. Although they extended the scope to non-Muslims, the policies of this ministry were oriented towards Islamic affairs at every layer (Geertz 1976:200). Following Indonesian independence in 1945, the Protestant churches became independent from foreign missions and developed a national profile involved in the independent movement. In May 1950, church leaders decided to establish the Indonesian Council of Churches to monitor the process of the ecumenical movement in Indonesia. The national consciousness drove them to establish this council “in the sense that the ethnic churches were seen as being called to grow into one church in order to express together the Christian presence in the nation” (Simatupang 1982:25); see also Hoon 2013; Intan 2015).

In the New Order era (1966-1998), there was an operation to get rid of communism. It was directed against the Indonesian Communist Party or PKI, as the institutionalised form of communism which was allegedly the mastermind behind the rebellion and the murder of the generals in 1965. In a dangerous situation like this, it was important for everyone to be affiliated with a state religion, because otherwise they would be accused of being communists

(Intan 2015; Harsono 2019). Thus, many Muslims who were neither very devout nor affiliated with the PKI converted to Christianity (Geertz 1976; Samson 1972:237).

Responding to such conversions, some Muslim urged the government to hold an Inter-Religious Conference between Muslim and Christian leaders, mediated by the Minister of Religion. The meeting held in 1967 proposed a joint statement that Muslim and Christian leaders agreed on: (1) Each religious group must limit its religious activities to its own environment; and (2) there should be no attempts to convert someone who already has a religion. For instance, a Muslim should not try to convert a Christian. Both the Council of Churches in Indonesia (DGI) and the Supreme Council of Churches in Indonesia (MAWI) refused to sign the joint statement because it contradicted the Bible's mandate to spread all the good news about Christ. However, they agreed that the missionary movement should avoid all forms of propaganda, coercion, and persuasion (Intan 2015:355, see also Samson 1972).

In addition, several Islamic organisations urged the government to limit the construction of non-Muslim places of worship in some areas, especially for Christians. Government regulations required each place of worship to obtain permission from the head of the local government and receive approval from representatives of religious organisations and local religious leaders. Given these requirements, it was very difficult or even impossible for non-Muslims, especially Christians, to establish churches in communities where Muslims were the majority (Intan 2015; Harsono 2019). Indonesian Christians here in New Zealand mentioned this particular situation as one of the difficulties of living as a Christian in Indonesia. The rule limited people's ability to enjoy their religion fully. People in St James also described the similar situation. Bintang, a young dad with two kids who was originally from Manado, once told me that in his region it was easy for Muslims to build mosques but took ages for Christian to build churches because the administration process was so difficult.

Christianity in Contemporary Indonesia: Tensions between Religions

After the reformation in 1998 marked by the fall of Soeharto, the Pancasila ideology and several state institutions were no longer as strict as they used to be. The state then lost its authority, and the wave of many revival movements from religious groups in Indonesia, both Muslim and Christian challenged the state, especially in the form of religious political identity (Nordholt 2008:2, see also Hoon 2013). The development of revival movements like this was a wind of change from the new era of democracy when there was far less directive policies towards religion. Some, perhaps many, Indonesians might argue that there is a greater threat of religious suppression in recent years (Rijal 2005:430-435, see also Harsono 2019). However, religious conflicts rose along with this freedom of speech era.

Some Muslims and Christians view the other as a homogeneous entity, a narrow perspective that construct the other (Hoon 2013:460). They rarely interacted each other. In fact, just like the diversity in Islam, Christianity is also not a monolithic group. This perception sometimes prompts antipathy within Islamic groups, especially when they realise that Christian groups such as Evangelicals and Pentecostal-Charismatics have gained popularity recently. The popularity of these movements can be seen in how they promote their religious activities through TV, billboards, and social media. Some Muslims consider this as a form of Christianisation, of bringing Christianity into the public sphere, instead of keeping it exclusively within a Christian realm where they believed it should stay.

As an example, a group of Muslims protested and took down a billboard for a Sunday Service plastered on a highway in Makassar.³ They thought that the huge billboard was a form of covert missionary activity. This was allegedly because “open for the public” was written on the billboard. Muslims perceived this as an invitation to anyone who wished to

³ The biggest city in Eastern Indonesia. It is the capital city of South Sulawesi Province; a city where I come from.

join the service, including Muslims, who considered it something that could damage their Islamic faith, whereas in a multicultural country, it runs counter to longstanding claims that the different groups should understand each other to avoid any form of persecution in the name of a particular religion (Hasan 2012).

As an anthropology student in Makassar at the time, I remember being curious about Christianity. However, I buried my curiosity. It was not until conducting this research that I dug up my old intention to understand more about Indonesian Christians in a place far away from home.

In the bigger spectrum, cases of religious conflict have largely developed after the 1998 reformation, including the conflicts of Ambon, Poso, and West Papua, where religious affiliation is tightly bound up with the local independence movements (Al Qurthuby 2013 and 2015; Farhadian 2017). Both Muslims and Christians often accuse each other of trying to destroy their religion by proselytising among followers of other religions, Christians with their missionary activity and Islam with their shariah and agitation for the state incorporation of Islamic principles. Some extreme religious communities consider their religion alone to be correct, and other religious groups to be the root cause of problems (Farhadian 2017). Al Qurtuby (2015) explains that both Muslim and Christian religious groups in Indonesia constructed identities, teachings, doctrines, symbols, discourses, organisations, and networks in a community (such as churches), especially in the conflict period. Some of these Christian or Muslim groups built doctrines formed by Islamic and Christian radicals to hate each other. In some cases, it is undeniable that churches and mosques are directly responsible for spreading radical views and violence at hot spots of conflict (2015: 313-314; see also Al Qurtuby 2013).

Debates and arguments involving the two major religions in Indonesia persist. The most significant recent example was the case of blasphemy against Basuki Tjahaja Purnama

(Ahok), the Christian former governor of Jakarta with Chinese ancestry. In his campaign for the gubernatorial election in a district in Jakarta, Ahok publicly said that Muslims should not be misled by people who use some verses of the Qur'an to claim that Muslims should not vote for non-Muslims for leaders (Watson 2018:15). On several occasions, Ahok clarified that he worried that some would misuse the Quran to prevent Muslims voting for him. Ahok's case prompted a series of rallies known as Aksi Bela Islam (Defend Islam Action) between 2016 –2017. The most prominent was the Aksi Bela Islam III (December 12th, 2016) or 212 Movement. This Ahok saga exacerbated religious tension, with many Muslims seeing their religion as insulted by unscrupulous Christians, and many Christians feeling that Muslims convicted an innocent Christian.

Accusations of missionary activities or Christianisation are most frequently claimed by some Muslim communities against minority Christian communities (Rais 1996:69-71; Hoon 2013:460; Farhadian 2017: xii). In fact, these accusations were sometimes misdirected. Some people in St James refer to what they describe as the “Corporate Social Responsibility of the Church”. The “CSR” activities varied: distributing groceries, sending assistance in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, or giving charity to poor families in the hinterland of Indonesia. In doing these, they did not intend to convert Muslim to Christian, but as an expression of their religious commitment to a perceived responsibility to the environment or wider community.

Some people revealed that one of the reasons they left Indonesia was because living as a Christian in Indonesia was difficult, saying that they experienced discrimination, and feared that conflict could ignite at any time. For example, *Tante Annette*, a quite talkative Indonesian-Chinese grandma that came to New Zealand after marriage, was afraid that her daughter would live in a discriminative environment; *Bintang* was disappointed with the Muslim majority who do not care about the minority; *Om Paul*, a Javanese left Indonesia after

the 1998 tragedy (also for his children's education) and became an elder in St James; *Kak Lulu*, a Manadonese woman who came to New Zealand with her only child, expected she was going to a Christian majority country. Therefore, New Zealand, which they saw as a country that respects religious freedom, promised a potential new home. Some even considered New Zealand as a Christian country and were shocked to encounter its secularism (see below).

A Brief History of Christianity and Secularisation in New Zealand

But what about the lives of Christians in New Zealand? What is the history of the Indonesian Christian community in St James? Christianity first arrived in New Zealand in 1814 through the encounter of Europeans and the Māori, first by missionaries from two Protestant churches and the Catholic Church (Davies 1966:20). Then, from 1840, Christian settlers arrived, mostly from Europe, to re-form the religious landscape (Davidson and Lineham 1987:21; Pratt 2016: 52).

Although Christianity had once dominated New Zealand, the religious landscape has changed dramatically, with increasing numbers of people not affiliated with any organised religion. Oliver (1966) reports that in the 1852 census, 91.9% of New Zealanders were Christian. Yet, in the 1871 census, the percentage dropped to 87.2%. Furthermore, in the 1961 census, there were 79.2% Christians, 12.4% non-Christians, and 8.4% "object to state" (a mixture of non-religious and others who refused to write their religious affiliation in the census) (Oliver 1966:6; see also Hoverd 2008).

As these patterns suggest, in the late 20th century New Zealand life and society became increasingly secular (Geering 26:1966). In many countries such as the USA and France, secularist values, as one of the many faces of modernisation, favour the liberation of political and cultural life from religion (Esposito, Fasching, Lewis 2006:520), an effort to assign religions into private realms instead of public spheres (Carter 2018:30). But it is a

different story in New Zealand. There was a debate about this in 2014, and the Human Rights Commission clarified that the state did not intend to confine religion to the private sphere. For example, local councils fund civic celebrations of Diwali, Eid, Christmas, and Easter. The aim is not to restrict religion, but to treat all religions equally. Officially, New Zealand is secular, but not secularist.

Since the 1970s, some scholars believe that most Western nations have become more secular, and people are less likely to subscribe to religious beliefs (Vaccarino, Cavan, and Gendall 2011:85). One reason is the global awareness of scientific and technological achievements. Human have been successful in explaining natural phenomena through science abandoning the supernatural causes of things. Thus, some people started to question religious beliefs and the God's existence (and "murdered" God) (Nigosian 1994:471-472; Esposito, Fasching, Lewis 2006:520).

But what is secular at the first place? Some scholars, as well as most of the participants put secular and religious in binary terms. They often mentioned about the fear of secularism that could erode religiosity of the believers. Other scholars, in contrast, argued that secularism is not the opposite of religion (Bangstad 2017). It is certainly not the ultimate state in human life in which people emancipate themselves from the power religion, but instead, it is the process in which the religious and the secular are bounding and conditioning each other (Casanova 2017:112). Casanova defines secularisation into three categories: 1) a decline of religious beliefs and practices; 2) a privatisation of religions; 3) a differentiation of secular spheres such as economy, politics, science, and state (2017:110). While people may agree with all these three meanings of secularisation, the term secularisation, secularism, or secular in this thesis more likely falls into the first definition, since most of the people in St James perceive the notion as a decrease of religious values and norms.

Some New Zealand scholars in the 1960s were very confident that, despite the spread of secularism, New Zealanders still took religion seriously (see, for instance, Downey 1966). Many people had personal commitments to religious life and continued to attend and donate to churches. Further, religion was still incorporated in the life cycle in New Zealand, even among those who live largely secular lives. In the 1960s, for example, many New Zealanders were still christened, more than 80% of marriages took place in a church, and the Christian service was used for burials (Downey 1966: 36-37). Some scholars claimed that this is evidence of *de facto* Christianity in New Zealand (which has since eroded slowly) (Hoverd 2008: 57-58).

Contemporary census data from 2018 showed that 48.2% of New Zealand's population claimed no-religion, while 36.5% are Christians, a significant change to 1961 when there were 86.2% Christians and only 0.7% no-religion: within about half a century, New Zealand has ceased to be a Christian-majority country (Wallace 2021:2), at least in terms of formal affiliation.⁴ In the early 20th century, New Zealanders saw Christian principles as commensurate with social principles, and government decision-making as properly informed by them. Since then, some people at St James, including *Om Alex*, confirmed that even though New Zealand today is a secular country, “the Christian values are still buried here”. He argued that some of the law implemented in New Zealand were derived from Christian values and Christian traditions, such as Christmas, were publicly celebrated.

It is important to note that the census category, no-religion is ambiguous. As Vaccarino, Cavan, and Gendall argue (2011), secularisation in most Western countries (including New Zealand) does not necessarily mean that the people abandoned religious beliefs entirely. People might perceive themselves as non-religious while believing in a god

⁴ The details survey can be found here: <https://www.stats.govt.nz/tools/2018-census-place-summaries/new-zealand> (accessed date 29 April 2021)

or other noumenal beings or advocating spirituality without associating themselves with any formal religion or doctrine.

Further, degrees of religious observation are highly variable. Some might perceive themselves as non-religious only because they do not attend the regular Sunday service and therefore think they are not pious Christians. The Wilberforce Foundation for example, reports that some non-religious New Zealanders are uncertain about their religion because they feel that they do not fit into the mainstream religion; they are in the process of searching for the truth; or they do not have much time to think about it (2018:13). Some might celebrate Christmas and Easter, but never attend church, but that does not mean they are not Christians so much as what Indonesians call *Kristen KTP* (Christian on ID only).

There is little ethnographic material on New Zealand Christianity, but growing studies in recent years, including about religious immigrants. Carter (2018) describes how religion and secular intertwine each other in social scape. Like other scholars (Bangstad 2017 and Casanova 2017) she believes that the secular contributes to producing religious subjects. In her study, New Zealand Christians tried to counter and detach themselves from the secular, but they became involved in producing the secular instead. I found the similar tendency while working on Indonesian Christians. They believed that they had to counter the secular values that could lessen their and their children's faith, but it was not easy. The religion and the secular had entangled each other, particularly in the public space where they felt that the New Zealand environment often tempted them to commit sin.

A Muslim Anthropologist Entering a Church and Joining a Service: Methods and Reflexivity

One Sunday morning, Agustina, a Javanese tomboy girl who is also an international master's student by scholarship, told me that she had been preparing the PowerPoint for service, when

she found the slide introducing me as a researcher. I told her it was because earlier on that morning, I had been preparing to go to the church service when the minister called me to ask whether I would come or not. He said that he would invite me to come forward to give a quick speech about the nature of my research. So, I quickly changed my clothes into a formal *batik* shirt. After the children's talks and a *Tante* announcing the weekly news, the *Tante* invited the minister, *Om Alex*, to talk.

He announced my research as it appeared in the weekly news, then asked me to come forward. So, I went and stood in front of the congregation, just beside him. After he talked, he also gave me a chance to deliver a quick speech about the research. I thanked the congregation and the church for their acceptance and their help so far and said that I needed their help for this research, inviting them to participate if they wished. Finally, I told them that even though I am a Muslim, I was very grateful to be a part of this church. I saw everyone paid attention and focused on me when I spoke. *Om Paul*, an elder I had interviewed the day before, sat in the first row and photographed and recorded me as I spoke.

After the speech, the next step of the liturgy was giving greetings to other congregants. Everyone congratulated me on the formal approval of my research by the church. After the service, I went to the hall to chit chat (*ngobrol*). In the hall, it was like everyone knew me. Three people approached me to introduce themselves. One of them asked me about the research and two of them wanted to be interviewed. A *Tante* introduced herself and asked for my phone number. She told me that she and her husband wanted to be interviewed. Talking with members of the congregation, I realised how people acted differently. After the formal introduction, they were lovely and friendlier than before. It was as if everyone wanted to greet and to talk to me. I was grateful for the warm welcome and remain grateful for their rich contributions to my research and understanding.

One significant aspect of this research concerns my position, as a Muslim Anthropologist. It remains very rare for Muslim to undertake research with their religious others. Part of this because Muslim anthropologists tend to research their own religion that is considered exotic by western public. Looking at the literature of anthropology of religion, we can easily find many non-Muslim anthropologists undertaking research into Islam (and many Muslim anthropologists undertaking research on Islam). Why, however, there are so few (if any) Muslim anthropologists undertake research into other religious communities, particularly Christianity? I do not seek to answer that question, but, given the growing religious tensions in Indonesia and beyond, it seems crucial that we work towards religious understanding from multiple directions. I see this project as a bridge for me to understand Christians, and, hopefully, for Indonesian Christians to understand more about Muslims. I sincerely hope that this is not just a thesis for the academic world but, beyond that, I and my research participants hope this research can contribute, however, slightly, to addressing the interfaith problems in Indonesia; tolerance and understanding of how Indonesians can behave in a multicultural environment.

This reflects my longstanding interests in religious tolerance at home. As a Muslim anthropology student with many Christian friends, and having been involved in Indonesian interfaith movements, I now seek deeper understanding of the beliefs and values of Indonesian Christians.

The church door is a metaphorical border between Indonesian Christians and others. When I passed through the door, I embodied one example of people who tore down their religious walls. I remembered a moment at elementary school. My Muslim friends and I used to build a border and stereotyped our non-Muslim friend. We usually called him *Kristen* (Christian) and mocked him. As this memory shows, assumptions and stereotypes regarding Christians (and Chinese) were planted in my mind. Researching the Indonesian Christian

community was a partial attempt to redeem myself. This reflexivity becomes a way I question and reconstruct my assumptions.

I was grateful that the Indonesian Christians in St James accepted me despite my religion. When I first introduced myself to them, many presumed I was a Christian and asked questions such as, “where’s your church in Indonesia?” To which I responded, “sorry, but I’m a Muslim.” Hearing the unexpected answer, they would laugh awkwardly, and said sorry for mistaking me as a Christian. They continued stating that “it does not matter if you are a Muslim or non-Christian, everyone is welcome here”.

The Congregation – Why St James?

As I noted in the Introduction, “St James” is a pseudonym for the church at the request of the congregational authorities. *Om* Alex, the current minister for the Indonesian service, explained that he was not concerned about using the church’s real name but the Indonesian Council, the body that regulates the Indonesian congregation. One elder was very worried that if the church was identified, people might misuse the research.

Regarding the naming, I put a title in front of the name of some participants such as *Om*, *Tante*, or *Kak*, while with others I keep their name without these titles. This is based on their ages and how other people call them. *Om* (for men) and *Tante* (for women) are the titles for those who are much older than me. For instance, since *Om* Alex is the minister and over 40 years-old, people called him *Om*. I called some people *Kak* (like *Kak* Lulu or *Kak* Naomi) because they are not really much older than me (between 30 to 40 years-old). Whilst, those who do not have titles are mostly youths or those who have the same age as me (below 30 years-old).

Accordingly, the church requested that I use a pseudonym and *Om* Alex accepted that some people would deduce the church’s identity but asked that I try to disguise it. Indeed, there are several churches with Indonesian language services in Auckland, but compared to

other churches, the Indonesian congregation of St James has a long history. It has been around since the 1980s and provided the first service in the Indonesian language (in comparison, one of others was only established in Auckland in 2019). The comparatively long history of St James was one of the reasons why I chose it as my research site.

The building has existed for almost 200 years in Auckland. In the 1840s, a public meeting appointed a committee to undertake the construction of the church. Throughout St James' history, many ministers have contributed to the development of the church. One of them was Rev. Solomon, who, during his tenure, extended the influence of the church far beyond the Auckland region, significantly refurbished the church, established a new hall, and installed a new organ. In the 1930s, the number of congregation members rose dramatically.

During the 1980s, the largely Pākehā church under the leadership of Rev. Adam, hosted a worship for the Indonesian community. This was the beginning of a relationship between St James Church and the Indonesian community. According to *Om Alex*, at first, only a few Indonesians joined the services every Sunday. At that point, Indonesian Christians typically gathered in someone's house for prayer, Bible study, or socialising. Yet the community quickly grew and, in 1988, the church needed an Indonesian minister to establish a special Indonesian speaking congregation. The minister at that time, Rev. Adam, had ties with Indonesia; he had visited several times for missions, specifically in Bandung, the biggest city in West Java (a four-hour drive from Jakarta). Rev. Adam met with an Indonesian who later became an elder at St James. He introduced Rev. Adam to his colleague in Gisborne, Rev. Yusuf, suggesting that he could help to manage the Indonesian congregation of St James. Accordingly, the Indonesian minister, Rev. Yusuf made regular visits from Gisborne to Auckland. Then, in June 1990, the congregation appointed Rev. Yusuf associate minister with the responsibility of the Indonesian speaking congregation. To date, there have been

three Indonesian ministers appointed for the Indonesian congregation: Rev Yusuf (1990-2002), Rev. Yunus (2003-2016), and Rev. Alex (2016-now).

This is the only congregation in Auckland that has been formally established under the local church. As a comparison, the other Indonesian churches rent a space or building for a certain period of time to be used as a church. If the lease period expires, they must look for another building to rent.

St James is also more demographically diverse than others in Auckland, which are mostly composed of young people (especially students). By comparison, the St James congregation varied from children to senior citizens (some over 80 years old). The range of ages is important to enrich the data. This is because the older generation may have more experiences living in both Indonesia and New Zealand. Those who are quite old spent more than half of their lives in Indonesia, so they were more “rooted” in their homeland than younger people. Older members had also gone through many historical events that had shaped them. For example, *Tante Annette* had lived through the 1960s tragedy when there was an anti-Chinese violence. The memory of these terrible events lingered in her mind. Another example is *Om Paul*, who still remembered how the events after the 1998 tragedy made him want to leave Indonesia for New Zealand for the sake of his children’s education.

Almost all the members of St James had Chinese or Indonesian Chinese ancestry. They came from different regions but mostly from Java, specifically Jakarta, Central Java, and East Java. While they were a double minority in Indonesia: to the Javanese and to the Muslims, they were also a double minority in New Zealand: as Asian and Christian. In Indonesia, some were affiliated with an ethnic church like the Javanese Church or Chinese Church. (Like other ethnic churches in Indonesia, Chinese also have their own ethnic church that spreads across the nation.) In Indonesia, Chinese congregations also tend to be further divided into mixed-blood Chinese (*peranakan*) and pure blood Chinese (*totok*) (Aritonang

and Steenbink 2008: 903-904. See also Hoon 2016). When I talked to Indonesian Christians in Auckland, people had attended these Chinese churches because, like others, most Indonesian Chinese prefer going to churches that are not affiliated to certain ethnicities. And even if they did, they went to the Javanese church because they could not speak Chinese.

People in St James often mentioned that, in the early days of the congregation, St James was the centre for Indonesian Christians in Auckland and that when Indonesian Christians came to Auckland for the first time, they usually went to St James first. Thus, St James has always been the first for Indonesian Christians in Auckland. Interestingly, St James has always welcomed Muslim since long time ago. Some of the early Indonesian Muslims who came coming to New Zealand in the 1980s also visited St James to meet and interact with other Indonesians.

I conducted this research during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. When the rest of the world was in the middle of the crisis, New Zealand seemed fine. We had a hard time with closed borders (during which I could not return to Indonesia to conduct my original research plan). Several times of lockdowns which urged most people worked or studied from home significantly affected my access to the church. In many times I could not go to the church to meet the minister and thus, the observations and interviews were delayed. Despite the disruptions, however, religious life continued. During the lockdown, the church held online services on a Live YouTube channel.

Participant Observation “Let’s Go!”

As a key component of my research, I involved myself in congregational activities. As an ethnographer researching the other, I felt that I would like to run from the fieldwork in the early period. I felt anxious and experienced the fear of rejection. As a Muslim, I thought the Church had many reasons to reject my proposal. When I talked to people at the beginning of

my fieldwork, I was hesitant to announce that I was a Muslim. Even though I told them, the feeling of anxiety was there. However, as time went by, I felt blessed by their kindness and acceptance of me as a fellow Indonesian and as a Muslim researcher who was very curious about their religion. To me, this shows their religious openness and their philosophical position to embrace all human beings. After that first anxious week, I came to love my fieldwork, the church and the people.

In conducting this research, it was necessary for me to be involved and to participate in some of the religious events. This did not mean that I must abandon my Muslim identity; indeed, it remained a significant foundation for our relationship, informing, for example, the ways in which they explained their Christian lives to me. It was a challenge for me since as an ethnographer doing participant observation: on the one hand, I had to situate myself as an outsider to observe the community, but on the other hand, I had to mingle and be embraced (physically and emotionally) as the part of the community (Rudyansjah 2012:18). I felt blessed when the community accepted me very well by letting me become a volunteer in the Church, involved in rituals and events, and when I was invited by participants to several private occasions.

Participant observation is pivotal in confirming the participant's subjective experience. In participant observation, the ethnographer has an opportunity to *ngobrol* in the people's everyday lives. This is what I tried to do every time I finished the interview with a participant. After services or events when I met participants, I invited them to *ngobrol*. Sometimes my participant invited me first. The topic was varied, ranging from the elaboration and confirmation from the interviews to the hot issues in Indonesia.

My first observation was a YouTube church service when New Zealand was in lockdown. The online service was significantly different to the services *in situ* during the following weeks. Later, I realised that since the lockdown, meetings such as the Bible study

group were held on Zoom. The Indonesian congregants thought that it was more efficient considering those who were in Indonesia could also join.

When Lockdown ended the following week, I could do *in situ* participant observation at the church. I was very excited and nervous at the same time. I had been in a church before, but that was in the context of my activities as a bachelor student in Indonesia. When I was involved in the International Multifaith Youth Assembly, a program that promotes mutual understanding and tolerance between religious groups, I visited various places of worship, such as temples and churches (both Catholic and Protestantism). Even so, the program only provided me a surface level of understanding about other religions, and it is only in this research that I have followed a Christian practice of worship.

Because I had never attended a service before, I felt out of place. I was confused about what to wear and how to participate in the rituals of worship. As soon as I entered the church, I was paying attention to people's clothes. I saw that everyone who went to church was well-dressed and, luckily, as someone who had never attended a service, I had tried to be as neat as possible.

Once I felt safe about the respectful clothes I wore, I tried to understand the liturgy. I sat on the right side of the church with Agustina and Andara, two participants who were very friendly in explaining each liturgy and in answering my questions. When the worship began, I paid attention to them. I tried to follow as best I could, starting from standing up and singing some hymns, listening to sermons solemnly, and giving some offerings. Andara, a master's student coming from Maluku and with a scholarship from New Zealand government, laughed seeing me giving the offering.

“You're so dedicated with your research, why you should do that? Don't bother yourself,”
and then she laughed again.

I explained that it was fine to give a small contribution to the church. Even after the service was over, they kept discussing it, telling other people in the church about what I did. For me, giving a small amount of money to the community was a very simple thing but for the people, it seemed significant. They might think that I was so dedicated to my research or perceived that action as a way of respecting their religion. They might think that as a student and as a member of the other religion with which there were historical tensions, offering your lunch money for the other religion was impressive.

Just because the church service finished at 1 pm, people did not leave; they stayed to socialise. After every Sunday service, the congregants gathered in the church hall to drink coffee and tea and eat cakes or sometimes lunch. This was often when I mingled. While in the hall, some of the student members often joked that I was "hunting for prey," an interesting but funny metaphor. To some extent, I thought that in conducting participant observation, I had to be careful, because everything in the field could have ambiguous meanings. These kinds of jokes, for example, could be a shared joke, a kind of polite or covert critique, or an expression of ambivalence or discomfort about the research and my presence. However, I did not perceive such jokes as a criticism, because those who told me were also students and I built a very good relationship with them during the research. After all, they often told me that they knew the feeling of collecting data for the sake of study. It seemed that they sympathised with me as we were in the same boat.

I could easily mingle because people were very inclusive; indeed, I had fun with them. Among the important weekly activities that I attended were the Saturday events. There are two activities, the breakfast fellowship, which is held from 9 to 11 am, and the youth fellowship, which is held every Saturday afternoon at 5 pm to 7 pm. The word "fellowship" is common in Protestant denominations, describing the meeting for worship or other related activities by groups of people (Gomes 2017:193). The breakfast fellowship is a bonding time

for members of the St James. It is not just for the Indonesian congregation, but for all congregations (including international congregations), where they share “born-again” stories or experiences, followed by having breakfast together and playing table tennis. However, those who came most often, from my observation, were Indonesians.

The Saturday morning activities varied from voluntary work such as cleaning and repairing broken equipment, playing table tennis, practicing music at Sunday services, to having breakfast together. The breakfast fellowship mostly attended by the *Om* and *Tante* and were rarely attended by the youth. *Om* Paul and *Om* Agus were the most influential people, who always encouraged other to attend the activities. *Om* Agus had been a bad boy (*nakal*) and used to be an illegal migrant in New Zealand but he was “born again” after marrying. The youth fellowship, like its name, was mostly attended by the youth and often was coordinated by *Om* Alex as the minister.

Besides the weekly observations, I had the opportunity to observe the church’s major events: Christmas, New Year’s, and Easter Week. The series of Christmas events began on Christmas Eve until the Christmas service on the 25th of December. Not many people attended the Christmas Eve, even though it was a combined service with a different liturgy from a Sunday service or during the Holy Communion. Despite the fact that there were not many attendees, the people were very solemn in celebrating this Christmas Eve. I noticed that several congregants came with their family and some came with their partners. It was a beautiful, peaceful atmosphere that night: the dim church lights, the beautiful Christmas tree, and the choir accompanied by the sweet sound of a saxophone. After Christmas Eve service was over, people took photos near the tree and uploaded it to social media (some of them tagged me on Facebook and Instagram). The event then continued in the church hall for drinking coffee and tea. Some people were also preparing the Christmas event on the next day. At first, I sat quite far from some of the elders, then one of them invited me to sit near

them, involving me in a warm chit chat. It was an honour to be welcomed in the community, especially by the elders.

I was involved in this Christmas event as a volunteer. One day, a few weeks before Christmas, a *Tante* ordered me to take part as a dishwasher. I ate first so that when I finished eating, I could stand by to pick up plates to be washed and bring them to the kitchen. After that, I helped other volunteers to wash the dishes. The congregants who came into the kitchen thanked us for being "servants" on Christmas day.

Easter Week was also full of events. One of these was the Easter camp at Whangaparoa (Shakespeare Bay) held from Friday until Sunday. This was an event of bonding for the members, I also felt that way. At the Easter camp, I had the opportunity to get to know and to be recognised by more participants. The morning before the Easter service began, while eating breakfast, I spoke about many things with the elders and with *Om* and *Tante* at the camp. We shared stories and jokes at each other. It was a happy atmosphere. Personally, the moments like this that made me grateful to be an ethnographer in an inclusive and welcoming community that I had never imagined I would research. I also had the opportunity to volunteer at the Easter camp: arranging the seating of the space that would be used for the service and helping to clean the camp area afterwards. The whole series of Easter camp events ended with a group photo session, and of course, I was included in the photograph.

“When Will You Interview Me?” - The Interviews

Some participants were fine if I did not give them a pseudonym although I have done so in order to respect the church’s concern with anonymity as well as respect the elder’s anxiety about the unspecified dangers of identifiability. Others requested a specific pseudonym because they thought that was cool. For example, one person wanted to be called Zeus

because she thought the name was cool and aligned with her interests, and someone else wanted to be called Anugerah because when she was a child, she really wanted that name.

After about 2 – 4 weeks, I began semi-structured interviews. I interviewed 13 people who came from various backgrounds: from students to workers, temporary immigrants to citizens, youths to a 70 year-old grandma, from the elders to those who felt they did not really belong at the church, from various genders and sexualities, from those who perceived themselves as pious to those who claimed to be “in process of looking for God.” Interviews lasted between 30 – 120 minutes, depending on individuals, focusing on questions regarding their experiences and feelings about being an Indonesian Christian in New Zealand. In addition, some participants were interviewed more than once because of important topics and themes that they brought based on their interesting life story that could enrich the research.

In doing the interviews, I spent time with the congregants after Sunday services and other events that I was invited to. Usually, participants told me directly when they met me at the church that they wanted to contribute to my research. In addition, some introduced me to other congregants, and later, those congregants also became participants. In fact, some church members asked me why they were not being interviewed or when would they be interviewed. Issues like these often arise in the field (it also happens every time I do research in Indonesia). One of the reasons was people thought that those who were selected were special people, so those who were not selected may have felt that they were less special than the participants involved. *Kak Naomi*, a Bataknese woman who came to New Zealand with her husband and struggled to achieve permanent resident status, even told me that it was her first time someone had asked her for her signature (on the consent form), and she felt like a celebrity. In contrast, some felt that their information or their life story was not interesting because they were not particularly important. However, for an ethnographic researcher, every story matters.

An interview with *Tante Annette*, for instance, was one of the memorable interviews. She cried when I asked her about her memories of Indonesia. She did not cry because of the bad memories rather she experienced a deep feeling about Indonesia, about what happened during her university student life when she contributed to the country. After the interview, she sent me a music video about the longing of Indonesians in diaspora (Chapter Five). What did she want to show? I realised that *Tante Annette* had found a chatting partner (which was me!) who she could tell anything about her feelings regarding nationality and bittersweet experiences in Indonesia. Besides the nature of *Tante Annette* who was very humble, the reasons why she told me anything were because my temporariness as an outsider made it “safer” for her to say things to me. Also, I had an impression that she really would like to help me on this research. Therefore, she tried to keep me informed about anything that she thought useful for my research. For many congregants, *ngobrol* (chatting) with fellow Indonesians healed their longing, especially when discussing Indonesia itself. As a person who researches about Indonesia, I met the requirements for a good chatting partner: as an Indonesian, as a Muslim interested in Christians, and as a researcher about Indonesia.

“Where's Batara?”: The Stories of Becoming (Partially) Part to the Community

People were extremely friendly and generous. They invited me to every event they held. For example, they often said, “let's go, there is lots of food,” or invited me to grab lunch together. This and the way I was included in the work as well as low-key social events meant that I felt I had partially become part of the Congregation. People increasingly seemed to expect me, and they always asked about me if they did not see me in any event:

"Where's Batara? How come he didn't appear this time?"

Then, as soon as I showed up, people would tell me.

"Batara, someone is looking for you. Where have you been?"

These ways in which they regarded me was beyond my expectation. I had not realised that they would accept me so well. *Tante* Gloria, a very devout member who came to New Zealand with her husband and whose children already lived and built families in this country, even told me one afternoon that sometimes she forgot that I was non-Christian. But before she said that she apologised first. Maybe because she was worried that I would be offended. After hearing that, I recalled a moment in the early days, when I was just starting out in this research. In my field notes, I often wrote “they” to refer to congregants, especially the activities they do. But once I had mingled with them and participated in their activities, I then started to write “we” instead of “they.”

When I told them that I would go back to Indonesia, some people gave me chocolate to bring back home. They held a special farewell session after having a prayer fellowship via Zoom attended by dozens of people. In this farewell, they told me their impressions and feelings about my presence in the church. I was touched hearing their beautiful words. They were thankful and very grateful because I became part of them and all of this because of God’s plan. *Om* Alex said that people in St James could learn lots of things from my presence. *Tante* Gloria’s husband, *Om* Varis, told the audience that the world needed more moderate people like me so that we could enjoy life together without fear, judging, and discrimination.

Another moment that I will never forget was an event after one Sunday service. One day, I had a discussion with *Om* Soeharto in the church hall, a Javanese who used to study in Belgium and once said to me that he was not a truly believer. At that moment, I met *Om* Musa who was preparing coffee. *Om* Musa was a writer and knew lots about Christianity. He knew that I was a Muslim researcher, and he began to tell me that he wrote some articles about theology in Christianity. I opened the internet link he gave me and found lots of writing about Christianity that was interesting for me. He then continued to tell me that some Muslim

journalists (he gave an example of someone from Kalimantan) had converted to Christianity after understanding the real Christian philosophy. I asked myself, was this an effort to convert me? When he asked me about the conversation, *Om Soeharto* came and told *Om Musa*.

“Don’t do that to the Muslim, that’s not a proper way to discuss with a Muslim,” said *Om Soeharto*.

“No, no, that’s totally ok. I’m an open-minded person,” I said.

“Not for me! That’s not good, just don’t talk about that,” *Om Soeharto* replied.

On that discussion, *Om Musa* did not care about what *Om Soeharto* told him. *Om Soeharto* always told me that it was important to understand other religions, especially in Indonesia so that people might become more tolerant. However, the reasons why *Om Soeharto* did not like the conversation that I had with *Om Musa* was because it showed the other side of Christianity, the tendency to attract people to embrace Christianity. That was the classic problem of why Muslims and Christians always had a conflict in Indonesia. In other occasions after that day, *Om Musa* and I often discussed Christianity. He broadened my insight about Christianity, from the history of the Bible, the concept of ecclesia, to the eschatology of Christianity.

Om Soeharto was one of the best friends that I made during my fieldwork in the Church. He is extremely humble and does like to talk. We discussed a lot, from Christianity to mythical phenomena in Indonesia (he loves that kind of discussion!). One day when I was making observations in the front corridor of the church, *Om Soeharto* came from inside the church and invited me to join him for a coffee at the hall where people usually meet after the service. He came out just after the minister had finished his sermon, meaning that he did not stay until the liturgy was finished. In a very polite way, I asked him why he was in such a hurry.

“I am a believer, but there is something in Christianity that I do not entirely agree with. I don’t really believe 100% of the Bible,” he replied.

“How so?”

“I don’t know, but I don’t force people to be like me. I’m just being open minded for everything. For the truth.”

He convinced me that he was a believer, but he said that there are many ways to reach God. He said that some people in the Church believed that only Christians were guaranteed go to heaven while other religions could not. In the weeks afterwards, when I observed Sunday School at the church hall, I often met him coming earlier to the hall compared to other congregants (and as always, he finished early). Then, one day, he started another discussion.

“Let’s talk about your religion, Islam. I want to learn lot of things from it. And let’s talk about your family as well,” he said.

He was really excited about my stories. Having a chat with him made me realise the importance of chatting and deep conversation to gain rapport in the fieldwork.

After that meeting, he and his wife invited me for lunch in an Indonesian restaurant. I spent almost a whole day with *Om* Soeharto and his family. We talked a lot, from their state of faith in New Zealand to their memories about home. He said New Zealand was a peaceful country, and that was the reason why he and his family decided to move there. He talked about his former work in Indonesia that he considered quite “dirty”. Therefore, this country became the good retirement place for him to gain peace in his old days.

Chapter Three

“I Question Everything I Do in Indonesia”: Memories of Being Christians “at Home”

There is surely a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off
-Proverbs 23:18

Bintang once said that living in Indonesia as a Christian was difficult and often complicated. On another occasion, Andara and *Tante* Annette shared their bad experiences as members of a double minority: Andara came from Maluku, an area in the eastern part of Indonesia that has historical inter-religious conflicts and *Tante* Annette had Chinese descent. Andara, who was a master student, felt that she had no reason to leave Indonesia forever, she had a vision to develop her hometown and eastern Indonesia, and change the perspective of the younger generation. Likewise, even though *Tante* Annette had lived in New Zealand for decades, she could not forget Indonesia because there were many happy memories of the place she considered home.

In this chapter, I discuss the memories of these participants, both bad and good, that influenced their present selves as Indonesian Christians in New Zealand. Considering their stories, it is important to see how they practiced Christianity in Indonesia.

How Did They Practice Christianity in Indonesia?

In some areas of Indonesia, being a Christian is easier than in others, where Christians, as a minority, experience discrimination (Aritonang and Steenbrink 2008; Hasan 2012). There have been attempts to obstruct and restrict certain religions and ethnicities, especially Chinese, from building churches, owning property, or a business. This meant that it is even harder if you are a double minority person, as a Chinese as well as a Christian. However, this

may also reflect widespread social resentment of ethnic Chinese Indonesians for their apparent greater prosperity. This resentment has risen since the colonial era where some Chinese converted to Christianity due to social and political reasons. Most of the Indonesians who were anti-colonial governments saw this as a disgraceful action of “becoming Dutch” (Nagata 2005; Hoon 2013). By converting to Christianity, there was a chance for them to gain respect or to respect a special treatment from the Dutch government. Nowadays, it has become a stereotype for Indonesians to perceive Chinese as Christians and vice versa. Thus, we can see that both ethnicity and religion are axes of power and discrimination: intertwined with each other; difficult to disentangle in understanding attitudes towards Chinese Christians (Rais 1996:69-71; Spickard 2007:234; Hoon 2013:460; Farhadian 2017:xii).

Bintang, a Manadonese, believed that in several parts of Indonesia, establishing a church was harder than building a mosque. What Bintang explained was in line with what I experienced. In one region in South Sulawesi, for example, there was an attempt to forbid the construction of a church because the area is a predominantly Muslim, so the church construction was considered unrepresentative of the majority population on that area.

This is in line with what a participant mentioned in an interview. Although Bintang had said he had never been a victim of discrimination, himself, he had heard many stories from friends in Kalimantan (Indonesian Borneo) and other parts of Indonesia that erecting a church needed lots of “extra” administration. He claimed that if Christians wanted to build a church, it was always “*dipersulit*.” The term literally means “complicated.” But “*dipersulit*” is used if someone is trying to make your business or administration procedure more complicated than it is supposed to be, as if they are doing it half-heartedly, resentfully, or subversively. According to Bintang, this became one of his reasons to leave Indonesia. He was tired of the religious inequality and people who used religion as a political tool. Politicians often used religion to encourage people to vote them. The Ahok which I described

in the previous chapter saga was the good example for this. Muslim politicians invited other Muslims to vote for them in the name of Islam.

I have witnessed such *dipersulit* and how religion has been used as a political tool. A friend of mine from Sulawesi often mentioned how a Muslim group in his area forbade the construction of a church, because the area was predominantly Muslim and they worried that Christianity would spread. The Ahok case was proof of how religion became a political tool.

Besides the major political issues, Indonesian Christians in Auckland also deeply resented more minor but ubiquitous things in Indonesia. One of them was what they described as the culture of judging. Many participants, particularly the young ones, experienced this. Agustina, a young woman from Java, for instance, was tired of being judged by her appearance or behaviour. According to Indonesian norms, she was very male-like. People then spread rumours to other people that she was LGBTQ+, without anyone trying to confirm whether it was true or not:

In Indonesia, people prefer to *suudzon* [judging/negative thinking about other], rather than *husnudzon* [positive thinking]

Agustina's comment was sarcastic. She was very upset that some Indonesians seemed to find it hard to think positively towards others. When a man wears women's clothing, for instance, people judge them as transvestite or gay, not to mention that most Indonesians are not open towards LGBTQ+ ideas. To some extent, this claim suggests most people are prone to transphobia or homophobia. But it also suggests that Indonesians are disinclined to think positively.

Bintang elaborated on what Agustina explained above regarding the culture of judgement in Indonesia. People in his church sometimes had a judgmental nature and often gossiped. He said that in Indonesia, "gossip is everywhere," and he did not like that kind of environment. This was because if someone told you a bad story about other people, there was

no guarantee that the one who told you the bad story would not tell other people about your bad story. You might be an object of gossip also.

These disappointing things are some of the reasons why people left Indonesia. Once they arrived in New Zealand, they felt a significant difference, not only in terms of their environment (Chapter Three), but also in terms of their Christian practices. Some of them practiced Christianity in Indonesia in quite different ways to their practice in New Zealand. In part, this was because of the extent of ethnic marking of Christian churches in Indonesia (Engelke 2010; Intan 2015).

As a small minority in New Zealand, by contrast, people come to think of themselves as ethnic Indonesians who have more in common with each other than they do with others in New Zealand, at least partially suppressing or losing their sense of being Javanese or Chinese, or other ethnic Indonesian Christians. They often introduced themselves as Indonesians rather than their affiliated ethnicity. They did not explain themselves as Chinese or Javanese before someone asked for details. Some members such as *Tante Gloria* and *Om Paul* once told me that emphasising their identity as Indonesians was more accurate rather than explaining their origins. *Tante Gloria* said that physically she was Chinese, but she could not speak Chinese at all even some of her family were still practicing it. She also could not claim herself as a Javanese even though she spoke the language, since she still had Chinese traits. Therefore, it was easier for her to introduced herself as an Indonesian.

They recognised that in Indonesia, they were not very pious. But they said that they became more pious when they arrived in New Zealand. What about in Indonesia? Some told me that they were among those who did not really care about religion. They rarely went to church for Sunday or other services, even that, they had been just a *NaPas (Natal-Paskah)*, those who only went to church at Christmas (*Natal*) and Easter (*Paskah*).

Participants often mentioned Christians who are considered to lack faith is *Kristen KTP*. *Kristen KTP* originally derives from *Islam KTP*, for someone who identifies as Muslim on their KTP (ID card), but does not observe all the obligations and commits sins, such as not praying five-times daily, not fasting in Ramadan, or drinking alcohol. The term *Kristen KTP* has the same meaning: people with “Christian” written on their ID cards, but who rarely attend church, do things that are prohibited by Christianity, or only come during Christmas or Easter which some consider to be an annual ritual lacking spiritual substance. Michael, an Indonesian but New Zealand born, who was involved in the St James *Persekutuan Pemuda* (Youth Fellowship) claimed that it was the responsibility of Christian youths involved in the revival movement to invite *Kristen KTP* youths to understand true Christianity. Talking with Michael, I got a sense that he saw this as an important mission because youth like them are the future of Christianity (and St James).

In Indonesia, although sometimes the churchgoers got invitations from friends or family to come to church, some of them just attended these invitations without knowing the substance of their faith (*Kristen KTP*). Some even felt they were obliged, since their parents forced them to go to churches, not to mention that some Indonesians were obedient to their parents and would do whatever their parents wanted (Hoon 2013 and 2014). Bahagia, for example, a bachelor student from Faculty of Arts who was very excited to help me in this research because we were from the same faculty, did not like when her parents and friends ask her to go to churches, but she could not do much to reject this kind of attitude from family and friends. She grew up sceptical of religion and confessed that she used to tend towards agnosticism (she called it atheism). She said that if God exists, so be it; if not, so He does not exist, then. Bahagia's thinking was based on her dissatisfaction in finding answers to some of her questions about the existence of God and church doctrine. She could not find satisfying answers to the questions she asked, including questions to her family, when she

went to churches. This was what made Bahagia inclined towards agnosticism, when there was no explanation of why doctrine or religious orders must be carried out. Sadly, this tends to happen in Indonesia. Most of the social environment in Indonesia, such as family, friendship, and work environment, tends to force us and judge our behaviour. They are expected to have religions, to behave according to their own religious values, and to obey all of the doctrines.

By contrast, Bintang argued that these kinds of environment in Indonesia were suitable for maintaining piety. While almost all the participants claimed that they were more pious when they were in New Zealand (Chapter Five), Bintang felt the opposite. Evoking his sense of Indonesia as more religious, he highlighted the frequency of practice, explaining, for example, that there would be an event or service every day, such as events for kids and for youth, and so on. It shows how religiosity was inherent to sociality rather than set aside as here in New Zealand. He felt very solemn when he was in Indonesia, especially when he attended the service. After the church service he could meet and chat with lots of people. Bintang further claimed that there were terrorist acts towards Christians: there were cases in which terrorists threw bombs at a church; there were efforts at banning the establishment of churches; and there was also the criminalisation of the Christian leader Ahok, the former Governor of Jakarta. However, Bintang believed that people should not overgeneralise that Indonesian Muslims were racist or extremist. People should not take for granted how the media portrays Islam; terrorists do not represent the face of Islam in general. When I asked Bintang if he had been the victim of discrimination or terror attacks, he answered with a simple word, “no.”

But this answer is at odds with others’ accounts and the realities of religious tensions in Indonesia. I now explore participants’ accounts of being Christians in Indonesia, including a number that point to the difficulties they experienced there.

“I Was Bullied by the Whole Class”: Stories of Discrimination, Conflicts, Reasons for Leaving, and Future Hope

Many of my research participants described a negative view of Indonesia as a “hometown” or at least as a place of birth, growth, or as somewhere they had lived for some time. The state of Indonesia has been discussed in both informal conversations and interviews.

Many were concerned about the politics of Islamisation or the proliferation of Islamic movements in civil society (Yunus 2019:89) which were significant to them as Christians. *Om Paul* said that he was restless after seeing the news that there were some Islamic groups in Jakarta that had opened a Turkish market and made transactions in Turkish currency. *Om Paul*, considered it as excessive because it violated Indonesian law, namely using foreign currency for domestic transactions. Personally, I was quite shocked hearing this news. When I returned to my apartment after the interview with *Om Paul* that day, I immediately tried to find the news. It turned out the information that *Om Paul* received was inaccurate; it was not Turkish currency that had been exchanged, but instead, it was *dinar* (gold) and *dirham* (silver) that were used as the unit for measuring weight.⁵ This issue concerned him because he was afraid that this was a sign for the growing of Islamic radicalism.

People in Indonesia are narrow-minded. Poor them. Religion is personal. In New Zealand, it's individual's business. Religion can be used as a medium to seek power. When other people have gone to the moon with their rocket science, we are still dealing with trivial things like this. Poor them. Poor them. Poor them.

For *Om Paul*, the reality that some Indonesians have abused religion for politics is unacceptable even though this incident occurred in Jakarta and had no direct impact on him, but it was about his homeland which he loved the most and he was afraid that his homeland was turning into a theocratic country. He believed that the excessive Islamisation process like

⁵ <https://voi.id/en/jurnalisme-rasa/31693/we-went-to-the-muamalah-market-and-understood-that-dirham-transactions-may-be-criminal-in-the-eyes-of-the-police-but-not-necessarily-criminal-for-the-community> (accessed date 22 March 2021)

that he described would undermine tolerance in Indonesia. And indeed, people can use religion as a political tool, as the Ahok saga explained earlier (see also Harsono 2019; Yunus 2019; Intan 2015). Deep from his heart, he was very upset about Indonesians who had narrow minds that could spark intolerance and religious conflicts (look how he repeated “poor them” thrice).

The issue of discrimination came up frequently in interviews and conversations. Some participants had been victims of discrimination, and others who had never experienced it, but saw or heard of these cases happening to friends, family, acquaintances, or in the media. These cases of discrimination have varying degrees of seriousness, ranging from those that are not too severe such as expressions that are insulting to minority groups, to extremes such as repression (Simatupang 1982; Hoon 2013; Al Qurtuby 2013 and 2015; Intan 2015; Farhadian 2015).

Tante Annette said that she had experienced discrimination in Indonesia since she was a kid. *Tante Annette*, who is now around 70 years old, comes from quite diverse family. Her mother was Indo-Chinese, and her father was a Dutchman who was born in Indonesia. Indonesians with biologically Dutch fathers are often referred to as *sinyo* (for men) or *noni* (for women). The bitter experiences left by colonialism filled the newly independent Indonesians with feelings of resentment. Moreover, Indonesia's diplomatic route to make peace with the Netherlands post-independence was hit by a stalemate marked by military aggressions that lasted for four years. Most Indonesians were very anti-Dutch because of these conditions. Indonesians considered the Dutch as a cruel invader: some of them were murdered, and almost all of them were expelled from Indonesia (Sanduan 2017). Therefore, to some extent, these terms, together with other terms such as *Cina* (for Indonesian Chinese) carry racial implications. People often use these terms for mocking or insulting people,

building a barrier between themselves as *pribumi* (indigenous people) and “other” (Indo-Chinese and Indo-Dutch).

Tante Annette told a story about how lucky her family was to escape an expulsion and further conflicts during the early days of the Indonesian independence. *Tante* Annette told me that her grandfather had succeeded in converting her Muslim grandmother to Christianity although Banten, the region where her grandmother was born, is known as one of the areas with strong Islamic influence in Java (data from Kemenag 2008 and BPS 2010, see also Farhadian 2015). In addition, because *Tante* Annette's family are not too Caucasian looking, they are fully accepted as Indonesian natives. All her family members were born and raised in Indonesia.

I explain her account because I have great sympathy for her. In my interactions with her, *Tante* Annette was one of the people who most often discussed the issue of discrimination, but at the same time, she was also one of the people who cared most about Indonesia. Apart from being of Dutch descent, she is also of Chinese descent. She said that, among all her siblings, she was the one who inherited the biological characteristics of her Chinese mother, while the others had more characteristics of her father's physiology. The fact that *Tante* Annette has a Chinese face and is a Dutch descendant as well as a Christian makes her vulnerable on multiple grounds in Indonesia (Aritonang and Steenbink 2008; Hoon 2012; Hoon 2013). She told me that once, as a teenager in the 1960s when racial and religious issues surfaced, she was prohibited from leaving home because of her appearance, fearing that she might become a victim of the riots at the time (see also Harsono 2019:123). Her account was a very good example that shows how people's experiences, religious practices, and senses of themselves as Indonesians arise from the intersection of ethnicity, religion, class, and family history.

Moreover, *Tante Annette* experienced discrimination from her co-workers in Indonesia. She told me how sometimes she became cynical towards others. She mentioned a time when a boss in her office was replaced by someone that *Tante Annette* considered unfair to the employees. The new boss, who was a Muslim from Malaysia, prioritised the Muslim employees compared to other employees who were non-Muslim and non-Malay (Chinese). These experiences made *Tante Annette* feel that her status as a citizen was underappreciated, which, in turn, was one of the reasons why she left Indonesia. She repeatedly told me that when her child was born, what she thought the most about was how to give the child a better life than she had. She hoped that her daughter would not experience similar things. She wanted her to grow up in an environment that was supportive and non-discriminatory. *Tante Annette* really thought about the future of her child. For her, having children at that time was a miracle given by God. She and her husband had even given up because they were convinced that one of them had reproductive problems. When they heard that God had given her a child *Tante Annette* really tried to ensure that her child got the best.

A common theme in my participants' accounts of living in Indonesia was fear for being Christian. Despite Indonesia's size, official celebration of "Unity in Diversity," and the many people who readily accept those who differ from them, religion is still close to regional and national politics, and Indonesian Christians have had enough experience of bias or discrimination that their lives to have been marked by fear and anxiety grounded in their identities and beliefs. They fear, aggression, bullying, discrimination, and violence, such as the extreme possibility of death at the hands of a suicide bomber in the midst of a service.

Andara told me regarding this discrimination further:

I feel there is a bit of discrimination. I used to go to a Catholic school when I was in junior high school, so I felt safe, even though *Kristen* (Protestant) and Catholics [look different], but they are just the same. But when I was in high school, I went to a public school, then I was surprised because there was no such representation. Indonesia is not an Islamic country, but when you go to school, how come it looks like an Islamic school? For example, how teachers teach us in class (the Islamic values). I once read a short story in the textbook for Indonesian language class, there was a word "Allah SWT" I read only the literal abbreviation, S.W.T,

instead of *Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala* [Allah the Holy and Exalted] and I got bullied from the whole class, saying that why you don't know that such kind of abbreviation? That's very easy, said my friends. I mean, if I ask you about my religion, you will not know that also.

From Andara's account, she felt a bit of discrimination when she was in school. In fact what she said literally means "a little" bit of discrimination. I think Andara said the word "bit" because, in comparison to the spectre of things like suicide bombers, people like her tend to report significant but relatively minor levels of discrimination. She compared the discrimination that she felt personally to the discrimination and religion tensions that occurred in Ambon, her hometown, a few years ago, when people killed each other. However, what Andara might not realise was that sometimes, big conflicts started from trivial things like this. After all, if the mentality of Indonesian students had been like this from the start, building boundaries and being discriminatory, it is not impossible that in the future, bigger tensions could arise.

As an Indonesian living in a region where Islam is the majority, the term "Allah SWT" is quite common. Some people write "SWT" after the name of Allah in pieces of writing, such as in books and letters (even formal ones issued by governments or other institutions). Andara's circle was not very wide before she was in senior high school, so she was not exposed to written Islamic terms (she mentioned that she was in a Catholic school when she was in junior high school). She knows the term *Allah Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala*, since it is more common to encounter Muslims saying this term in everyday interaction, and in the media. However, she did not know the abbreviation of the term.⁶

Sibe, an Indo-Chinese participant who just finished his university study pointed out the fear of being discriminated against when he was in Indonesia:

In Indonesia, as a double minority, I still feel scared about where to go or what to do. Basically, I question everything I do in Indonesia. Is it safe? Is it ok? Will it be accepted by society?

⁶ In the English context, it is like if Muslims want to say "Muhammad (peace be upon him)," they can just write "Muhammad (PBUH)."

Here, we see again the double minority issue as we have found in *Tante Annette's* account. We can see that becoming a member of a minority group (either Christian or Chinese, or both) is often problematic of potentially oppressive, but becoming a double-minority, Christian and Chinese, means that people experience significantly greater vulnerability. Even though Sibe claimed that he felt afraid of being discriminated against, he never experienced any kind of discrimination; it was his fear. But one does not need to be personally singled out to suffer fear of oppression: the fact of belonging to a group whose members are targeted is that it becomes part of one's own life. Living in New Zealand for the last two years has allowed me to appreciate these accounts. Having, myself, become a member of a double minority (Muslim and South-East Asian) I, too, find myself anxious or fearful, particularly given my awareness of local forms of Islamophobia and anti-Asian sentiment.

Beyond the small discriminations of everyday life and distressing, but not dangerous experiences, such as aggression in school, many participants feared physical violence. Agustina, a postgraduate student from Java who got a scholarship, has lived in Auckland for two years. She mentioned:

[I am] afraid [of living in Indonesia], especially during the Christmas, we don't know if there will be a bomb or not.

Indeed, despite their rarity, Indonesia's random instances of violence focused on church buildings and services have exacerbated people's sense of vulnerability. They literally feel afraid for their lives.⁷ In the middle of my fieldwork, during the Easter week, a terrorist detonated a suicide bomb in front of the oldest Catholic Church in my hometown, Makassar.

⁷ While such terrorist acts are at the hands of a very small minority of Islamic extremists, the number of public and church bombings have increased since 2000. See <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20210328150157-20-623072/daftar-kasus-ledakan-bom-di-indonesia-2-dekade-terakhir>.

Although no-one except the terrorist died, local news reported that a number of congregants were traumatised by it. A few days after that, there was also an “attack” on the national headquarters of the Indonesian Police in Jakarta by a woman who wore a long hijab and *niqab*. She died after the police shot her. This act of terror, an example of Agustina’s fear, happened recently.

At least partially, I have come to understand the way many Christians feel in Indonesia. As a Muslim in New Zealand where memories of the 2019 mosque attack in Christchurch remain fresh, I too sometimes imagine that someone will enter the mosque during Friday prayer and start shooting people. Like my Christian interlocutors, I know this is just my wild imagination but nonetheless fear the possibility.

After all these bad stories, let us explore my participant’s good memories and experiences of Indonesia since indeed, life is like two sides of a coin. No one lives their life in complete of misery.

The Good Memories – “Hmm, So Many”

While people revealed many negative things about their lives in Indonesia, it would be wrong to characterise them solely in such terms. Indeed, good memories were a prominent conversation topic, things that made them miss Indonesia very much. When I asked people about “good experiences” in Indonesia, most just said, “hmm, so many,” meaning that despite the bad experiences, they also had lots of good experiences living in Indonesia. In comparison, when I asked about their bad experiences, it took time for them to mention an example of their good experiences. When I followed it up, they explained that it was hard to mention the experiences one by one since there were so many of them compared to their bad experiences. In casual conversation at social events and even when I was not specifically focusing on life in Indonesia, nostalgia was a prominent theme. In its “purest” meaning,

nostalgia suggests lamenting for what can never be regained, a kind of sorrowful harking back, since it entails a kind of homesickness for elsewhere or other times. It is also important to note that Indonesian Christians in Auckland experienced nostalgia differently from one another. This difference was particularly evident between permanent and temporary immigrants.

Common stories I heard from Indonesian Christians are a feeling of happiness when they can go to church with family or friends in Indonesia. A participant told me that when they would come home from church, they usually would have lunch with their families. In addition, they could also spend time with friends. This was especially the case for the young people. Some of them, after the service, immediately went to the mall or to a café to hang out with their friends. Gomes (2017) describes the same situation for Indonesian Christians in Australia and Singapore, claiming that some of them go to church only to meet other Indonesians. The participants who lived in Auckland temporarily, or those who had just arrived, especially students, did not feel the warmth of family in the same way as they had in Indonesia (Winland 1994:39; see also Reimer et al 2016). However, they did replicate the situation by creating a new support system (Bruner 1961:508), for example, by looking for new friends or considering close acquaintances, such as *Tante* and *Om* at church as family. And for those who were long-term residents, they also experienced the similar situation when they first arrived in New Zealand, replicating their homeland experiences. And the longer they lived in New Zealand, the more fully they accepted other Indonesian Christians as their true family.

As confirmation we can see how Indonesian Christians in New Zealand use different terms from those Christians in Indonesia to call each other. There was a tendency to call each other by intimate kin terms as if they were truly a big family. The use of *Om* and *Tante*, for instance, is not common in a community. Indonesians normally call older people “*Pak*”

(sir) or “*Bu*” (madam). Most Indonesians only use *Om* and *Tante* to refer to their own uncle and aunty (their parent’s siblings) or those who are close and very familiar to them. In Islamic communities that I have been involved in here in New Zealand, no one used *Om* and *Tante*, but instead, they used *Pak* or *Bu*. Some participants told me that they did not use the words *Om* and *Tante* in Indonesia in the same way they do now. Therefore, I would argue that the using of *Om* and *Tante* at St James indicates the construction of an intimate environment where people will perceive each other as a family.

Mattulada (1985) notes that, for most Indonesians, “family” falls into three categories: 1) blood (such as parents and children) 2) marriage and 3) social relations. The meaning of the family for the Indonesian Christians here falls into the third, filling the absence of blood and marriage families. They often said, “they are like family to me” (*sudah seperti keluarga*), for those who are very close to them. And sometimes, best friends can get this family status also. Regarding this, some of them missed their actual families in Indonesia, particularly the newer migrants. Missing actual families in Indonesia was not really an issue for those whose families were already passed away or were already moved to New Zealand.

Still, nothing exactly replaces the warmth of the family. *Kak*⁸ Naomi, who came to New Zealand 13 years ago, stated that even though she considered the Indonesian congregants in St James to be her family, there were things that she talked about with her family in Indonesia that she would not talk about with her church family. For example, she could tell financial problems to her family in Indonesia, but she would never speak about her financial problem to the congregants in St James. Although being with the family here could somewhat “cure” their nostalgia, the longing could only be fully eliminated by returning to Indonesia, gathering with her father, mother, siblings, or a grandmother with a longstanding bond.

⁸ *Kak* or *kakak* is a genderless term meaning “older brother/sister”

Indonesian Christians also liked the fact that there were places in Indonesia where the rights of minority groups were appreciated. The Indonesian national motto, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (unity in diversity) has indeed been instilled for everyone since in school. Those who had never experienced discrimination in Indonesia had lived in an environment where they were the majority such as the provinces of North Sumatera, North Sulawesi, East Nusa Tenggara, Maluku and Papua, where Christianity is the majority religion (Simatupang 1982; Intan 2015). There are also Christian-majority areas on a smaller scale. For instance, there are districts that have a Christian majority population such as Toraja district in South Sulawesi Province, or in some parts of Jakarta, such as China Town. Most of the congregants who had lived in these areas said they had rarely experienced discrimination, but they often described people around them as being closed-minded. Some of them rarely interacted with people outside their ethnic or religious group, a pattern of interaction that indirectly built a boundary between them and those they perceived as the other.

Such walls were made of stereotypes against certain groups or perhaps from negative experiences in the past and it is part of the nature of ethnic and religious differences as forms of differentiation. Sibe, a congregant of Indo-Chinese descent, who used to go to a very heterogeneous public school, rather than a Christian school, told me how his grandmother often told him not to play with non-Christians (meaning Muslims) when he was a kid in Indonesia. I can understand how the intentions of his old-school grandmother were a form of worry and efforts to keep her grandson from becoming a victim of discrimination (or maybe she was afraid he would be converted?) (Hoon 2013:61). However, Sibe explained to his grandma that he would be fine and that none of the non-Christians in his school had done anything bad regarding his ethnicity and his religion.

When I was talking to Sibe, he explained his experience in a very excited tone. I still remember his smile and his enthusiastic laughter in telling his experiences while in Indonesia,

as if speaking of a happy childhood and teenage years, even though he also used to feel the fears described by others.

My social circle was quite varied, I had time to hang out in areas where I was really the most minority person there. I lived in Taman Menteng area [in Jakarta]. When I was in high school, my friend circle was all Muslims. My parents were concerned about my safety in general, like don't come home too late. But my grandparents were concerned about why I hung out with Muslims. But I said to them, why did you forbid me from making friends with Muslims? There were also many Chinese who were bad. But these Muslims were very nice. Without them, no one would help us. If there's a bad Muslim, it's just because either he's not a good Muslim, or he's a radical or an extremist.

Despite their sometimes frightening or intimidating experiences in Indonesia, or their awareness of others' experiences, he typically did not perceive all non-Christians (or non-Chinese) as evil people. People noted the importance of not overgeneralising about Indonesian Muslims and that those who exercised violence or other forms of bias did not represent Islam or non-Chinese in general. Or, at least, some of them made some effort to reassure me that they did not think of Islam negatively. *Tante Annette*, for instance, was a Roman Catholic but converted to Protestantism after marriage because her husband was a Protestant. Along with the experiences I described above, she has good memories of her daily interactions with non-Christian and non-Chinese Indonesians. She never judged and overgeneralised them even though she lived near and was surrounded by Muslims.

In the interview, she told me that during her pregnancy, one she had long wished for, she was attended by a kind Muslim doctor. When it came time to give birth, she needed a caesarean section. She was very afraid that her child would pass away, so, she prayed to God for His grace. What particularly touched her was that this doctor also prayed for her before the surgery began.⁹ This was one of the good memories that she always had about a potential for kindness that we all have as a human being regardless of our religion and ethnicity.

⁹ There is a prayer in Islam called *salat sunnah* that has many aims. One of them is to seek for guidance or to seek for easiness so that Allah will make people's business easier. This was what the doctor performed. He sought guidance and easiness in performing the caesarean section so that both *Tante Annette* and her child would be saved.

Knowing Indonesian Christians' experiences and memories of Indonesia is significant because these memories are part of how Indonesian Christians constructed their selves in Auckland. As these few accounts suggest, while people had bad, as well as good, memories of Indonesia, they still perceived Indonesia as their home (Chapter Five). Some people kept going back to Indonesia every year during the summer holiday to cure the longing, visiting their friends and family. It meant that although they already developed other roots in the foreign land or the new home, they kept rooted to the place where they were born.

From this, we can also see how the metaphor of rootedness is important (Malkki 1992). As far as they go, they remain bound to their homeland as an inseparable part of their identity, particularly for those who have lived in New Zealand a long time. They still feel they belong to Indonesia. This is exemplified by the stories of *Om Paul*, who was still in Indonesia up until I finished writing this thesis, or *Tante Annette*, who often said that Indonesia remained in her heart (see Chapter Five). And it is a fond memory for the temporary or the newcomer migrants (particularly students), such as *Andara*, who preferred to go back home in Indonesia and contribute to her hometown.

Chapter Four

Living as a “Minority 2.0”: Being Indonesian Christians in New Zealand

Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.
-Deuteronomy 31:6

I remember one day, Agustina told me that after finishing her study and contributing to Indonesia for two years due to her scholarship’s requirements, she had a plan to return to New Zealand. When I asked why she wanted to come back, she replied, “because living here is so peaceful. I can be myself. I am a minority here, but at some point, it is better than being minority in Indonesia.” I also found similar tendency from other people, such as *Kak Lulu* and *Bintang*, who claimed that living as a minority in a secular country such as New Zealand is better than in Indonesia. Therefore, this chapter explores the issues regarding being a religious minority in secular New Zealand where they were also double minorities as foreigners.

To some people, this situation did not meet their expectations at first. They thought that they would live in a Christian-majority country but found out a different reality. Thus, their stories about stereotypes and expectations of New Zealand are prominent. This chapter brings the stories of their first arrival, encounter with local Christians, and finally joining St James. I also discuss how Indonesian religiosity and rituals become a way for gathering and strengthening the sense of belonging among the Indonesian religious community. Thus, I will argue that religious institutions are places for gathering in diaspora (Van Dijk and Botros 2009:193; Reimer 2016:500).

“It’s Safe Here at the Edge of the World”: Indonesian Christians’ Visions, Stereotypes, and Expectations of New Zealand

This is what *Om Paul* said when I asked him why he chose New Zealand as his destination country. He never imagined that he would end up in New Zealand. For him, New Zealand is a safe and remote country to start a good life. *Om Paul* was one of the many who left Indonesia after the 1998 tragedy in Indonesia. It was the worst monetary crisis in Indonesia's history (Nordholt 2008:2, see also Hoon 2013 and Harsono 2019). The crisis was the cause of the reformation in the governmental system, marked by the fall of an authoritarian government that had been in power for 32 years. One of the effects of this instability was the social upheaval and ethnic conflicts, including violence against Chinese who are widely resented for their perceived affluence relative to indigenous Indonesians (Aritonang and Steenbrink 2008; Hoon 2014; see above). What I want to explain here is the aftermath of the conflict of the 1998.

One day in 1998, *Om Paul* saw a crowd in a hotel. “How busy,” he said. People made a line that is quite long, almost all of them Chinese. It turned out that the queue was for a visa registration to New Zealand. According to *Om Paul*, the people were queuing up to leave Indonesia for a better life.

Hearing the story of *Om Paul*, I tried to position myself as one of the Indonesian Christians. If there was a choice to leave a country that had just been hit by a financial crisis, was full of upheaval, and where I often experienced discriminatory treatment, effectively becoming a second-class citizen, of course, I would be very interested in taking that opportunity. But *Om Paul* only decided to leave for New Zealand after thinking about it many times. For *Om Paul*, his children’s education was the strongest reason to come to New Zealand. He really hoped that his children could get the best education and that it would not cost a lot of money. Upon hearing that schools in New Zealand were free, he decided to

migrate to New Zealand. So, it was not solely conflict and discrimination that were the main reasons for *Om Paul* to come to New Zealand (Dewanto 2020:521, see also Schut 2019).

From *Om Paul*'s account, we can see how Indonesian immigrants have high hopes for New Zealand. In Indonesia, sending kids to school was sometimes problematic. *Om Paul* and some Indonesian Christians found themselves in a dilemma whether to send their children to public schools or private schools. Public schools were cheaper compared to private schools, but the standard, service, and the quality were not really good compared to the private one. Not to mention the possible discriminative environment that the Indonesian Christians might face in the public schools exemplified by *Andara*'s case and in my personal story. On the other hand, sending kids to private school, particularly Christian schools dominated by Chinese, might be a good option but it was very expensive. Therefore, taking a chance to go abroad was a very reasonable option. They could have a better job, better life, and better education for their children.

That is why New Zealand is a place to make a living, to continue their education, to "live". When they said "I just want to live" in interviews, I suddenly felt sorry for them. What kind of experience they had in Indonesia so that they had to go to New Zealand first to live? Did they not feel "live" in Indonesia before? And when I asked again what they meant by "live" was that they wanted to live their life freely, far from crime (like what *Tante Annette* expected), and free from the discrimination, stigma, and stereotypes. They wanted to people to accept them as who they were. They just wanted to be themselves. They would have never felt "live" before they could live as they want.

One person, who identifies as an LGBTQ+ person,¹⁰ had dreamed of having a nice life in New Zealand. In Indonesia, they had experienced discrimination from their parents and

¹⁰ I have to be extremely careful regarding this. I do not give a pseudonym to the person I refer to only for this LGBTQ+ issue

from their environment, but once in New Zealand, they felt at home. Although some Christian denominations prohibited LGBTQ+ behaviours, they, surprisingly for me, felt closer to God in a secular New Zealand environment that largely respects the rights of LGBTQ+ people. They went to the church and were actively involved in the congregation but remained covert within the congregation. They were afraid to open about their sexual orientation because people in the church might be disappointed and excommunicate them from the church. They did not want that to happen since they regarded the people in St James as their family.

Theologizing experience (Smith 1978) is the best concept to explain this phenomenon. The host country, which is much different from the home country in terms of inclusivity, made them grateful for the life that God had given them. They interpreted their experience through a religious lens, that God had placed them in New Zealand. It was part of God's plan to draw them into an environment that they personally liked. Thus, some believed that was a test from God, the reason why they must be closer to God to thank Him for the opportunity to live in the supportive environment. This is one of the many stories that Indonesian Christians talked about their expectations and ideas of New Zealand.

“I Couldn't Stay Here If There's no Indonesians in the City”: The First Arrival

On a bright Sunday after the afternoon service, I went to the hall with Agustina and we met *Tante* Gloria, one of the most devout Christians that I met in New Zealand. Standing near the door, we chatted a little bit about my study. *Tante* Gloria told me about her experience of arriving in New Zealand and how she had chosen St James, an account she later elaborated.

In 2000, *Tante* Gloria followed her husband, now an elder in St James, who had a job in the South Island. While there, she found it difficult to worship, struggling to find fellow

Indonesian Christians to support each other emotionally and socially. She said she could not stay in a city where she could not find any Indonesians., it was difficult for her to participate in English services because her English was still not good enough to understand the messages that were conveyed in the sermons (except for some Bible references that she already understood). Apart from this, she experienced difficulties in interacting with other Kiwi congregants due to the language barrier, making her feel lonely and isolated. These issues prompted *Tante* Gloria to persuade her husband to move to Auckland where she knew there was an Indonesian-speaking congregation from a person in the church who came from the same region in Indonesia. *Tante* Gloria was very grateful to finally be able to meet Christian Indonesians.

From what *Tante* Gloria said, we see how social relationships, as well as becoming a member of a particular religious community is significant for pious people like *Tante* Gloria (Cho 2018, Corrie 2014, Van Dijk and Botros 2009, Leek 2005, Warner and Wittner 1998). It also shows how Indonesian Christian community has a significance as a reminder of home, helping migrants to cope with negative feelings such as loneliness that *Tante* Gloria experienced (Gomes and Tan 2017). Her account reaffirms Smith's (1978) and others' theologizing experience hypothesis (Smith 1978; Levitt and Jaworsky 2007; Johnson and Werbner 2010; Yharrola 2012), that instead of remaining alienated from her religious environment, *Tante* Gloria tried to find a way to keep close to God.

If I was in a small town and there were no Indonesians, oh my, I couldn't! Some people might find themselves alone, and they still went to the churches. But for me, I couldn't. I felt lonely and alone because I had no friends. The first reason was the language. My English was bad. So when I went to the English Church, I could only read the verse but I couldn't catch the sermon. I didn't really understand. So, it's not optimal [for what I wanted from the Church]. Then, because the communication was difficult, you couldn't joke. You couldn't connect.

From her account also, we can see how being able to speak a language is not only a form of identity which connects people to a homeland, but also determines whether or not a person feels they belong to a community overseas. For *Tante* Gloria, the feeling of belonging

was important because she was afraid of being alienated from her religious environment, of being disconnected socially and being far from God. Not understanding the sermon could possibly prevent her from achieving what she really wanted from the church, namely religious experience in which could make her more devout. Several people in the church who had limitations in speaking English also shared similar stories.

Other accounts came from *Tante Annette* and *Om Paul*. Both chose St James because an acquaintance who came to St James earlier invited them. *Tante Annette* came to New Zealand after the 1998 crisis. Before they came to St James, neither knew many Indonesians lived in Auckland. *Tante Annette* had attended several Auckland churches before and felt that she belonged in a Baptist church. When she got into trouble, it was that church that helped her.

She told me a story about the kindness of the mostly Pākehā New Zealanders in the Baptist Church. When she arrived in New Zealand for the first time, she and her husband tried to establish a café business in Auckland. In the first days, they brought their daughter to the café and worked while taking care of the child, which was not ideal. Knowing their situation, people from the church offered to help. If *Tante Annette* wanted, she could bring her daughter to someone at church while she and her husband were at the café and after the day finished, she could pick her daughter up. She was so happy and so grateful because, people in the Baptist church helped them to make their life way better in New Zealand.

Tante Annette told me more stories about the help the congregants offered. After about one year their café was robbed. One early morning, when she and her husband arrived at the café, they discovered the window was broken and their money had been stolen. It was as though their world was torn apart. They did not know what to do. They had thought that New Zealand was a very safe place, having left Indonesia for this reason. *Tante Annette* never thought that it would happen to her and her family.

Oh my God, I've never expected it would happen to me. Poor me. I've never experienced that tragic moment in Indonesia, even though there are lots of crimes, robbers, and bad people there, I was safe. But here, it's not [safe].

When she remembered that moment, she was obviously still very upset. She said that in Indonesia, despite everything, she had never been the victim of a crime; and now she had experienced it in New Zealand, when she looked for a safe place to live.

This story raises the issue of class and their possible movement in the class hierarchy when they moved from Indonesia. In general terms, people found themselves occupying markedly lower-class positions in their new environments. When they first arrived here, their money did not buy as much, their qualifications were not recognized, and their language held them back. That is why, hearing that *Tante Annette* got into trouble, the congregants from her former church helped her again by visiting her and giving donations so that *Tante Annette* could at least survive financially for a couple of weeks. Receiving the donations made *Tante Annette* feel so grateful to be part of the Baptist Church. She could not say anything and did not know how to return the favour. She felt blessed because as a part of a Christian community, God connected her with very kind people in the place that she had felt she did not belong at first; the place that she did not perceive as home.

A few years after the bad event, other Indonesians that she knew invited *Tante Annette* to go to the Indonesian congregation. At first, she attended both congregations, spending three weeks a month in the Baptist church and one week a month at the Indonesian congregation in St James. However, after she had consulted with the minister and some of the congregants in the Baptist church, they suggested that *Tante Annette* should come to the Indonesian service because it would be more comfortable. The minister felt that St James church was a place where he interacted with fellow Indonesians and studied the Bible.

If we look at *Tante Annette's* preferences, I could return to my discussion about belonging and rootedness. No matter how comfortable and inclusive the religious community

was in the host country, people prefer to belong to a religious community that of same nationality.

Due to the differences between Indonesian and New Zealand churches, once people arrived in New Zealand, especially those whose churches based in Indonesia were ethnic churches, they tended to find it difficult to settle into a suitable church. As Reimer explained, in diaspora, Christians tend to seek for churches that will meet their specific needs (2016:501). Some people in St James had attended several churches before finally choosing to become a member of the Indonesian congregation. Some (especially students) even tried several Auckland Christian churches, seeking the one that would best suit their beliefs and needs. One of the most common reasons was the issue of language, as in the story of *Tante Gloria*, and the similarities to the liturgies that they had practiced back in Indonesia. For them the good service was the service that had a balance between the seriousness and fun: not too serious, not too fun. The “too serious” means the service that is too traditional (such as using only old hymns), while the “too fun” means the service that is like a concert, where people come to the church and only have fun with the music (as in a Charismatic church).

Another reason why they found it difficult to belong to some churches in Auckland was the liturgical difference Agustina, a student who has lived in New Zealand temporarily for about two years, initially felt confused about which congregation to join in Auckland. In Indonesia, she attended the Javanese Church in Central Java. When in Auckland, she was initially confused about which congregation she preferred to join until she attended St James. When she attended St James for the first time, she found that the liturgy had similarities with the Javanese ethnic church she attended in Indonesia. What she knew was that the Javanese church and St James were both Protestant churches. She said that it was this similarity that initially made her feel at home in the church (apart from the fact that it was an Indonesian church), even though her first impression was that there were several things that were

different such as the sections and the total members that were less than she had in Indonesia (Van Dijk and Botros 2009:193; Husson 2015:65, see also Zhang 2015).

Bahagia also experienced the similar thing. She was Catholic before becoming atheist and then later joining an ethnic Chinese Charismatic Catholic congregation in Jakarta, although she did not really understand Chinese. Once in Auckland, in her search for God, Bahagia tried several churches, both Indonesian and *bule* (non-Indonesian) churches. Even so, she was not quite satisfied with the churches she attended because of the differences to liturgy she had experienced in Indonesia and because she had lots of questions about Christianity that the ministers could not answer. One day, she passed in front of St James Church and found that the church had Indonesian services.

This church is very weird. I mean, this is a big old church in the city. How can they have the Indonesian service? I was very curious to this beautiful church. Why do they have Indonesian Mass¹¹? And when I tried, that's good. I was surprised because it was similar with Catholic... At that time, I was interested in Bible. I took a course at the Uni called Bible and Popular Culture, like Lucifer. And when I heard what the minister explained about the Bible, that was interesting. Even though I did not really put my faith in God, but I wanted to learn. And, when I met with everyone, it was like in Indonesia. Everyone was so friendly, like all the *Tante* brought food. It felt like home.

Some Christian immigrants may try several churches before they find the most suitable one. One of the important aspects to take into consideration is social networks (Nagata 2005 and Reimer 2016). In Bahagia's case, despite her long efforts to find what she felt would be the right kind of Christianity, being with other Indonesians was so important that she was willing to put aside some of her more purist concerns. She preferred the church because it was "like in Indonesia" and as a temporary migrant, surrounded by familiar practices and people brought back memories of homeland as well as reminded her about her roots in Indonesia (Malkki 1992). Certainly, theological issues remained important but in this culturally inclusive environment, developing a sense of togetherness, she was able to feel that

¹¹ She said "mass" instead of service because it is a Catholic term for "services" and she used to be a Catholic

her questions could be addressed. Religious institutions become a media for gathering in diaspora (Van Dijk and Botros 2009:193; Reimer 2016:500).

Many of the participants (especially students) told me that when they were in Indonesia they went to church with friends or families. These two circles (friends and families) were significant drivers that influenced whether or not people attend church. Many young participants said that they are in a phase that requires encouragement and “a little push” from their environment such as families, friends, colleagues, or flatmates, in addition to the desire to become a good Christian. Bahagia was always involved in church events. It seemed that she never missed a single Sunday service. Gomes (2017) reports the similar tendency for Indonesian Christians in host countries, arguing that some of them go to church to meet fellow Indonesians, emphasising the significance of church friends. She elaborates that it is important for the migrants to be surrounded by their friends in the church otherwise, they would lose their faith (2017:111).

Bahagia shared that when she was in Indonesia, her parents and grandmother often invited her to come to church every Sunday. She did not really like this, because she felt forced and insincere, but because her family invited her, she did not have a choice, and she finally joined the church. While in Auckland, Bahagia changed churches several times because she was invited to different services by friends. Eventually, she made a choice and began to feel comfortable participating at St James.

While some, such as Bahagia, or *Kak Lulu* who found this church through Google, found it accidentally, these stories demonstrate how important networking is in the process of finding a place to meet the spiritual and social needs of immigrants. Sibe, for example, is from Wellington and recently moved to Auckland in 2020. They chose St James because their previous church in Wellington was related to the St James church. The minister of St James had visited the church because it was in the same denomination. Also, the church in

Wellington had made several missions to Indonesia in Sumatera and in Sulawesi. Sibe got information that the liturgy was also not really different from what they had in Indonesia. Therefore, when Sibe moved to Auckland, the ministers of the two churches suggested they joined St James. Without the recommendation from the previous minister in Wellington, Sibe might not have joined St James.

Betrayed Expectation – Against Secularism!

Many people did not expect to find a secular environment in New Zealand. They thought that New Zealand and other western countries were predominantly Christian countries as they were used to seeing in the movies. They thought that it was more like the USA where the population was predominantly Christians. *Kak Lulu*, who came to New Zealand because she got a job offer at a company, was initially happy because she thought that living in New Zealand would be different from living in Indonesia. She was right. It was different, so were the problems. *Kak Lulu* explained that when she arrived in Auckland, she decided to involve herself in Indonesian communities (Indonesian Christians and a Manadonese community, one of the Indonesian ethnic communities). She was shocked after learning that New Zealand is a secular country with lots of irreligious residents. So to keep herself devout and to make her child find God, she actively involved in St James.

My data shows that Indonesian Christians are extremely concerned about secularism in New Zealand and across the world. They think that more and more people were far from churches. They are afraid that this secular environment will seduce their children or the youths away from God's law. They perceived the secular environment as being far from God's law, and that some of the New Zealand's policies were not representing those laws. They even believed it was part of an evil power (*kuasa jahat*) that always tries to destroy God's values in human beings. In their prayer, they often mentioned saving humanity from

the evil power. There were always prayers for New Zealand, at every situation and event, such as on Sunday services, weekly meeting prayers, and so on, in the hope that God would guide this country.

Their prayers to guide this country might be granted. The 12.00 p.m. Indonesian congregation has been growing, having larger attendance than the 10.00 a.m. English-speaking congregation, with more than 40 people in attendance. This was mentioned by several congregants, including *Om Alex*. According to him, this could not be separated from the increasing number of young New Zealanders who are moving further away from the church. In my observations, almost all congregants at the combined service were senior citizens. It was very rare to find the young generation at the this service. In comparison, the Indonesian congregation was concerned with the new generation of Christians. *Om Paul* once said that the Indonesian congregation had an important function in the survival of St James church because the congregation was growing and the members were a variety of ages, not only older people. Interestingly, *Om Alex* revealed in his interview that in the future, it might be the English-speaking congregation that would be important in the sustainability of the church.

This is because almost all children from Indonesian-speaking congregations were born or raised in New Zealand, classifying them as the “generation 1.5.” Most of them communicated in English; some of them could not even speak Indonesian. Therefore, as they grow up, they may become part of the English-speaking congregation instead of joining the Indonesian service. *Om Alex* revealed that he was also worried if Indonesian children felt they did not belong in the Indonesian congregation. His concern was more than just language issues, but also other factors such as cultural ties, families, and friendships. *Tante Annette* also told me about a similar concern regarding her daughter. She claimed that “my daughter [growing up in New Zealand] doesn’t have that feeling [of belonging to Indonesia or

Indonesian congregation], I'm pretty sure". This suggests her daughter did not really have a strong bond with Indonesia.

What *Kak Lulu*, *Tante Annette*, and *Om Alex* explained above are examples of some of the problems that immigrants could face in the host country. Indeed, immigrants who leave their homeland experience particular kinds of problems abroad, social, cultural, and financial. However, immigrants can adapt to their new environment in various ways. Ammarell (2002) states that migrants who are far from their homeland find it hard to adapt to the local social and cultural environment (see also Berger 2004:492). Some people in the church of St James had moved at least several churches before finally choosing to become a member of this church. Language, as experienced by *Tante Gloria*, is one of the most common reasons. Some of them make their national-religious based community a place that will surely accept them as people who have the same identity. This also indicates how people in the church were very inclusive and accepted anyone, especially if the person mentioned that they were an Indonesian or a Christian, since they found similarities between each other. Even within the religious community itself, some of them felt they did not belong because of the language barrier, that made the national-religious community more preferable for them.

In a new environment, far away from their metropole, migrants seek the comfort of the known, some means of overcoming their sense of being in a strange, sometimes hostile or disturbing world. But familiarity can be difficult to find and people attempt to reconstruct their social order as they experienced it in their homeland. This social order kept them in a circle of people who shared similar beliefs and practices. This also maintained their relationship with their metropole (Ammarell 2002:52). In other words, it created a new environment based on their old circumstances in a new and unfamiliar place.

Ammarell's ethnography regarding the Buginese once again shows how migrants could adjust themselves within a religiously different environment. Ammarell (2002; 1999)

gathered his ethnographic data from Bugis migrants in South-East Asia who experienced various rejections and even conflicts in the host-country. The Bugis ethnic group, from Muslim majority central Indonesia, made various adaptations to succeed in their overseas journeys, particularly in the South-East Asia Region (see also, for example, Farhadian 2017). In this area, although dominated by the Christian majority, Bugis migrants managed to prosper in the diaspora.

Ammarell criticises scholars who believe that the failure of the migrant adaptation in a completely different area was caused by a clash of religious values. For Ammarell, failure to critique this issue will have a serious impact because scholars will view the clash as an endless fight (2002:53). In his opinion, the frequent conflicts between migrants and local communities are economic matters instead of religious ones. While Ammarell, importantly, raises the issue of economy as the source of the failure to adapt, the claim appears reductionist, simply substituting one cause for another. My study suggested that there are multiple axes of difference and conflicts, including economy and religion, along with socio-cultural and emotional aspects, and that becoming a member of a religious community can help overcome these issues. The case of *Tante* Annette exemplified this when she became a victim of a robbery, or *Tante* Gloria when she felt lonely in a small town, or *Kak* Naomi who found the warmth of family in St James. Religious communities helped them to solve their problems.

Indeed, in the process of reconstructing their world to make it more familiar, migrants had to go through challenges. They experienced significant changes in terms of social life, family structure, gender, class, and so on (Levitt and Jaworsky 2007:136; Muhidin and Utomo 2015; see also Yharrola 2012). Some of the most significant boundaries they experience are the socio-cultural environment and racial discrimination, for example, in the case of Asians who travel to Western countries such as Netherlands and the United States

(Amersfoort 2004; Levitt and Jaworsky 2007). Immigrants adjust themselves with the host country environment. In this adjustment process, there is an aspect called the "migration melange," or "the mixing cultural traits from the homeland and the culture of residence," a form of hybridity (Levitt and Jaworsky 2007:140).

For example, in every event where food was provided, St James served both traditional Indonesian and Western dishes. They did this to meet the needs of congregants from the international service and the Indonesian children or youths who were born or raised in New Zealand, the "1.5 or 2.0 generation". Another example was how the church responded to the LGBTQ+ issue. In Indonesia, churches can publicly announce their disapproval towards LGBTQ+ people in sermons or other events. In general, same-sex sexual orientation and in between genders are considered contrary to common religious norms, even though almost all ethnic groups in Indonesia have a traditional gender beyond male and female. For instance, some people accept five genders in South Sulawesi province; or the unofficial third gender in Indonesia called *waria* (shemale), from the words *wanita* (female) and *pria* (male).

However, the fact that New Zealand today is one of the most pro-LGBTQ+ countries in the world means that Indonesian Christian immigrants living in Auckland who disapproved of LGBTQ+ movement felt that they should be more careful about expressing their disapproval publicly. I asked almost all the participants about their thoughts regarding LGBTQ+ people, and most gave similar answers: that they do not hate the people, they disagree with their behaviour. They perceive the LGBTQ+ person as someone to be embraced and to be guided so that they will leave their bad habit.

Indeed, some Christians see nothing wrong with becoming homosexual unless people engage in same-sex intercourse. In most denominations, the church only permits sexual intercourse within marriage, and same-sex marriage is forbidden, including in the denomination to which St James belongs. Thus, because of the cultural differences between

Indonesia and New Zealand, Indonesian Christians here adjust how they show (or preach) their disagreement towards LGBTQ+ people. They had to be more careful not to announce it in public and to avoid this kind of discussion in public sphere, because it might become controversial or others might perceive it as hate speech or a direct attack on human rights. When we talked about their ideas regarding LGBTQ+ people, they started to lower their voices (some even whispering), like they did not want our conversation heard by others.

The clash of values (in this thesis, with secularisation) should be taken into consideration, even if it does not seem to have any significance for the adaptation of the migrant groups. Rather, we can see the ways in which migrants develop certain practices to adapt with their environment.

We can see that effort is also an element of participants “adaptation” in their new environment. In his ethnography of African Muslim immigrants in Harlem, USA, Abdullah (2010) describes the struggles these immigrants experience in the US, beginning with the process of adjusting to the social environment and adjusting their religious practices. One of the examples concerns the memorialisation of an Islamic cleric (Cheikh Amadou Bamba), a tradition from home that African Muslim immigrants tried to sustain in America. But because they were far away, they were only trying to celebrate it in their new environment, resulting in a compromised ritual that was less festive than at home. But at least, they felt, they had tried to live up to the tradition (2010:7).

Abdullah (2010) further notes how living in a very diverse multicultural area in which they are a minority group, African Muslim immigrants are intensely connected to each other through various kinds of routine religious activities centred on mosques in Harlem. Activities such as five-times-a-day communal prayers, Friday prayers, as well as monthly and annual events (such as Eid) are moments of gathering for immigrants, a circle that embraces them. Gomes and Tan (2017) also reveals the similar tendency among Indonesian migrants in

Singapore who replicate what they did in church communities back in Indonesia. They did this reconstruction in order to express their Indonesian identity and to provide a sense of community as well as connectedness to their home countries. And the reconstructed environment partially resembles their home environment, something that I discovered here in Auckland Indonesian Muslim community as well as among Christian immigrants at St James.

These immigrants, like those in St James, are partially reconstructing their habitual social orders and habits in ways that both sustain their links to their homeland and enable them to live their lives despite the constraints in their new place. People in the church were trying to connect with each other as fellow Indonesians, supporting each other by forming the Indonesian congregation community, while maintaining their traditions from Indonesia. For example, they often held feasts on big days such as Christmas, New Year's Eve, and even on Mother's Day. These traditions, maintained like this, made many Indonesians feel at home in the church of St James. As *Om* Paul stated,

In the past, every time we went to church, we would *makan-makan*, *ngumpul*. And it's free. That's every Sunday service. Indonesian food again. That's why I used to come often. That's where I started. But now [eating after service] has been limited only in the special events or only for the elders.

Makan-makan (eating) or *ngumpul/kumpul-kumpul* (gathering) are very common traditions in Indonesia. At every activity or event, there must always be meals and *ngumpul*. Other than the people, food is what migrants notably miss from home although it is quite easy to find in Auckland. Food is an effective mnemonic that simultaneously expresses and partly ameliorates nostalgia (Mannur 2009 and Moffat, Mohammed, and Newbold 2017). Members of the congregation tended to cook Indonesian dishes if they missed home. This is what Mannur (2009) called “culinary citizenship,” a state that grants migrants the ability to articulate national identity through food (Mannur 2009: 19-20).

The point I want to emphasise here is how the tradition is still carried out in New Zealand. This is in line with what scholars call “gathering in diaspora,” the desire of immigrants to engage in a community that shares similar identities such as religion, nationality, and sometimes ethnicity (Van Dijk and Botros 2009:193; Winland 1994 :39). In this context, gathering in diaspora enables people to get to know each other better (see Chapter 5). *Ngumpul* here was more meaningful in how they embraced each other; people tried to belong to each other.

Om Paul also mentioned that there is no longer a tradition of *makan-makan* in the church every week. One of the reasons is the community now growing bigger and having *makan-makan* every week is considered excessive. It is only the elders, or senior citizens, who still eat together after the service every week. They sit at a table, curtained off, in a different room in the church hall. Sibe said that was for those with a “premium membership”. This metaphor was a reference to Sibe’s awareness of the different “membership” positions in the church. This made me realise how position/status was also important in understanding Indonesian members of the church. People who had been in the church for a long time and made many contributions get this privilege. Sibe, who had just joined for less than a year, was aware that he did not get such privileges. Interestingly, when I did an interview after the service with *Tante* Annette who had a “premium membership,” another *Tante* who also had a similar “membership” came to me and packed me some food to take home. I then wondered, was that a privilege that researchers had when they were in the field?

I have explained how Indonesian Christians in New Zealand kept Indonesian traditions significant and build a sense of familiarity so they could feel as though they were at home. We can also understand this kind of tradition in the religious context. Some people mentioned that one of the reasons why they loved St James was because the liturgy was almost similar to the church they attended in Indonesia. Therefore, to understand this further,

it is important to see how the Indonesian Christians in St James performed their rituals and how this was entangled with *ngumpul* and *makan-makan*. This tradition contributes to the process of their “adaptation” in the new environment.

“It’s Time for *Ngumpul* and *Makan-Makan*”: Doing Rituals in New Zealand

I will describe the religious events of the Indonesian congregation of St James in this section: how they carried out the liturgy in each of these events; and how the liturgies became significant for the participants. These include Sunday Service, Saturday Program (breakfast and youth fellowship), Christmas events, the New Year event, Easter week programs (Good Friday and Easter camp), the Bible study and the Prayer Fellowship. The liturgy of these rituals varies.

Describing the rituals will help us to understand the important aspects of their religious and social life here as immigrants. This explains how replicating their home could be achieved by conducting the similar or familiar religious events including the liturgies. The events also simultaneously bring the two important traditions, namely *ngumpul* and *makan-makan* that help the migrants to feel at home.

Saturday Events

Activities that could familiarise the members of this church with each other were the Saturday events. These consisted of two activities, namely the breakfast fellowship which was held every morning from 9 to 11 a.m. and the youth fellowship which was held at around 5 p.m. Considering the significance of *ngumpul* and *makan-makan* for Indonesians, this activity is the best example to illustrate the importance of gatherings and meals.

The breakfast fellowship strengthened the bond between the members of St James. When I participated, I felt a very close togetherness. This activity was more fun than other weekly activities. There were several activities such as community service, table tennis, discussion, giving a testimony of faith, and having breakfast together. Food at breakfast also varied, ranging from "western food" such as bread and cake, to Indonesian/Asian food. Even though the food was provided by the church, sometimes there were congregants who brought food to share. The mundane meals after services echo that theme of communion. So, there was a double "communion" of sacred, spiritual meal and profane eating together: Christian communion & Indonesian communion. These kinds of activities made some people feel at home in St James. This gathering was more intimate since it was not really a big one, so all the people could interact each other, exchange jokes and play with everyone. I saw this as a moment for bonding each other. When I attended this activity, it reminded me of the similar activities in Indonesia. It is common for people actively involved in religious communities to have a *ngumpul* once a week, whether it is for playing any kind of sport, having a feast, or doing a public service.

In the evening, the youth fellowship carried out an activity. The minister or elders would lead this activity. The church youth, from 13 to 22 years-old, mostly offspring of adult congregants, and not too many in numbers, sat in a circle and played games, sang songs, watched videos, and listened to the pastor giving advice or messages that could be taken from the video. I felt that the activities in the afternoon were less attractive than the activities in the morning. Maybe because this activity was only for young people and there were not many youth active in the church, or maybe it was because the activities were carried out on the weekend before Saturday night, when young people might prefer to spend time hanging out and having fun with their family or friends.

Sunday Services and the Holy Communion

As I have already mentioned, the liturgy of Sunday service is a determinant in whether people would choose St James or another church. This is because the liturgy was quite similar to the liturgy they used to do in Indonesia. This similarity then gave rise to a familiar feeling for Indonesian Christians to join in worship. Agustina mentioned that, even though the liturgy at St James was very old school, or quite rigid when compared to the liturgy of the Charismatic church, it reminded her of the liturgy at the ethnic church she used to attend in Indonesia.

The service started with a *votum*, the congregation singing “Amen, Amen, Amen,” accompanied by music. The Minister then opened the service with greetings followed by an opening song and prayers of thanksgiving as well as confession. After the prayer, the minister would lead the children's talk, which was a special session where the children would come forward and listen to the minister talk in a fun way. After that, one of the congregants read an oral message before everyone greeted each other and said, “happy Sunday”. The greeting was also another chance for the congregants to say “hi” and have a small talk in the middle of the service. I often heard someone sharing a joke with another when they greeted. After the greeting, someone would go up to the podium to recite the prayer of intercession for the salvation of the world, Christians, countries where they have relatives (New Zealand and Indonesia) and for the members of the Church, for example if a congregant was sick.

The sermon is one of the most important sessions in the whole service. Through the sermon the congregants get something to “take back home”. People get lots of insight after listening to the sermon. It also becomes a weekly reminder for the congregants to refresh their faith and their devotion to the Christ. If we recall *Tante Gloria*’s account, it is clear that one of the reasons why she preferred a particular church was because of the sermon. She felt that her Sunday worship was incomplete if she could not understand the sermon fully.

According to the people, one of the particular reasons why St James had a special sermon session was that the minister was very clever and insightful. He delivered sermons passionately, citing many Bible verses and building arguments from that, convincing people that the Bible was truly a divine revelation. He had very good public speaking skills, and he brought some solutions for problems that congregants may have had by delivering relatable themes. After the sermon, the congregation would stand to read the Apostles’ Creed (*Pengakuan Iman Rasuli*). That was the most important part in Sunday service because, they said, that was the moment where they could refresh their faith every week. It was a form of surrender as well as a statement that as a Christian, they still wanted to try to be a better person despite the sins they might have committed.

The last section was the benediction where the minister conveyed blessings before he walked out of the church and waited at the main door of the church to greet everyone who was about to leave the church. In the moment after the blessing, the congregation usually stayed for one more session known as Conclusion (*Saat Teduh*), where the congregation remained silent for a while to calm their hearts, minds, or to have a spiritual reflection. The doorway farewell also symbolises the act of God who cares for everyone. On one of his sermons, the minister explained how every single person matters for God. This is the reason why He mentions lots of names in the Bible. Thus, the minister tried to implement this kind of act in his life by showing how he cares with everyone. He knew every member on the

congregation, and if he forgot (which was extremely rare), he politely asked their name and joked with them.

For the weeks when Holy Communion was offered, the liturgy was not much different. The Holy Communion was held after the offering service session and before the benediction. During Holy Communion, the elders stood on the front podium holding bread and wine/grape juice. Then every congregant who believed would come forward to take a slice of bread and a shot of wine/grape juice.

The Holy Communion is a ritual for remembering the Last Supper, the event when Jesus and his disciples ate bread and drank wine. Jesus broke the bread, saying that it was His body, and the wine was His blood. The Holy Communion's centrality is in the act of faith, the evocation of the Christian collective, and proximity to the Crucifixion and Resurrection. Easter is the central period for Christianity and the regular Holy Communion throughout the year evokes those core foundational events or myths. St James church did it monthly because it was a part of managing its sacredness and its role in strengthening the bond between their members.

Holy Communion is a ritual that allows participants to become more closely united with God through Jesus, and to become more closely related with each other into a single "body." This is what communion means: Christians enter a "union" with God and a "union" with the other people in the congregation. Two hundred years ago, Holy Communion was still a mystical experience for many Protestants – especially because they had usually fasted and attended sermons for a whole week before they went to communion. For nearly all Christian churches, particularly Protestants, the two sacraments or ordinances of Baptism and Communion are rituals of membership (Nigosian 1994:411). Communion is supposed to strengthen and deepen the unity between members of the community and with God. It is a very good metaphor: Protestants "eat the body of Christ" to become one body with other

members of the community (Damm 2012:52). For the Indonesian congregation, the process of becoming one with the community through Holy Communion was significant for uniting the members, not only in the formal way, but also in the more informal one. They did not only gather in the church for the Holy Communion process, but more than that, it was also another chance to *ngumpul*, since more people would attend this event compared to the ordinary Sunday service. And after the service, they would go to the hall to have food (*makan-makan*).

That is why, traditionally, according to the minister, Communion was used as a marker of who was part of the community and who was not (or who was on its margins). If the authorities excommunicated a particular person, the person was no longer part of the “body” (Thompson pers. comm.). However, in modern pluralistic societies, even though being cut off from the community can be hard, the excommunicated person can probably still have contact with community members; or they can just join another congregation. It also happened in St James, when people left, they joined another community or even built their own.

In the process of the Holy Communion, the elders broke the bread and put it on a plate. The elders also poured the wine into small cups. Grape juice was provided for those who did not like or did not want to drink wine. The congregation was invited one by one to take slices of bread and a shot of wine/grape juice. The first time I attended this Holy Communion, a *Tante* said to me that if I believed, I could participate. Out of curiosity, I also took part in this process. At first, I felt that this was something that could be tolerated (such as how a Muslim can get into church to attend services). But during the following Holy Communion, when I came with Agustina, she prevented me from taking part in this process. I naturally asked why, and she explained to me.

Do you want to accept that Jesus with His blood is in your body? Even some Christians who are not truly a believer, cannot join this. So, what about you? As a Muslim, what do you think that can make you join this process?

For most of the modern Protestants and according to the minister, communion is a ritual of remembrance, sometimes of the Last Supper, sometimes of the crucifixion of Jesus, and usually of both. However, Agustina's rejection of my involvement held another understanding of the Holy Communion derived from her previous congregation in Indonesia.

When Agustina told me about accepting the body of Jesus, I immediately thought about my own faith. Several questions spun in my mind. By joining in the process, had I been betraying my Islamic self and becoming a Christian instead? At the least, did it contaminate my Islamic faith? In Islam, the biggest sin for Muslims is *syirik*, or believing in the presence of another God. Thus, in the previous week when I took the bread and the grape juice, did it mean that I believed in the presence of another God (Jesus) than Allah? I do respect all the methods of ethnography and I have tried to understand the world of participant. However, as a Muslim, I participated in that process of the Holy Communion, did I go too far? After that week, I did not participate again when I attended the Holy Communion. I am glad that even though I did not get involved in the session again, my participants understood.

Christmas (*Natal*) and New Year's Eve (*Malam Tahun Baru*)

The series of Christmas events started on Christmas Eve and ran until the Christmas service on 25th December with a liturgy that was different from a Sunday service or the combined service during the Holy Communion. It started when the choir entered the podium and sang a song. At that time, the Christmas candles were also lit. The congregation then stood up when verse two of the song began (the song chosen that night was *Once in Royal David's City*). There were some Bible readings, followed by the choirs' songs. This repeated two times: reading three - choir (two songs) - reading four - choir. After that, everyone shared a

Christmas greeting followed by a benediction with a threefold amen by the minister from the international congregation. The Christmas Eve service closed with an organ prelude and then the congregation was invited to the church hall to enjoy coffee and tea.

On the evening of 25th December, the Indonesian congregation held a service in Indonesian with the theme "Jesus is the light of the world" (*Yesus Terang Dunia*). It was about what Jesus gave for the world, a way to reiterate Christian community, a sense of Christian essence. It was an almost Christian statement based around a whole lot of themes of light/goodness and dark/sin, ignorance, heathenism, showing the way, guiding to the light, etc. It evoked the significance of the Christians and the church in the middle of the secular environment. According to one of the elders, this service was common in Indonesia, but less common in New Zealand, so it was not a combined service, but an Indonesian language service instead. The congregation was very large, exceeding the number of congregants who attended the combined service every week.

The liturgy for Christmas activities started with the preparation, namely reading the oral congregation message, and then lighting the Christmas candles. The session ended with congregants chanting hallelujah five times and threefold amen, followed by singing "*Selamat hari natal*, we wish you a merry Christmas." People were very excited to sing the song; they were happy because the long-awaited Christmas was back. I could see their joy reflected in how they greeted each other, including how they greeted me and said, "Merry Christmas". I felt involved in this happiness. I could see how St James really prepared for this Christmas celebration, for example by preparing a choir that had been rehearsing for several months before the event, showing how enthusiastic people were in welcoming Christmas. Participants mentioned that Christmas was "the most hype event in the church," when the members of the congregation competed to take part: especially as musicians and choir

performers. That was why people were so excited. They took many pictures and recorded videos, especially when the choir performed.

After the event, people moved to the church hall to *ngumpul* and *makan-makan* (mostly Indonesian food) provided by the Church. Some people from English services and non-Christians attended this dinner together. One of my participants invited friends who were non-Christians. In fact, one of my friends who was a Hindu wanted to attend this dinner at the church. I confirmed with the church a couple weeks before whether I could invite my non-Christian friend or not, and they allowed it. One of the people at the church also said, "it doesn't matter about the religion, the important thing is that they are Indonesians." This signifies the national sentiment over religious identity along with the general spirit of inclusion or openness. Christmas, is, after all, about community, a ritual that welcomes everyone.

Here, again, I also understand that religion was not the only reason for gathering in diaspora. Nationality, as a form of identity is also pivotal. When I introduced myself to the church as a Muslim they said that "it does not matter whether you are a Christian or not. You are accepted in the community," and "this [being around other Indonesians] is what makes me feel at home." One of the members of the congregation said, "there is no difference between you and us the important thing is that we are both Indonesian." And, again, this section reminds us of what migrant scholars refer to as "gathering in diaspora" (Van Dijk and Botros 2009:191-193; see also Reimer 2016:500).

The New Year's Eve service was specifically for the Indonesian congregation; I did not spot any Kiwi congregants. An elder, rather than the minister, performed the liturgy and gave the sermon. His theme was "Change." It was a criticism of people who did not return to God during the pandemic but were busy discussing prosperity; the elder said that a pandemic should lead to a form of human reflection on God's presence. Hearing the sermon, I

immediately thought that maybe this New Years' service was deliberately made to remember God rather than have fun and forgetting God. The year must end and must start with prayer to God. This was also their effort to connect spirituality with almost every aspect of their lives. God should be involved always and everywhere. This kind of sense was very important in a secular environment. After the service, the congregants went to the church hall to enjoy the special Indonesian dishes that had been provided. I then met *Om* Paul, an elder. He hugged me, wished me a happy new year, and said sincerely, "thank you for coming, thank you," as if he were very grateful for my presence at the event. One might say that *Om* Paul displayed true Christian love, embracing everyone full heartedly.

The Easter Week (*Minggu Paskah*)

If the regular Holy Communion became the way people *ngumpul* and *makan-makan*, Easter, as the central period for remembering Christ, was also the perfect chance for doing these traditions: it was a week full of events. The week started with a parade around several streets in Auckland Central as an effort to remember how Jesus carried the cross to Calvary. After that, at 11 a.m., the church held a Good Friday combined service with a liturgy quite like that of Christmas Eve. It started with the video of people portraying the crucifixion of Jesus, followed by a "hymn-sandwich-type of liturgy": hymn - prayer of intercession – hymn - Bible reading - hymn - sermon - hymn - another video – final hymn – benediction, and closed with threefold Amen and organ postlude. After the service, the congregation, as usual, *ngumpul* in the hall for drinking coffee and tea with food.

After the event, the congregants went home to get ready for the Easter camp located in a beautiful beach called Shakespeare Bay, from Friday until Sunday. The Easter camp was an important event because it was the ultimate example of *ngumpul* and *makan-makan* for strengthening the bonding within this community. It was not only attended by younger

generations, but it was varied in the terms of age. On the last day (Sunday), they held an Easter service with a liturgy that was similar to the Indonesian congregation's Christmas service. This Easter camp was only attended by Indonesian congregations. Some did a round-trip every day, while some came and stayed there for the full three days. I had the opportunity to join the Easter camp on the last day as *Om Agus* picked me up from the city early Sunday morning.

On the way to the Easter camp, I talked a lot with *Om Agus* about his journey in finding Christ. He used to be a bad boy (*nakal*), he was a drunk, used his money for gambling and women, and became an illegal migrant in New Zealand. He stopped all of them and started to involve himself in the Church's activity after he married another Indonesian here. He did not want to be a bad role model for his child, instead encouraging his son to actively get involved in the church. He regretted his past but wisely told me that the past was part of yourself and you had to learn from it. Indeed, at the heart of Protestant autobiographies is theme of before and after: Jesus as saving people from sin. *Om Agus* became the musician of the church. He played musical instruments in every service to redeem himself, an effort to become more devout by getting himself involved to serve God in every Sunday and in every religious event. He was the one who always played Christian music from his playlist on the phone through loudspeakers, such as in the breakfast fellowship.

Other Online Activities (Bible Study and *Persekutuan Doa*)

There are two main online activities in St James: the Bible Study and *Persekutuan Doa* (Prayer Fellowship). In the Bible study, there was a certain theme from the Bible that congregants should discuss every week. In the beginning, the minister will lead the discussion by introducing the theme and the verses related to it. Then, someone would voluntarily read the verses. In the process, everyone had an opportunity to explain or to

provide views regarding the verses discussed. Apart from the Bible study, I also had the opportunity to observe prayer fellowship conducted on Zoom. The elders and each participant had opportunity to pray. Prayers varied from general prayers related to world conditions, to more specific ones for things such as health and healing for the members of the church. In both these events, there had to be an open section for everyone to give a testimony about the presence, the miracle, or the grace of God in their lives. Sometimes, in both these events, there was an open discussion in the end of the session to discuss anything. When two of the members travelled to Indonesia, people asked them to tell their experience in quarantine and their feelings of coming home.

The online activity at this church was a result of the COVID-19 pandemic when the New Zealand government implemented a lockdown for more than a month in early 2020 (later followed by other lockdowns). People living in a lockdown situation had to adjust to the new normal and rely on communication technology. The services were flexible; they could be watched not only during the live streaming, but also at other times when the congregants had free time (if they wanted, they could even watch it many times). In the live streaming, I saw that the number of congregants who attended “live” (based on the number of viewers at that time) was only a dozen. This might have been because people were not really familiar with the new form of service in the pandemic. Other congregants might not attend the service in the real-time because they could access the records the service later.

In an era where technology is extremely advanced, maintaining this kind of networking is not difficult. Even though immigrants are far from their homeland physically, they are connected to people in the home country through the digital space. People today have a wide variety of media that they can use interchangeably depending on affective and relational meanings or uses (Madianou and Miller 2012). Technology such as the internet provides us access to instant messages as well as international telephone and video calls

through different applications (including everyone's most recent favourite, Zoom). These technologies are the main ways immigrants maintain their relationship with their homeland (Adogame 2010:61-70). Communication with their family and friends in the host country provided the migrants with emotional aspects such as the feeling of closeness, even though they were separated geographically (Taloko et al 2020). Technology has become increasingly important for the migrant religious community during the recent COVID-19 pandemic.

Connecting this with the issue of belonging, I discovered that some congregants preferred online services with their congregation in Indonesia rather than St James, even after the lockdown. Andara said:

As long as my church in Indonesia has online services, I'll prefer to join them... I'm not really attached with the churches here.

I see this as related to the issues of belonging, since Andara felt that she did not belong and did not have a close relationship with the church of St James. In part, this was because Andara's roots and her sense of her future were still firmly in Indonesia; as a student, and therefore a transient immigrant, Andara had only been in Auckland for less than two years, during which time it had not been easy to build bonds with people in the church. And, as a temporary resident, the effort that community-building entails may not have seemed worthwhile. Andara's case exemplifies how rootedness as described by Malkki (1992:24), is very significant for some migrants. Even though from their own perspective they were living in a more prosperous, more organised, and safer country (in terms of discrimination) than their homeland, Andara still loved her homeland and felt she belonged there. This indicates that Andara's roots were so strong that she did not even think about looking for another home(land).

According to her friend, Andara was a very devout person who had extensive knowledge of Christianity. When I was about to interview Agustina, she said that Andara was

the most appropriate person to talk to. Andara and Agustina were both unusual students because most Christian students prefer to attend churches which are more pleasurable or enjoyable to them. One of their reasons was that the service at St James was like their churches in Indonesia. Furthermore, the minister and the sermons were very good, and seemed to answer the problems they were experiencing. They interpreted this experience as if God were speaking to them personally through the intermediary of the minister. Even so, Andara still felt that she did not belong to this church.

Her case indicates what some migrant scholars have called the alienating experience, the opposite of the theologizing experience. In such cases, immigrants acutely feel that they do *not* belong to a particular religious community even in contexts, such as this one, where congregations can seem ideally constituted for individuals such as them (Corrie 2014; Chapter 5).

Andara said that prior to the lockdown, she was very diligent at church, but after her church in Indonesia held an online service, she considered this as an opportunity to return to being active in her previous church. Since then, she was rarely seen at St James. The last time I saw her was on Christmas Eve when she told me that she felt attached emotionally to her church in Indonesia. She was involved in virtual and semi-virtual activities that her church in Indonesia carried out. These were not only routine virtual activities, but in her daily life Andara remained actively connected to her church's WhatsApp group in Indonesia. We could say that this kind of virtual environment made Andara feel that she belonged to her church in Indonesia even more, especially during the lockdown.

To conclude, I would emphasise that belonging and ritual behavior patterns are very important for those who are members of the double religious & ethnic minority in New Zealand. Some of them think their expectations are being met, but many are dealing with unfulfilled expectations, even though their rituals and customs in the church have changed, similar to what they had done in Indonesia.

Chapter Five

“They Become Like My Extended Family”: The Membership of an Immigrant Religious Community

*Their children will be mighty in the land;
the generation of the upright will be blessed.*
-Psalm 112:2

Religious communities are networks of social relations. That is why home is a place where we always belong: in connecting with the place we connect with our families and friends.

Perceiving a particular community as a home can also mean that people segregate themselves from others (Day and Rogaly 2014). In this chapter, I describe the significance of St James as an immigrant religious congregation in the lives of migrants, developing a sense of how members considered each other to be “family” and perceived this church as their home.

My study suggests at least three significant reasons why Christian immigrants chose to become members of the St James church family: (1) it served as a place of mutual support, including financial since, as immigrants, they were in similar situations. They placed value on mutual support (*tolong menolong*); (2) people recounted stories and nostalgia through *ngobrol* (chatting) and food. In community understandings, a good warm family is a group who share stories and memories; (3) the church was felt to be a “safe zone” for them as Indonesians and as Christians, an arena in which they did not just feel comfortable, but free to articulate their moral, ethical, religious practices, their sense of what a good world should be, and the nature of God.

The Church as a Place for Mutual Support

Several people said that the Indonesian congregation became their family when they first arrived in Auckland because they did not have family or friends in the city. Certainly, the community embraced them. Some felt welcomed by a sense of familiarity, that it was “like going to other churches in Indonesia.” In addition to this similarity of form, the congregation seek to enact connection. Thus, after Sunday services, they usually gathered in the hall to chat while enjoying cakes and cookies served with tea or coffee as a moment for *ngumpul* and *makan-makan*. These practices were understood as part of their tradition of ensuring of intimacy and solidarity (Winland 1994:39; see also Reimer et al 2016). That is, while they are, and were understood to be, traditional Indonesian practices, they were also seen as particularly important.

Gomes and Tan (2017) describe a similar practice/approach among Indonesian Christians in Singapore. In such foreign places, family, and friends, migrants seek social support, a sense of belonging, and to keep their identity. For Gomes & Tan, Indonesian churches provide a foundational identity, connecting them to and reminding them of home, as sense of being and connection created by the Indonesian-language service and the food which both sensorially evokes home and, shared, makes that home in Singapore (2017:231 – 232).

A religious community such as a church congregation may be very significant so far as it provides comfortable associations, close relationships, shared values and core social relationships. This may be even more the case for members of minority immigrant groups. Such faith networks can serve as their primary community identity (Nagata 2005; Winland 1994). Located in a foreign place, such networks are simultaneously transnational, linking

those with the same beliefs globally, as an imagined ecumene¹² (Farhadian 2017:2; Zhang 2015:188; Nagata 2005:100-101).

As a marker of a person's identity, faith becomes a bridge to others in the host country. In this case, when Indonesian Christians came to New Zealand, to an unexpectedly and disturbingly secular country, they found themselves confused. Who should they contact? Where should they go? They had no one to rely upon. So, they sought somewhere where they could rely on each other, and the church, especially the Indonesian church, welcomed them. It was the place that readily accepted religiously and ethnically. Once there, they found familiarity, including people who also believed in God, a spiritual and social welcome.

Migrants are caught in complex processes of responding to their new environment and coming to view their homeland from different perspectives (Nagata 2005:100; see also Winland 1994). Accordingly, For Nagata (2005), global transmigration 'profoundly remakes migrant identities. In the host country, their identities become more layered or multiple, available for situational deployment that provides the flexibility to move in and out of new and old situations (Farhadian 2015:6; Nagata 2005:121-124).

In Auckland, notably, individuals experienced a consolidated sense of being *Indonesian*. As I noted in Chapter Two, the St James members have diverse ethnic backgrounds in Indonesia. And in Indonesia, many of them came from a specific, often ethnically-based churches. However, in New Zealand, these differences were regarded as largely insignificant. When they introduced themselves to the church for the first time, rather than describing themselves as Chinese, Javanese, or Batakese, they said that they were Indonesians, reflecting ethnic identities, Asian or Indonesian, imposed by New Zealand's

12 In using this term, I draw on Anderson's (1983) concept of the imagined community. While Anderson focuses on the nation as imagined community, I suggest that, as is the case for Islam, for many Christians, their faith embeds them in a community that transcends the nation. In the case of immigrant congregations like Indonesian Christians in Singapore and New Zealand, their local Christian community embeds them locally, links them to home and makes them part of the global religion, expressing their ethnicity, their nationality, and their cosmopolitan belonging.

cultural patterning, as well as their sense that it was as Indonesians that they belonged together.

To some extent, identity is about self-definition, one's sense of oneself as a person. But this is always embedded in social interaction and one's sense of the wider society in which one finds oneself. Reflecting on my own experience as a temporary migrant, I found myself doing the same kind of thing: when I wanted to enter the church. I defined myself as a researcher and Indonesian, laying out the grounds on which I hoped to be accepted.

Over time, as Nagata has suggested, our experiences in the shared congregation lent new perspectives to our sense of Indonesia. Several of my interlocutors told me that, although the Chinese and Christians often experienced discrimination in Indonesia, they now felt that living there had not been as bad as they had thought. Rather than simply being aware of the constraints and occasional dangers they faced there, for example, they noted that they had been free to express their critical position that LGBTQ+ relationships are not part of Christian teachings because almost all religiously minded Indonesians agree on this. But in New Zealand, they could not do this openly because of its widespread acceptance and the definition of their attitudes as homophobia. Here, they felt silenced: it was to be avoided.¹³ Some were even critical of those churches that fully support LGBTQ+ people by allowing them take active part in church life or enabling them to become ministers. Still, against such new attitudes to the homeland, and their sense of having new identities, people felt a need to maintain their connections with, and identities in, with other contexts; they did not wish to become entirely new kinds of people.

¹³ While it is true that the queer rights continue to be debated within the churches and wider society, the St James congregants almost all felt that the weight of disapproval fell on those who opposed LGBTQ+ rights and, quite strongly, that opposition was the appropriate stance.

According to Nagata, beyond its place in developing and honing people's sense of themselves, church membership links migrants to helpful practical and material possibilities (2005:115; Winland 1994:39; Reimer 2016:507 – 508; Sadouni 2013:56). While in New Zealand, most migrants face the same problems: being away from family, and friends, facing unanticipated costs and feeling uncertain, vulnerable and insecure. They never know what tomorrow would bring. The Indonesians could imagine, that if, for instance, *Kak Naomi* had financial problems today, maybe *Kak Lulu* would face something similar tomorrow. People are often haunted by worries such as financial and family concerns or of being victims of crimes like *Tante Annette* (Chapter Four). Some had to deal with expired or expiring visas and the inefficient, complex New Zealand bureaucratic requirements and processes entailed. *Kak Naomi*, for example, struggled with her residency for approximately ten years before she and her family finally received permanent resident status. She described it as the most troubled time in her life, a period when she needed lots of help from others.

Kak Naomi, told me about her family's visa expiring, waiting for the new one. During that time, they were not allowed to work and, having no income, their burden increased when she became pregnant. The sense of community in St James which treated all of the congregants as family members, and their religious as well as Indonesian principle of helping others, were prominent in her account. In this very difficult time, congregation members provided substantial help, some gave staple food and money, others provided the ingredients to make traditional food that she could sell informally. Such mutual help and togetherness reinforced her sense of congregation as family. As *Kak Lulu* put it, "because I don't have family here, they become like my extended family."

The classificatory use "family" (*keluarga*) profoundly evokes Indonesian senses of the proper closeness of kin, something that goes beyond friendship. Family is the centre of the community in most Indonesian regions, where people live in a very big extended family,

neighbours are often closely related and, in many rural areas, villages and even small towns are largely constituted of kin. Family members are expected to protect, nurture, support, and take care of each other. Such classificatory terminology is commonly used of those to whom people are very close. To introduce someone as family or by saying “s/he is like my own family” (*dia sudah seperti keluarga sendiri*) or “s/he is like my own child/father/mother” is, in a real sense, to constitute them as *like* your mother or whoever and, as such, as truly family. Meanwhile, the word “friend” (*teman*) describes someone who is not really close as a family. It is a very general term that can cover acquaintances and colleagues. For instance, in Indonesians, the word “colleague” is often translated into “*teman kerja*” (friends in workplace). No other term can describe such closeness and intimacy as the word “family.” It evokes a sense of no longer feeling the differences between themselves and others.

The mutual help that *Kak Naomi* explained extends to others who need it. Indonesian Christians with whom I worked understood as a form of hospitality. I often heard this discussed by ministers and others in the church. While it is widely understood to be a core part of Christian teachings more generally, it was also habitual and part of the congregation’s sense of identity as *Indonesian* Christians. The minister once brought this up in a sermon on how we can present ourselves before God. One way, he said, was to provide hospitality for anyone who needs help. Such hospitality implies devotion to God, becoming a “servant” of God. The minister described this as how we receive people who come to our homes by providing a place to live and linked it to migration. When someone comes from outside the region and needs help, he said, then we should embrace that person, providing our own place an option for them to stay.

A notable subtheme here is that of striving to make everyone feel comfortable. By this is refer to a feeling of accepting everyone and not being bothered by someone’s presence. Everyone knew that being abroad, away from family and friends, was hard; accordingly,

mutual support was crucial. This circle of those who embraced each other constructed a place in which to be at home; somewhere of ease and comfort, a place that might imitate or even replicate the place they had in Indonesia. A place is “home” if those around them can be perceived as “family”.

Recollections and Nostalgia: The Importance of *Ngobrol*

The church was also home because there, people could share stories and memories. Is home not supposed to be like that, the best place for sharing anything? One day, *Tante Annette*, sent me a video of a national song called “*Tanah Airku*” (My Homeland).

*“Tanah airku tidak kulupakan
Kan terkenang selama hidupku
Biar pun saya pergi jauh
Tidak kan hilang dari kalbu
Tanahku yang kucintai
Engkau kuhargai*

*“My homeland, I will never forget it
Will be remembered forever in my life
Even though I go far away
Never will it disappear from my heart
My land that I love
You are appreciated*

*Walaupun banyak negeri kujalani
Yang mahsyur permai di kata orang
Tetapi kampung dan rumahku
Di sanalah aku rasa senang
Tanahku tak kulupakan
Engkau kubanggakan”*

*Even though I visit lots of famous and scenic
countries in the words of people,
But my hometown and my house,
Only there I feel happy,
My land will not forget,
I am proud of you.¹⁴*

Guy (2008) convincingly shows how music expresses structures of feeling. Singing patriotic songs in social movements, for instance, evoke the feelings of collectiveness. This song was often played on Mondays in school, in events related to the national days, and in demonstrations, rallies, or in university student-led social movements. When she sent it to me, *Tante Annette* said that she was missing Indonesia (using a crying emoji). For her, like me, this song evokes nostalgia. She explained that if she missed Indonesia, she always listened to this song. I often found something similar among other Indonesian immigrants:

¹⁴ See the rendition here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Alz6vY1fe0>;
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3TpU4FOSV_I

when they heard this song, they felt nostalgic and would fall to reminiscing about their childhood or youth.

What she remembered the most was being a university student in Indonesia in the 1960s. At that time, she was quite a nationalist campus activist and. Together with her fellow students, she often ran demonstrations against government policy that they thought that would not bring prosperity and social justice for the people. One notable demonstration during this era was the one that led to the first president of Indonesia leaving office and to the disbanding of Indonesia Communist Party (PKI) in 1966.

It was also during that time that people affiliated with PKI became targets of violence, including Chinese because they were considered communists or Chinese spies. *Tante Annette* told me that although there were sometimes cases of discrimination and violence against Chinese and Christian minorities, she always forgave those who directed it against her. But, in the demonstrations, her fellow students were open-minded and never questioned her minority status, appreciating her as an activist in a shared society.

She remembered those days as a time when she and her friends carried the voice of the people, a happy memory for her. And when she listened to the song, she felt it expressed her feelings for Indonesia, evoking her patriotic feeling, as well as the times when it was played in demonstrations when she and other students sang along and raised the Indonesian flag. For her, the song shows how beautiful and how precious her homeland is, a place she would like to protect or make into a better country. For her, Indonesia is where she used to contribute, the place where she helped underprivileged people through her privileges as a student, the country that, although she has been in New Zealand for a long time, never left her heart. Although she really loved Indonesia, she had to leave the country for her child. She did not want her only child to experience the similar situation that she had.

My important point is not just about the song, but also about *Tante Annette's* actions. I had interviewed her the day before she sent me the video and this prompted her to send me the video to more effectively communicate her feelings about Indonesia in ways that she could not quite say with words. I also saw it as an act of sharing with a fellow Indonesian, a sense of solidarity as Indonesian migrants in New Zealand. She had cried in the middle of the interview when she talked about poverty in Indonesia. She told stories about when she was still a psychology student and had to undertake research with poor people. At that time she saw a poor child with a bunch of rice in his hand. Suddenly, the rice fell from his hand while he looked at *Tante Annette's* face. His mother told him to take the rice that was on the soil now. *Tante Annette* just could not handle the scene that she experienced because it was too sad for her.

It was after telling this story that *Tante Annette* said that the country remained part of her and that she always missed it. Despite the tragedy of this episode, her memories of meeting and helping other Indonesians are, for her, memories of good times when she felt herself making worthwhile contributions, a time she wished she could return to.

Reflecting on *Tante Annette's* story raises a question about relationships between transnationalism and memory, particularly nostalgia. Nostalgia initially explicitly referenced a (medicalised) homesickness, (Foyer 2006:364) has come to refer more widely to an essentially temporal sense of loss and longing beyond the geographical focus of earlier accounts, (Silva 2014:127). As Bandyopadhyay' (2018) observes, people experience nostalgia when the beautiful past keeps haunting them, forcing them to look back to the "place" once again (2018:254). For *Tante Annette*, all her contributions and activism on behalf of others were beautiful memories that she really wished repeat but time and place make that impossible. She lives in New Zealand and she is not as energetic as when she was

still at university and this good past haunts her. And even if she returns to Indonesia, she will never be able to really return in the place that home has become.

The contemporary stress on nostalgia as referring to a longing for something or somewhere to which it is impossible to return (Foyer 2006; Silva 2014) presents it as evoking a temporal, rather than physical place. But, in the context of migration and transnationalism, place again becomes a prominent element of nostalgia, alongside the temporal stress on then (longed for but past) and now (lived, but with at least some dissatisfaction). Indonesian Christian immigrants not only missed the country or their hometown, but people and memories of periods far in their pasts: when they were still children, when they were in high school, when their friends were still their best friends (because sometimes best friends can become strangers), or when their parents were alive. They could technically return to their hometown anytime – most of them had enough money to have a round trip every year – but even in their hometown they would not have returned to the where/when for which they longed and about which they reminisced. And, for many, in the middle of COVID-19 pandemic, it was difficult or impossible to even return to Indonesia as it is today.

Their nostalgia, then, was simultaneously about place and time. Their hometown was still their hometown, but it is different and will never be the same again. The place they wanted to return to exists in the shadows of the past, and remembering those places (and the specific times and situations) is one way to cure the nostalgia (Bijl 2013:131). *Tante Annette* encapsulates this nostalgia.

Even though we're in the far place, we feel Indonesia is our homeland. The feeling is always here... For those who grew up there, how can we eradicate that feeling? I came here when I was 40 [30 years ago], I spent my life for almost a-half century there. So, it's impossible. Our past is ours. What's "the past"? Our friends, our family, our places, our homeland, our food, etcetera, so it's impossible. They are memories that are impossible to forget.

We can see how *Tante Annette* defined "the past" as equivalent to "the place".

Although the past could not be forgotten, much of it is now unattainable. She could still

afford Indonesian dishes (she always made them at home and shared them with others, including me), but she could not meet with her parents, other family members, and her friends who had died recently. Her loss and longing transcended the practical facts partly because of the extent to which the remembered time and place is an idealisation, even a fantasy, partly because home constantly changes while the migrant is away so it becomes a foreign place even if one is able to return.

Smith (1978), like others, notes how migrants romanticise their memories.

Loneliness, the romanticizing of memories, the guilt for imagined desertion of parents and other relatives, and the search for community and identity in a world of strangers all began the moment the nearest range of hills shut out the view of the emigrant's native valley. Longing for a past that could not be recovered intensified the emotional satisfaction of daring to hope for a better future. Separation from both personal and physical associations of one's childhood community drew emotional strings taut ... At such moments, the concrete symbols of order or hope that the village church and priest and the annual round of religious observances had once provided seemed far away... (1978:1174)

Smith's point about the relationship between migration and the level of religiosity intertwines with *Tante Annette's* account. The longing for the unreachable place in the past creates an emotional feeling that cannot be satisfied; rather, it becomes more intense. We can see this from *Tante Annette's* story about how she defines the past and how she cannot forget it. Among all my participants, *Tante Annette* was one of the most devout Christians. She was very active in all the events that the church held. In Bible study, she always passionately asked for clarifications on Biblical verses. She always started interviews and lunch by saying "let's pray first". She led with a very generic prayer, not specifically mentioning Jesus Christ or God the Father, just saying God to include me in the prayer, an act of inclusiveness and respecting my faith.

Tante Annette's quote above also highlights a core element of migrants' accounts of their past lives and their efforts to sustain ties to those pasts: food. Indeed, food was very important for this community. Whenever I asked people about the value of this church to them, they mentioned food. There was food in every situation and every event was also a feast.

Even on Good Friday, a day of Christian mourning when many fast, they still had food. They had breakfast together every Saturday with lots of food. And in every Sunday service, they had coffee and tea, and sometimes, there was also food.

Other than the people, food is what migrants notably miss from home although it is quite easy to find in Auckland. Food is an effective mnemonic that simultaneously expresses and partly ameliorates nostalgia (Mannur 2009 and Moffat, Mohammed, and Newbold 2017). Congregation members tended to cook Indonesian dishes when they most missed home, what Mannur (2009) refers to as “culinary citizenship,” a state that grants migrants the ability to articulate national identity through food (Mannur 2009: 19-20). There are two significant elements to *makan-makan*: the process of strengthening relationships with in the congregation and the experience of nostalgia, both through the medium of food.

Permanent and temporary immigrants experienced nostalgia differently, with the former particularly experiencing a sense of loss. COVID-19 exacerbated this nostalgia by creating a greater sense of distance from home and uncertainty about when they might return. Home became literally unattainable. Those with resident permits or New Zealand citizenship simply might not return for visits as they had in past years. Even if they could, they had to consider the spread of COVID-19 in Indonesia and would have to pay extra money for quarantine on returning to New Zealand. This might have been even more acute for temporary immigrants who had to postpone their return home to an undetermined time while living “neither here nor there” since they are never here, in the sense of being really at home (Adogame 2010:58).

Christian immigrants did not cut ties with their homeland, especially if their past was constantly remembered every week at the Sunday services. At every opportunity after services, they told stories about Indonesia: memories of the past, family conditions, and their plans for the future. They also often actively discussed the hot issues in Indonesia, such as

politics and natural disasters. In fact, during prayer in every service, they prayed often for the condition of Indonesia.

During the communal prayer in every Indonesian service, the congregation prayed for New Zealand, where they lived, and for Indonesia, their first, and for some, only, home. They considered both as “*negara kami*” (our nation), and they prayed for the New Zealand and the Indonesian government. They had to maintain this kind of relationship, not only because of their sense of rootedness and belonging in both places, but also because they might return to their homeland one day and when they returned, they would not need to start all over again because they had built and maintained communication and networking (Levitt and Jaworsky 2007:136).

This was the experience of *Om* Paul. He was one of those who often talked about Indonesia. One day in the middle of my research, he suddenly had to return there with his wife because his mother-in-law was sick. They resigned from their jobs in New Zealand. Luckily, he still had good relations in Indonesia so that while there they were fine socially and financially. St James Church often sent church donations to foundations in Indonesia, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic. They realised that Indonesia was one of the countries that had bad cases of COVID-19 and they wanted to help. *Om* Paul coordinated several St James charity projects in Indonesia. His position as a mediator with people there kept him actively connected with them.

Many the St James Indonesian congregation said that they visited their families in Indonesia almost every year before the pandemic. Some of them still sent money to their families in Indonesia as an expression of responsibility and love. Some of them were labour migrants who went to New Zealand to find work, either as skilled or unskilled labour. This is also one of the reasons why they chose New Zealand as a destination country: so they could work in New Zealand and have a better life. Most of the congregants were those who decided

to achieve permanent residency so that they could raise a family or bring their family in Indonesia to New Zealand. A few of them were also students or temporary residents. Sending money to families in the home country reflects the transnational moral economy of kinship, in which migrants prioritise their families in financial matters through the process of collecting resources in the host country (Levitt and Jaworsky 2007:133 – 136).

This international interconnection was not restricted to kin connections. As I mentioned above, St James church also sent donations to some communities. Such cases exemplify the simultaneity of multi-layered transnational social fields and international interconnections which give birth to the interconnected multiple identities and relationships (Levitt and Jaworsky 2007:130; see also Adogame 2010). While I have noted how migrants, as immigrants, can experience a sense of being neither here nor there, such connections can also place them in a simultaneous "here-and-there" position. Rather than just leaving their past (including their identities, roles, and responsibilities), they carry it to their host country (Muhidin and Utomo 2015:95; McGavin 2017:129) and their actions carry their host country presence back home.

For example, some congregants in St James, continued to help their family in Indonesia, sending money to sustain them. Others remained members of Indonesian congregations or retained membership of organisations there. Most of the people here, like *Om Paul*, here exemplify these situations.

“A Safe Zone” for Identity and Faith (Rise Against Secularism!)

Research on migrant Christian communities found that some of the members of the community feel relieved and happy in finding churches or other Christians while away from home, perceiving Christianity as an emotional anchor (Gomes and Tan 2017).

Some scholars argue, following Smith (1989), that migration tends to be theologizing and others arguing the contrary, that it is more likely to alienate people from their religion. Smith's conceptualization of migration as a "theologizing experience" was based on a particular period of specifically American migration (1978; Cho 2018). According to his model, they build a religious community or re-establish as one as a way of establishing a safely as well as familiar cultural and social life. As he put it:

Separation from both personal and physical associations of one's childhood community drew emotional strings taut ... At such moments, the concrete symbols of order or hope that the village church and priest and the annual round of religious observances had once provided seemed far away ... Migration was often a theologizing experience – just as it had been when Abraham left the land of his fathers, when the people of the Exodus followed Moses into the wilderness, and when Jeremiah urged the exiles who wept by the rivers of Babylon to make the God of their past the hope of their future (Smith 1978:1174 – 1175)

For Smith (1978), it is almost a necessity for migrants, in their new and alien, and sometimes hostile, environments, to seek to return to or better understand God, perhaps through sad experiences that they interpreted as a test from God, or through the ease in life that they interpreted as a blessing. The Bible analogy that Smith brings is very apposite to his argument: Abraham found God when he left his Father's land and devotion of Moses' followers succeeded his numerous miracles in exodus.

Smith's claims are echoed by some of the St James congregants who revealed that they became more devout in the land far away from home. Like Abraham, they found God when they left home; they, like the followers of Moses, lived in the wilderness but still received lots of miracles or grace from God. How is it that people living in a largely environment came to be more devout rather than more flexible or lax in practicing Christianity? Congregants, particularly Bintang, *Kak Lulu*, and *Om Alex*, often mentioned that although religious freedom is highly valued in New Zealand, there are strong currents of liberalisation and secularisation and they worried that it may erode their own faith, and, especially, that the younger generation (see also, Engelke 2014).

Van Dijk and Botros (2009) argue that migration's theologizing effect results from people's sense of that religious institutions are necessary to reproduce their culture, to pass on their heritage and religion to the next generation, as well as to integrate newcomers, and negotiate and construct religious identity (2009:192). For congregants, this sense of responsibility for reproduction and reconstruction was part of God's plan. *Om* Alex explained that since God had already put them in New Zealand, now they just had to live according to His plan. They must live as best they could and take the positive from whatever God sent them. For some, migration was indeed a theologizing experience. In connection with this, I would return to Leek's claim, that if people feel alienated and confused in a strange world, God is the one that they would turn their face to (Leek 2005:218).

However, some scholars criticise Smith's argument, noting that not all migrants experience that kind of deeper religious commitment. Indeed, Smith's claims are based on a narrow focus and thin cultural analysis. His work is primarily focused on relatively distant history, dating back to early America, a time when secular society was largely unthinkable. That may partially explain the rather one-sided nature of his article. He is, after all, a theologian working with biblical stories and narratives, drawing conclusion from the analogy, not based on the people's real-life experiences.

Nonetheless, this does not mean that migration is never theologizing; rather, this is a possibility, as I show above. The major critique of Smith consists of a similarly simplistic claim that migration is, in general, more likely to be alienating or secularizing. That is, Smith's critics tend to posit an either-or relationship between migration and religion that similarly forecloses on the sense that migration may be associated with diverse outcomes. For instance, what about the asylum seekers, like the Syrian refugees? Or what about Muslim migrants in Europe on the receiving end of protests from European nationalist movements?

Here, religion can be strengthened as a mode and expression of resistance to oppression (Cho 2018).

Massey and Higgins (2010) contra Smith and others, argue that migrant's experiences are prone to alienation from religion. The balancing concept of "alienating experience" responds to what the theologizing experience hypothesis does not cover. It provides another explanation of migrants' religiosity in diaspora. It finds that migration is often an alienating experience among underprivileged migrants, such as refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons (IDP), and undocumented residents (Cho 2018). Such migrants may be alienated by their new alien religious environment, new obligations, economic insecurity, time taken to learn language, having to struggle with how to manage their new life. Such migrants can feel that they do not belong, detached from their religion. Illegal residents, for example, limit their interactions because of concerns that the more exposure they have, the more likely the state authorities will discover them, leading to their deportation.

While, by definition, my focus on an explicitly religious community precludes most who might have experienced a sense of religious alienation, there was a sense of its possibility. Van Dijk and Botros (2009) explain that although some people are become more religious overseas, they may also experience a weakening of their religiosity and spirituality when religious conditions in the host country are totally different from what they have in their homeland. This may be because they are now in a place that tends to be more secular, like New Zealand, than at home, where religious norms were a guideline for everyday life, as in Indonesia. Such shift[s] in religious self-consciousness, triggered by conditions in the host country, can lead people to question their previously taken for granted religious attitudes (Geertz 1968; Habti 2014; and Vertovec 1999). In the host country, they might not be able to follow their habitual religious practices or may begin to moderate their "blind faith" (Habti 2014:151; Vertovec 1999:10-11; see also Buijs 2013). Geertz claims that people experiencing

this shift of religious consciousness have changed their primary question from “what shall I believe?” to “how shall I believe it?”; “do I believe?”; and “what do I believe” (1968:61).

Massey and Higgins argue that:

Although people do not change their religious beliefs when they migrate internationally, they do change their religious behaviours. Settling into a country of destination is necessarily a time-consuming process that involves learning a new language, mastering a strange culture, and working hard to earn money and get ahead economically, activities that necessarily compete with religious practice for the scarce time at immigrants’ disposal. (2010:1387)

The data from their sociological and statistical research show that “time” was also important, with religious activities coming to be considered peripheral. Religious communities do not only offer spiritual needs for the migrants, but also provide lots of non-religious social, psychological, and material benefits, such as educational resources, networks, opportunities, trust, and moral support (Leek 2005:219). For Massey and Higgins (2010), even people who go to church frequently are not necessarily devout. For some, religious organisations and relationships are more important in fulfilling their social needs, like meeting with other nationals, or for more practical or pragmatic purposes, such as gaining a letter of support for visa application, or as in my study, socializing through food.

Massey and Higgins focus on practical needs. But religion is often or usually practised despite the competing demands of everyday life, an effort that people make. For members of a congregation like St James, or my own mosque, it is, precisely, a matter of commitment. People often think that there is no better community to belong to than religious communities as an important source of morality. Thus, committing themselves into a religious institution such as churches is an act of ensuring themselves to be morally right and in reach of the ultimate salvation (Day and Rogaly 2014).

Indeed, in the host country, people often have to, and do, dedicate extra time and energy to practice their faith. Abdullah (2010), for example, described how African Muslims

in Harlem had to struggle to pray five times a day (some prayed under the stairs in the basement of their office) because their work did not allow them to practice their ritual.

Some of the St James members experienced analogous situations. Agustina, for example, wanted to be involved in the church's musical performances every Sunday and in every important event such as Christmas. But she pointed out that being a musician was very tiring. She should, at least, practice several times in a week (usually every Saturday and Sunday for a few hours) in order to perform better. One day, she reached her breaking point. She felt unable to attend every practice and did not want to be so active as a musician anymore because she was overwhelmed by many university assignments, and other jobs (internships and part-time jobs). On the one hand, she wanted to become a church musician to get closer to God, but on the other hand, she had to sacrifice her time for university and work. Obligations, she felt, made it impossible for her to fully perform her faith. She had to finish her studies within the time stipulated by her scholarship, so she had to really focus on it.

Given that religion is inseparable from the social lives we lead, there is obviously a complex dialectical relationship between one's circumstances and one's faith than allowed by a simple claim that people do or do not become more or less religious or that they do or do not change their behaviours rather than their beliefs. A core problem with the whole debate about whether migration leads to a deepening or lightening of religious commitment lies in an impoverished understanding of that dialectic or the complicated nature of interaction between self and social circumstances so that, while people may share some experiences and circumstances, they do not all respond in the same way but as experiencing individuals. It also seems to leave out consideration of the different circumstances that people leave (class, cultural, political, status, etc.) as well as the different places they arrive at and the circumstances into which they arrive and how they arrive (voluntary individuals, large or

small or no cultural communities of their own kind, refugees, unwelcomed or welcomed, and so on).

This thesis does not try to resolve these debates but to suggest something that ethnographic accounts can offer. Christian immigrants have diverse experiences in the host country. Since I did research on a religious community where the members were very devout, my thesis captures something of how migration can contribute to a deepening of faith. And, to a limited extent, I discerned an element of lessening faith (see for example Cho 2018, Corrie 2014, Massey and Higgins 2010, Van Dijk and Botros 2009, Leek 2005, and Warner and Wittner 1998). A few members found that the secular environment degraded their faith, but some found the “true” Christianity that they had been seeking for a long time, such as the story of Bahagia. To some extent, their state of faith was quite contradictory. Sometimes, they said "oh, this secular environment makes me realise the importance of God," but on the other hand, they also said "oh, this current environment makes me far from God." Some aspects of their lives bring them closer to God; others distract or lead them away.

For example, Agustina and other members told me about their experiences hanging out with their non-Christian friends while their parents in Indonesia did not watch them, they would tend to be carried away by the environment and commit sins such as committing adultery. They embraced, and were embraced by, the secular community, tempting them away from the Christian community in which they were involved. However, when they were in church or when they met fellow congregants, they would realise that they had been acting contrary to the values of the church. At this point, they thought that this secular environment had kept them away from God, and they were obliged to seek redemption since they believed that it was the God’s plan to place them in this secular country. In their turn to God, they experienced the theologizing process.

Fesenmyer (2020) reports a similar tendency among Kenyan Christians in London who give meanings to the migration in the United Kingdom as a “mission” to make the United Kingdom back into the Kingdom of God. *Om Alex* explained these contending forces on Christians in New Zealand. According to him, their position as a minority in a secular society must be seen from a positive point of view. Even though New Zealand is a secular country, God had a reason for placing Indonesian congregants in St James:

Secularism is also a problem, but I always tell people to see from different point of view. We have to see the positive... God has a plan in putting us here in New Zealand. As an example, the candle will burn bright in the dark room rather than in a room with lots of lamps. So that's the metaphor. We are the candles.

Worries and concerns about loss of faith are not notably addressed in the debate between advocates of theological and alienating experience arguments. Did anxieties about alienation mean that individuals were experiencing alienation or perhaps undergoing a theologizing experience? When they tried to give meaning to their situation or environment that had the potential to alienate them, did that mean they were undergoing a theologizing process?

The fact that some immigrants are afraid of their faith weakening makes religious communities such as churches and congregations the perfect places to maintain their faith. Here, the church is a home that protects them from a secular world (Van Dijk and Botros 2009:205). In this context, individuals tended to move, or even oscillate, between degrees of alienation and religion deepening. Some experienced elements of alienation and, over time, may be lost to the church; others, though, quickly returned to God.

Certainly, living in a secular society was difficult for Christian migrants. There were many challenges they had to live with, one of which was the state of their faith. But these challenges mainly arose from differences in views about how the rules in the Bible pertained to personal issues. They had to take a stand on whether to defend their faith by resisting temptation, or to give up and follow the temptation that their secular environment allowed.

For example, based on their particular denomination, a Christian may not get drunk, and they cannot smoke or get tattoos because they have to take care of the body, a "temple of God" (*bait Allah*). But these are common in New Zealand, leading to fears that they were becoming less devout because they were not supported by the environment.

However, even though their environment was considered unsupportive of their faith, there were also those who felt more devout since they felt they had found God and were increasingly aware of the importance of religious life in a secular society. Those who were worried that the secularism would erode their faith therefore tried their best to remain devout. They expressed self-doubt; doubted themselves and their own faith but saw the church as a place where they refreshed their faith; where they constantly reminded each other about good deeds and wrongdoing so that they remained on the stand of faith.

These things are in line with the arguments of several scholars (see Leek 2005, for instance) that it is important for migrants to be in their community, surrounded by people with the same ideas and faith. In the world where they are socially alienated and confused, God is the one that they could turn their face to, seeking faith or guarding it by trying to maintain devotion (Leek 2005:218). *Kak Naomi* also described her fear of secularism and the importance of returning to God and being a member of a religious community. Along with most of the people in the church (see also *Kak Lulu's* account in the previous chapter), she worried about the increasingly widespread influence of LGBTQ+ acceptance and their children's futures far from the church and God.

I'm afraid [of living here to some extent]. The government legalised gay married, that's a sin... And you can live together with your partner even before marriage, for me no sex before marriage, that's the major rule in the family. There's a law about it [in Christianity]. It's a sin because we cannot control our lust... I hope my children will be active here [in the Church] and feel comfortable since it's very good for their development. I hope they will make friends here at church that have a good [religious] background [in the sense of religiosity] so they do not lose their faith. That's why you have to protect your children with prayer. (*Kak Naomi*)

It is clear that religious institutions in the middle of a secular environment are significant for the continuation of religious knowledge, norms, and values to be mediated and negotiated (Bendixsen 2013:99; Adogame 2010; Yharrola 2012). These religious institutions protect their faith. They provide a place where migrants “refresh” their faith because the people there, especially religious leaders such as priests or imams will remind them about the religious values and they will be supported in adhering to it by the wider congregation’s practice.

In addition, religious institutions affiliated with one particular country become a place for them to connect and stay in touch, treat their homesickness by chatting and arousing feelings of nostalgia (see also McGavin 2017). I will end this chapter with a quote from Agustina regarding the significance of becoming a member in this religious community:

The church is not about the building, but it’s the people. A place where we can strengthen our faith together, take care each other.

Chapter Six

In (Re)Searching and (Re)Constructing “Home”: A Conclusion

*I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last,
the Beginning and the End*
-Revelation 22:13

Nationality, Identity, and Rootedness

It was a winter night in 2021 when, walking through Auckland city to catch a bus, someone phoned me. I did not recognise the number, but answered, anyway. I said "*assalamualaikum*" (peace be upon you), assuming it was a friend's number. Usually, people will return greetings with "*waalaikumsalam*" (and upon you, be peace). But what I heard was the words "hello, good evening, it is me, *Tante Gloria*", I then realised that it was someone from the church. She asked how I was doing because I had not been seen there for two weeks. *Tante Gloria* and her husband thought that I was sick or had returned to Indonesia without telling the church.

Receiving the call, I was deeply touched. It showed that although I am a Muslim, a member of what is often thought of as an opposing religion, the members of the community had embraced me to the point that I had become partially of them. I remembered that at the beginning of my research, *Tante Gloria* told me that it did not matter whether I was a Christian: so long as I was an Indonesian, they would accept me. My status changed from stranger to friend because they tended to seek grounds of commonality in embracing people who came to the church. Despite their inclusivity, identities such as nationalities and religions mattered. So, in my case, the emphasis was on my nationality as an Indonesian. By contrast, when non-Indonesians came to the congregation, the churchgoers took similarity in religion

as a form of common identity and as a way for the church to embrace the people who came there.

One day after Sunday service, *Om* Soeharto and his wife invited me to a mini restaurant run by a Muslim called *Tante* Aisyah from Bima, a Muslim-majority city in Eastern Indonesia. Every Sunday, *Tante* Aisyah turns her garage into a restaurant that serves Indonesian specialties. The *Tante* told me that she did not really know many people when she came to New Zealand 20 years ago. She only knew a few Indonesians and not all of them were Muslim. During those times, she often went to St James to be with Indonesians and they welcomed her on the grounds of their shared nationality, much as they had me.

But why is nationality so important? Homeland itself evokes those two complex, nostalgic words: “home” and “land”, both tied to the sense of needing rootedness, a sense of not just coming from, or being in a place, but of being tied to place. Immigrants from the same “(home)land” are from the same roots (Malkki 1992:24). In a host country, finding others from the same homeland is like finding part of their “homeland”, continuing to belong there as well as in the new place. Malkki’s roots metaphor suggests depth, being established, firmly in place; it provides a further sense of longevity, lastingness. And, so far as they can be transplanted, they also evoke a sense of awareness of coming from elsewhere. Moreover, particularly germane to Malkki but also relevant to migration more generally, depending on the circumstances of migration, the extent to which it is desired or in/voluntary, it can evoke significant loss—being uprooted, separated from the soil of one’s belonging, or longing for the lost.

It Feels Like “Home”

Although religion and nationality were pivotal, this did not mean that the church door was completely closed to non-Christians or non-Indonesians. Anyone was welcome, even if they

were godless. The church would also be open to those who needed help, including financial problems. *Om Alex* told me that if someone entered the church and asked for help, for example, if their car ran out of gas and they needed money, the church would be happy to help.

Throughout this thesis, I have addressed how Indonesian Christians perceived the church community as family and seek to construct home here while partially reconstructing home afar, united through both their shared Indonesian-ness and their fellowship and commitment to Christ. On the one hand, they invited other Christians to join this community, making a family through Christianity. On the other hand, they made an Indonesian (Christian) community through Christianity: in their shared worship, in the church space, and in linking their sociality to their church through the key embodied and symbolic idiom of sharing food.

Efforts to reconstruct home were reflected in several things that I have described, particularly in efforts to make this community familiar: developing expressively similar liturgies, embracing one another (as in *ngumpul*), and making or serving Indonesian food (as in *makan-makan*). At its best it was, as they said, “like having worship in Indonesia.”

The warm and embracing attitude of the elders and people in St James made almost everyone feel cared for, as if by a family of elders, siblings, aunts, and uncles. A family for them was a place where they found warmth, far from the alienation of an unknown place and the apparently cold secular world. Related to this warm attitude, some participants also felt comfortable because there was no judging, gossip, and bad stories that could lead to conflicts. In short, there was no excessive drama like that in other communities they joined before.

Certainly, when *Bintang* lived in a city in the South Island, he found little comfort since Indonesian people there often gossiped and slandered him. Indeed, that was one reason

he decided to move to Auckland. Now, warmly ensconced, he told me that he never heard anyone gossip or defame others.

While this may seem just too warm and fuzzy, it is certainly the case that I never once heard gossip or criticism of others. This is particularly notable given the potential to use the safe, confidential context of interviews to openly criticise others, express dissent or try to position oneself favourably against others, as I found in previous research. But my participants in the St James church did not use this opportunity to gossip about other people. This absence contributed substantially to making St James a place comfort and security. Is it not the function of the home to provide comfort and safety? Of course, it is also possible that my axis of difference, as member of the privileged Muslim majority at home, might have limited their openness on some things; or that their awareness that I wrote about them and concerned to represent their community well through this thesis may have had similar effects. But, over time, I was increasingly invisible, an unmarked member of the community that consistently enacted warmth, welcome and intimacy towards each other and reflected it in both formal interview-type situations and in the small gestures of everyday life in the church.

Food was one central component of everyone's recollection and sense of being Indonesian and being at home in St James. Almost everyone I interviewed mentioned this; *Om* Paul was one of them. He told me how the food attracted him to St James at first and made him come to church again and again, until years later he became an elder. It became the turn for him and his family to provide the food that made new people (such as students) attracted and feel at home at St James church, like him at first.

"The taste is so good. So good that it's like you want to die because of it," said Agustina one day while tasting the Indonesian food she ate at church. This was not just about taste, but an acute expression of her sense of visceral connection to her family in Indonesia, with whom she had once eaten similar food at church events there. This *makan-makan* not

only evoked nostalgia as scholars have suggested (Mannur 2009 and Moffat, Mohammed, and Newbold 2017), but became one of the moments of warmth of the family because basically, *makan-makan* is also a *ngumpul* moment, and vice versa. Scholars have described this kind of tendency as "gathering in the diaspora" (Van Dijk and Botros 2009:193; Winland 1994:39), highlighting migrants' desires for familiarity (religion in this case) and rootedness (homeland in my thesis), leading them to embrace each other in an alien world.

The things I described above were what migrants did overseas in efforts to partially feel familiarity and feel at home (Bruner 1961). These religious institutions help the adaptive and integrative process of immigrants in the new environment. They become a place to keep in touch, ameliorate homesickness by chatting and sharing memories, including nostalgic ones (McGavin 2017).

In (Re)Searching for "Home"

Even though the people in this church have tried to create something like home, a small number of people felt they did not really belong. Andara, for example, rarely attended any St James church activities. Before the COVID-19 lockdown, she always went to church. However, during and after Auckland's first lockdown, when her church in Indonesia started conducting online services, she shifted to attending them virtually, at home in Indonesia, rather than the services held *in situ* at St James. The last time I saw Andara at church was on Christmas Eve. I, myself am better known in the church than her.

Andara's case shows that even though a nationality-based religious institution tried to form a home-like place to embrace every member of the "family," some felt out of place. The church became a warm, inclusive place for most of them, but not for all. Some shifted congregations until they found one that fitted; others, likely found themselves not belonging

in a Christian community but alienated from the religion. For some, home is always that place far away that can never be satisfied elsewhere, an endless longing for elsewhere.

Things are different for long-term migrants, who may have greater incentive to involve themselves in this community, but when people know they will be leaving, like Andara, they may not want or be bothered to seek a place of belonging. Andara, had such strong roots in her homeland that she could not belong religiously in the new place. Thus, when there was an opportunity to "return" to home, via the virtual world, she went there.

Andara's case suggests many migrants may be less committed to new religious communities in the host country if still able to significantly live in their old community. When most people felt the lockdown was thwarting their plans, people like Andara found it serendipitously reviving their sense of connection with the place they felt to be their real home. In fact, lockdown created a distance between her and the Indonesian Christian community in New Zealand but brought her closer to people in Indonesia.

For some of those who have spent their lives in New Zealand, like *Tante Annette*, *Tante Gloria*, *Om Alex*, and the "generation 1.5 or 2.0," occupied an in between or liminal status. They were confused about their identity. Did they have strong ties to their homeland? Who were they really? How did they define themselves? Where was their homeland, was it Indonesia?¹⁵ This made me ask where they felt they belonged. Indeed, depending on the depth of their nostalgia, they might feel themselves to be permanently liminal: displaced from home in Indonesia but not home in New Zealand..

The "neither one nor the other, neither here nor there" sense of liminality pervades this account. For those who left Indonesia decades ago (such as *Tante Annette* or *Om Paul*), their deep feelings of nostalgia suggest that they still considered Indonesia home. However, when they returned to Indonesia, in no time, they would begin to miss home in New Zealand

¹⁵ This can be a particularly vexed issue for Indonesians, since it does not allow dual citizenship.

with its colleagues, friends, family (especially children and grandchildren who were citizens of New Zealand), and their job. So, did that mean New Zealand was their “new” home?

The 1.5 or 2.0 generations felt this confusion in different ways. Some of them had New Zealand citizenship or struggled in speaking Indonesian. Michael, for example, who was a member of the youth association which tried sustaining his identity as an Indonesian but was still trying to learn the language although he had attended senior high school in Indonesia. Youth like Michael were actually quite rare, because most of the youth and children at church did not speak Indonesian. The question then, did they think of Indonesia as home? As Indonesian New Zealanders, Indonesia for them was still their homeland, distant but still connected. But it was not home. The home for them was New Zealand.

The existence of a religious and nationality-based community like St James, at least, helps those who feel stranded or liminal state. Living as members of a minority the immigrant religious community becomes a place where some people feel like “being at home” and their fellow members as family. This community helps them to embrace each other, create new families and reconstruct what they call home.

Immigrant religious communities serve social and cultural, as well as spiritual needs. When people travel to another place, they partially carry and reproduce socio-cultural elements of “home”: beliefs, traditions, practices, identities, material cultures and identities (Bendixsen 2013:107; see also Garbin 2018). They embrace and are embraced by those communities in their new place. Thus, religious institutions become a medium for gathering within the diaspora, evoking nostalgia, and strengthening the sense of belonging. In St James, people could recall stories and created memories through *ngobrol* for Indonesians love to talk. The church became home for their identity and faith. And as a home surrounded by supportive family members, people provided mutual and financial support. As immigrants, they were in

the same boat. Surrounded by people who worship the same God, came from the same country, and supported each other, some congregants did feel as though they were at home so far from home and the longer they were in the host country, the more some of them began to ask which home they were referring to. Or, where exactly was their “home”?

The extent to which people felt liminal or in some kind of uprooted exile affected the extent to which they found immigration “theologizing”. Those who turned their face to God, had new spiritual experiences. However, for others, their liminal state deprived them of a sense of belonging and made them experience alienation. Some were ambivalent. On the one hand, they experienced deepening Christian commitment, especially when surrounded by people from the Church. On the other hand, they experienced the element of decline in faith, when they were with their non-religious friends or colleagues, or when they were very busy with their schedule, particularly during the deadlines of their work or study, like exams and assignment.

People give meaning to the reality they experience and express them in symbols (Geertz 2000 [1973]) and I found that most of the Indonesian Christians interpreted their experiences as God’s will. They interpreted their situation when they lived in an Islamic majority country, had some fun in their early ages, were discriminated against, left the country with all their memories, and lived in a secular environment, as the best plan God has given to them. All they could do was carry out the plan as best they could. *Om* Alex’s metaphor about candles burning in a dark place productively described how they gave meaning to their experience. However, the candles must burn themselves in order to shine. This raises another question, what cost did the Indonesian Christian migrants pay? The answers might be varied. Some paid with the “sickness” of not returning home, others paid with their kids becoming irreligious, and some, paid the high price of both.

Most members perceived St James as their re-created home, without abandoning their old ones; a few cannot find the new one even if they tried. The former grew strong roots in both home and host countries, others retained strong roots in the homeland alone.

Tearing Down the Boundaries – My Hopes

Many things have changed in my view of religions and ethnicities, particularly my view of Chinese Indonesian Christians. This research has been a different kind of liminality for me, one in which I have experienced a rite of passage of my own. Thanks to these generous congregants, I feel much more open towards others, I better appreciate the religious commitment and emotions felt by Christians and the ways in which their understandings of Islam and Indonesia differ to what most Muslims in Indonesia might have presumed.

As I mentioned in Chapter Two, by researching other religions, I want to give an example (as well as redeem myself) of how it is possible to implement an understanding of each other as a "family" of two Abrahamic religions. How I passed through the church door and became a partially part of them and how they accepted me regardless of my religion was a potent example of our capacity to remove each other's boundaries; of how I could pass the walls that I (and maybe they) had built or accepted; how we, as fellow Indonesians, were connected through roots grounded in the same homeland; how Muslim and Christian do not need to be mutual others.

I had been very upset when I heard Andara's story about how her mostly Muslim classmates in Indonesia treated her. Rather than helping and supporting her, the whole class had insulted and bullied her. To be honest, the story reflected the common response of religious or ethnic majorities in engaging with their others. It reminded me of what I did in the past, something I deeply regret. My hope is that these kinds of hatred, stereotype, and discrimination may someday no longer exist in Indonesia.

In the end, it was discrimination that made Indonesian Christians feel not at home in their homeland. For most of those who had fully emigrated, it was because they felt they needed to leave the home they loved and seek another. But in the middle of their journey, they could not forget their past or the place: memories, friends, family, and food from their homeland. Maybe that, along with the need to practice their religion, explains how, when they felt liminal state (confused about their identity and faith) or when they felt the nostalgia (experienced the sickness emotionally and socially), the church became the “home”, a place that helped them. At this point, I then agreed with what *Om* Paul said before he went back to Indonesia, that “the church is not full of saints. It is a place for the sick who need help.”

References

- Abdullah, Z. 2010. *Black Mecca, the African Muslims of Harlem*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Abélès, M. 2018. States: Transnationalism. In *The International Encyclopedia of Anthropology* edited by Hilary Callan. New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons Ltd, pp. 1-9.
- Abranches, M. & Hasselberg, N. I. 2018. Migration. In *The International Encyclopedia of Anthropology* edited by Hilary Callan. New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons Ltd, pp. 1-12.
- Adogame, A. 2010. Transnational migration and Pentecostalism in Europe. *PentecoStudies*, 9(1): 56-73.
- Al Qurtuby, S. 2013. Peacebuilding in Indonesia: Christian–Muslim alliances in Ambon Island, *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations*, 24(3): 349-367.
- Al Qurtuby, S. 2015. Christianity and militancy in Eastern Indonesia: Revisiting the Maluku violence. *Southeast Asian Studies*, 4(2): 313–339 313.
- Amersfoot, H. V. 2004. The waxing and waning of a diaspora: Moluccans in the Netherlands, 1950-2002. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 30(1): 151-174.
- Aritonang, J. S. & Steenbrink K. 2008. *A History of Christianity in Indonesia*. Leiden: Brill.
- Ammarell, G. 2002. Bugis migration and modes of adaptation to local Situations. *Ethnology*, 41(1): 51-67.
- Anderson, B. 1983. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Badan Pusat Statistik Republik Indonesia (Central Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Indonesia). 2010. Data *Sensus Penduduk* (Population Census Data). <http://sp2010.bps.go.id/index.php/site/tabel?tid=321&wid=0>. Accessed date, 23 February 2021.
- Bandyopadhyay, R. 2018. Longing for the British Raj: Imperial/colonial nostalgia and tourism. *Hospitality & Society*, 8(3): 253-271.
- Bangstad, S. 2017. Returning to the anthropology of secularism and the ‘secular.’” *Anthropology News*.
- Belanawane, M. 2011. Agama, kebudayaan, dan kekuasaan: catatan teoritik dari sorang Salafi (religion, culture, and power: theoretical notes from a Salafi). *Antropologi Indonesia*, 32(2): 82-98.
- Bendixsen, S. 2013. Connecting the local, national and transnational powers of a religious youth organisation in Berlin. In *Topographies of Faith. Religion in Urban Spaces*.

Edited by Irene Becci, Marian Burchardt, José Casanova. Leiden-Boston: Brill, pp. 99-111.

- Berger, M., Galonska, C. & Koopmans, R. 2004. Political integration by a detour? ethnic communities and social capital of migrants in Berlin, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 30(3): 491-507.
- Bijl, P. 2013. Dutch colonial nostalgia across decolonisation. *Journal of Dutch Literature*, 4(1): 128-149.
- Bissel, W. C. 2005. Engaging colonial nostalgia. *Cultural Anthropology*, 20(2): 215-248.
- Bowen, J. R. 2004. Beyond migration: Islam as a transnational public space. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 30: 879-94.
- Bowen, J. R. 2014. *Religions in Practice, An Approach to the Anthropology of Religion*. New Jersey: Pearson Education.
- Bruner, E. M. 1961. Urbanization and ethnic identity in North Sumatra. *American Anthropologist*, 63(3): 508-521.
- Bubandt, N. 2004. Genesis in Buli: Christianity, Blood, and Vernacular Modernity on an Indonesian Island. *Ethnology*, 43(3): 249-270.
- Buijs, F. J. 2013. Muslims in the Netherlands: social and political developments after 9/11. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 35(3): 421-438.
- Buther, A. & Wieland, G. 2013. God and golf: Koreans in New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies*, 15(2): 57-77.
- Carter, J. 2018. *Christian Experiences and Imaginings of the Secular in New Zealand*. Unpublished Master Thesis in Victoria University of Wellington.
- Casanova, J. 2007. Rethinking secularization: A global comparative perspective. In *Religion, Globalization, and Culture*. Edited by Peter Beyer and Lori Beaman. Leiden-Boston: Brill, pp. 101-120.
- Chao, E. 2017. *Entangled Pieties: Muslim-Christian Relations and Gendered Sociality in Java, Indonesia*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Chao, E. 2014. 'Not fanatical': the evolution of sociable piety and the dialogic subject in multi-religious Indonesia. *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology*, 15(3): 242-264.
- Cho, E. D. 2018. Re-understanding migration as a theologizing experience. *Practical Matters Journal*, 11: 1-5. In <http://practicalmattersjournal.org/2018/10/15/re-understanding-migration-as-a-theologizing-experience/> (accessed date 19 June 2021).
- Clarke, A. 2002. "Days of heaven and earth": Presbyterian in communion seasons in nineteenth-century Otago. *The Journal of Religious History*, 26(3): 274-297.
- Clarke, A. J. 2003. *Feasts and Fasts. Holidays, Religion, and Ethnicity in Nineteenth-Century Otago*. Unpublished Doctoral Thesis in the University of Otago.

- Corrie, J. 2014. Migration as a theologizing experience. The promise of interculturality for transformative mission. *Mission Studies* 31: 9 – 21.
- Damm, M. 2012. Anthropometamorphosis: konseptualisasi atas materialitas tubuh dalam studi antropologi (conceptualisation on body materiality in anthropology), in *Antropologi Agama: Wacana-Wacana Mutakhir dalam Kajian Religi dan Budaya* (Anthropology of Religion: Contemporary Discourses in Religion and Culture, edited by Tony Rudyansjah. Jakarta: UI Press, pp 1-29.
- Davidson, A. K. & Lineham, P. J. 1987. *Transplanted Christianity. Documents Illustrating Aspects of New Zealand Church History*. The Dunmore Press Limited: Palmerston North.
- Davies, W. M. 1966. Church and nation. *Landfall* 20(1): 20-24.
- Day, A. and Rogaly, B. 2014. Sacred communities: contestations and connections. *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 29(1): 75-88.
- DeHanas, D. N. 2010. Believing Citizens: Religion and Civic Engagement among London's Second Generation Youth. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation in the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
- Dewanto, P. A. 2020. The domestication of protection - the state and civil society in Indonesia's overseas labour migration. *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, 176(4): 504-531.
- Downey, P. J. 1966. Being religious in New Zealand. *Landfall* 20(1): 31-37.
- Engelke, M. 2014. Christianity and the anthropology of secular humanism. *Current Anthropology*, 55(10): 292-301.
- Espostio, J. L., Fasching, D. J., & Lewiss, T. 2006. *World Religions Today*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Farhadian, C. F. 2015. *Christianity, Islam, and Nationalism in Indonesia*. New York: Routledge
- Fesenmyer, L. 2020. Bringing the kingdom to the city: Mission as placemaking practice amongst Kenyan Pentecostals in London. *City & Society*, 31(1): 34-54.
- Fouron, G. E. & Glick-Schiller, N. 2006. The generation of identity: redefining the second generation within a transnational social field. In *The Changing Face of Home* edited by Peggy Levitt and Mary C. Waters: Russel Sage Foundation, pp. 168-208.
- Foyer, D. 2006. Ostalgie and the politics of the future in Eastern Germany, *Public Culture*, 18(2): 361-381.
- Garbin, D. 2018. Religion, migration, and diasporas. In *The International Encyclopedia of Anthropology* edited by Hilary Callan. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, pp. 1-8.

- Geertz, C. 1968. *Islam Observed: Religious Developments in Morocco and Indonesia*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Geertz, C. 1976. *The Religion of Java*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Geertz, C. 2000 [1973]. *The Interpretation of Culture*. New York: Basic Books.
- Geering, L. G. 1966. The church in the new world. *Landfall* 20(1): 24-31.
- Gilroy, P. 1993. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.
- Glick-Schiller, N. 2001. *Georges Woke up Laughing: Long Distance Nationalism and the Search for Home*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.
- Glick-Schiller, N., Basch, L., & Blanc, C. S. 1992. *Toward a Transnational Perspective on Migration*. New York: New York Academy of Sciences.
- Gomes, C. 2017. *Transient Mobility and Middle Class Identity. Media and Migration in Australia and Singapore*. Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gomes, C. & Tan, J. Y. 2017. Christianity as a culture of mobility: A case study of Asian transient migrants in Singapore. *Kritika Kultura*, 25: 215–244.
- Guarnizo, L. E. 1997. The emergence of a transnational social formation and the mirage of return migration among Dominican transmigrants. *Identities*, 4: 281–322.
- Habti, D. 2014. The religious aspects of diasporic experience of Muslims in Europe within the crisis of multiculturalism. *Policy Futures in Education*, 12(1): 149-162.
- Hammons, C. S. 2016. Indigenous religion, Christianity and the state: Mobility and nomadic metaphysics in Siberut, Western Indonesia. *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology*, 17(5): 399-418.
- Harsono, A. 2019. *Race, Islam and Power. Ethnic and Religious Violence in Post-Suharto Indonesia (Investigating Power)*. Melbourne: Monash University Publishing
- Hasan, H. 2012. Islam, Negara, dan Hak Minoritas di Indonesia (Islam, Nation, and Minority Rights in Indonesia). *Analisis*, XII(1): 1-18.
- Hoon, C. Y. 2012. “By race, I am Chinese; and by grace, I am Christian”: Chineseness and Christianity in Indonesia. *Chinese Indonesians Reassessed*, edited by S. M. Sai and C. Y. Hoon. London: Routledge. Pp. 159-177.
- Hoon, C-Y. 2013. Between evangelism and multiculturalism: The dynamics of Protestant Christianity in Indonesia. *Social Compass* 60(4): 457–470.
- Hoon, C. Y. 2013. Rethinking religious tradition and authority in the postmodern world. *Interreligious Insight*, 11(22): 30-41.
- Hoon, C. Y. 2013. Pancasila and the Christians in Indonesia: A leaky shelter? *Asian Culture*, 37: 29-46.

- Hoon, C. Y. 2014. God and discipline: Religious education and character building in a Christian school in Jakarta. *South East Asia Research*, 22(4): 505-524.
- Hoon, C. Y. 2016. Religious aspirations among urban Christians in urban Indonesia. *International Sociology*: 1-9.
- Hoverd, W. J. 2008. No longer a Christian Country? – Religious demographic change in New Zealand 1966-2006. *New Zealand Sociology*, 23(1): 41-65.
- Husson, L. 2015. Two Javanese maids in Hong Kong. Between trial and desire of fulfilment. *Biographical landscapes of the Asian Migrant*, 26: 65-91.
- Intan, B. F. 2015. Misi Kristen di Indonesia: Kesaksian Kristen Protestan (Missionary in Indonesia: The Witness of the Protestant). *Societas Dei*, 2(2): 325-365.
- Johnson, M. & Werbner, P. 2011. Introduction – Diasporic encounters, sacred journeys: ritual, normativity and the religious imagination among international Asian migrant women. *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology*, 11(3-44): 205-218.
- Karagiannis, E. & Glick-Schiller, N. 2006. Contesting claims to the land: Pentecostalism as a challenge to migration theory and policy. *Sociologist*, 56(2): 137-171.
- Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia (Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia). 2018. *Data Umat Berdasar Jumlah Pemeluk Agama Menurut Agama* (Population Data Based on the Number of Religion Adherents Based on Religions). <https://data.kemenag.go.id/agamadashboard/statistik/umat>. Accessed date, 23 Februari 2021.
- Kivisto, P. 2016. International migration. In *Handbook of Religion and Society* edited by D. Yamane. Cham: Springer International Publishing Switzerland, pp. 547-568
- Krú ger, M. 1966. *Sedjarah Geredja di Indonesia* (The History of Church in Indonesia). Jakarta: Badan Penerbit Kristen.
- Levitt, P. 1998. Local-level global religion: US-Dominican migration. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 37: 74–89.
- Levitt, P. 2003. ‘You know, Abraham was really the first immigrant’: Religion and transnational migration. *International Migration Review*, 37(3): 847–873.
- Levitt, P. 2004. Redefining the boundaries of belonging: The institutional character of transnational religious life. *Sociology of Religion*, 61(1): 1–18.
- Levitt, P. & Jaworsky, B. N. 2007. Transnational migration studies: past developments and future trends. *Annual Review Sociology*, 33: 129-156.
- Levitt, P. 2009. Roots and routes: Understanding the lives of the second generation transnationally. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 35(7): 1225–1242.
- Lewis, E.D. 2013. Land earth sun moon and the Father of Generations: An historiography of words for God in Sara Sikka. *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, 169(2/3): 295-325.

- Liao, L. C. 2007. *The Role of Christian Faith in the Acculturation and Identity Development of Chinese Immigrant Youth*. Unpublished Master Thesis in the Wilfrid Laurier University.
- Malkki, L. H. 1992. National geographic: The rooting of peoples and the territorialisation of national identity among scholars and refugees. *Cultural Anthropology*, 7(1): 24-44.
- Malkki, L. H. 1995. Refugees and exile: From 'refugee studies' to the national order of things. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 24: 495-523.
- Mannur, A. 2009. *Culinary Fiction: Food in South Asian Diasporic Culture*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press
- Massey, D. S & Higgins, M. E. 2011. The effect of immigration on religious belief and practice: A theologizing or alienating experience? *Social Science Research*, 40: 1371-1389.
- Mattulada. 1985. *Latoa: Suatu Lukisan Analitis Terhadap Antropologi Politik Orang Bugis* (Latoa: An analytic description of Anthropology of politics among Buginese). Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press.
- McCrinkle Research in commissioned by Wilberforce Foundation. 2018. *Faith and Believe in New Zealand*.
- McGavin, K. 2017. (Be)longings: diasporic Pacific islanders and the meaning of home, in *Mobilities of Return: Pacific Perspectives*, edited by John Taylor & Helen Lee. Canberra. ANU Press: 123-146.
- Micheelsen, A & Geertz, C. 2002. "I don't do systems": an interview with Clifford Geertz. *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*, 14(1): 2-20.
- Moffat, T., Mohammed, C. & Newbold, K. B. Cultural dimensions of food insecurity among immigrants and refugees. *Human Organization*, 76(1): 15-27.
- Muhidin, S. & Utomo, A. 2015. Global Indonesia diaspora: how many are there and where are they? *Journal of ASEAN Studies*, 3(2): 93-101.
- Nagata, J. 2005. Christianity among transnational Chinese: Religious versus (sub)ethnic affiliation. *International Migration*, 43(3): 99-128.
- Nigosian, S. A. 1994. *World Faiths*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Nordholt, H. S. 2008. Identity politics, citizenship and the soft state in Indonesia: An Essay. *Journal of Indonesian Social Sciences and Humanities*, 1:1-21.
- Oliver, W. H. 1966. Christianity among the New Zealanders. *Landfall* 20(1): 4-20.
- Peek, L. 2005. Becoming Muslim: the development of religious identity. *Sociology of Religion*, 66(3): 215-242.
- Pratt, D. 2016. Secular New Zealand and religious diversity: From cultural evolution to societal affirmation. *Social Inclusion*, 4(2): 52-64.

- Rais, M. A. 1995. Islam and Christianity in Indonesia. *Studia Islamika: Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies*, 2(1): 69 -91.
- Reimer, S., et al. 2016. Christian Churches and immigrant support in Canada: an organizational ecology perspective. *Rev Relig Res*, 58:495–513.
- Rijal, S. 2005. Media and Islamism in post-New Order Indonesia: The case of *Sabili*?. *Studia Islamika*, 12(3):421–474.
- Rudnyckyj, D. 2004. Technologies of servitude: governmentality and Indonesian transnational labor migration. *Anthropological Quarterly*, 77(3): 407-434.
- Rudyansjah, T. 2012. Going native sebagai tabu dan identitas tempatan sebagai titik pijakan etnografis (going native as a taboo and local identity as ethnographic foothold), in *Antropologi Agama: Wacana-Wacana Mutakhir dalam Kajian Religi dan Budaya* (Anthropology of Religion: Contemporary Discourses in Religion and Culture, edited by Tony Rudyansjah. Jakarta: UI Press, pp 1-29.
- Sadouni, S. 2013. Somalis in Johannesburg: Muslim transformations of the city. In *Topographies of Faith. Religion in Urban Spaces* edited by Irene Becci, Marian Burchardt, and José Casanova. Leiden-Boston: Brill, pp. 45-59.
- Samson, A. A.1972. *Islam and Politics in Indonesia*. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation University of California at Berkeley.
- Sanduan, V. V. 2017. *Ingatan tentang Belanda: Memori-Memori Sosial Orang Ambon tentang Belanda* (Memories of Dutch: Ambonese Social Memories about the Dutch). Unpublished Master Thesis of Hasanuddin University.
- Schut, T. 2019. The promise of education and its paradox in rural Flores, East Indonesia. *Focaal—Journal of Global and Historical Anthropology*, 83: 85–97
- Seo, M. 2013. Falling in love and changing Gods. *Indonesia and the Malay World*, 41(119): 76-96.
- Setiadi. 2000. Antropologi dan studi migrasi internasional (anthropology and the study of international migration). *Humaniora* 1: 86-97.
- Silva, C. 2014. Nostalgia and the good life. *The Eighteenth Century*, 55(1): 123-128.
- Simatupang, T. B. 1982. Doing Theology in Indonesia Today, *CTC Bulletin* 3(2): 22.
- Smith, T. L. 1978. Religion and ethnicity in America. *The American Historical Review* 83(5): 1155-1185.
- Spradley, J. P. 2016. *The Ethnographic Interview*. Illinois: Waveland Press.
- Spickard, J. V. 2007. ‘Religion’ in global culture: New directions in an increasingly self-conscious world. In *Religion, Globalization and Culture*, edited by Peter Beyer and Lori Beaman. Leiden-Boston: Brill, pp. 233-252.

- Taloko, J. L., Putra, M. S., & Hartanto, Y. 2020. Emotional geographies experienced by an Indonesian doctoral student pursuing her PhD in New Zealand during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of International Students*, 10(S3): 126-141.
- Turner, V. 2017 [1969]. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Antistructure*. New York: Routledge.
- Turner, V. 1974. *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Turner, V. 1981. Social dramas and stories about them. In *On Narratives* edited by W. J. T. Mitchell. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 137-164.
- Vaccarino, Cavan, & Gendall. 2011. Spirituality and religion in the lives of New Zealanders. *The International Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Society*, 1(2): 85-96.
- Van Dijk, J. & Botros, G. 2009. The importance of ethnicity and religion in the life cycle of immigrant churches: a comparison of Coptic and Calvinist Churches. *Canadian Ethnic Studies/Études ethniques au Canada*, 41(1/2): 191-214.
- Vertovec, S. 1999. Three Meanings of 'diaspora', exemplified among South Asian religions. *Diaspora*, 6(3): 277-299.
- Waldinger, R. 2008. "Here" and "there": Immigrant cross-border activities and loyalties. *The International Migration Review*, 42(1): 3-29.
- Warner, R. S. & Wittner, J. G. 1998. *Gatherings in Diaspora: Religious Communities and the New Immigration*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Webb, R.A.F. P. 1986. Adat and Christianity in Nusa Tenggara Timur: Reaction and counteraction: traditional custom and modern development in Eastern Indonesia, *Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society*, 14(4): 339-365.
- Winland, D. N. 1994. Christianity and community: Conversion and adaptation among Hmong refugee women. *The Canadian Journal of Sociology / Cahiers canadiens de sociologie*, 19(1): 21-45.
- Yharrola, S. 2012. Anthropology, diasporas, and mission. *Mission Studies*, 29: 79-94.
- Yunus, A. H. 2019. Hijrah: pemaknaan dan alasan mentransformasikan diri secara spiritual di kalangan mahasiswa (hijrah: understanding and reasons of transforming the self spiritually among students). *Jurnal Emik*, 2(1): 89-104.
- Zhang, C. 2015. *Challenging the Tiger Mother Stereotype? Christian Chinese Immigrant Homeschooling Mothers' Parenting Practices*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation in the University of Minnesota.

Other References:

<https://voi.id/en/jurnalisme-rasa/31693/we-went-to-the-muamalah-market-and-understood-that-dirham-transactions-may-be-criminal-in-the-eyes-of-the-police-but-not-necessarily-criminal-for-the-community> (accessed date 22 March 2021)

<https://www.stats.govt.nz/tools/2018-census-place-summaries/new-zealand> (accessed date 29 April 2021)

<https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20210328150157-20-623072/daftar-kasus-ledakan-bom-di-indonesia-2-dekade-terakhir> (the list of bomb cases in Indonesia within 2 decades) (accessed date, June 17 2021)

