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Being Muslim in a Secular World: Indonesian Families in Washington DC Area

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Abstract: *Indonesian Muslims in Washington DC and the surrounding states of Maryland and Virginia are an important Indonesian community in the United States. They are one of a few Indonesian American communities with a Muslim majority. We survey its birth and assess the early Indonesian and Indonesian Muslim presence in America and their arrival routes. We then examine the lack of Indonesian interest to immigrate to this continent until very recently. Our study draws upon scholarly research on Indonesian-Dutch connections and the early Indonesian experience in the United States. Data about the Indonesian Muslim Association in America (IMAAM) mosque are derived from interviews with over two hundred leaders and members of the community (jamā'ah). This includes in-depth interviews with forty-six selected individuals, and observation of the masjid activities over a year (April 2017 – June 2018) forms an integral part of this explorative research.*

Keywords: Indonesian American Muslims, IMAAM Mosque, Indonesian Muslim Migration to America.

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Abstrak: *Muslim Indonesia di Washington DC dan negara bagian Maryland dan Virginia merupakan komunitas Indonesia yang penting di Amerika Serikat. Komunitas ini adalah satu dari hanya beberapa masyarakat Indonesia Amerika dimana Muslim merupakan mayoritas. Studi ini menelaah sejarah kelahiran kelompok ini dan mengkaji asal mula kehadiran orang Indonesia dan Muslim Indonesia di Amerika serta jalan ketibaan mereka. Kami juga menganalisa ketidak-tertarikan orang Indonesia untuk berimigrasi ke benua Amerika sampai akhir-akhir ini. Kajian kami didasari pada riset ilmiah tentang hubungan Indonesia Belanda dan pengalaman awal orang Indonesia di Amerika Serikat. Data tentang mesjid IMAAM berasal dari interview dengan lebih dua ratus pimpinan dan jamaah mesjid. Interview mendalam dengan empat puluh enam informan pilihan dan observasi aktivitas mesjid lebih dari satu tahun (April 2017 – Juni 2018) merupakan bagian integral dari riset eksploratif ini.*

Kata kunci: Muslim Indonesia Amerika, Masjid IMAAM, Imigrasi Muslim Indonesia ke Amerika.

ملخص: يعدّ مسلمو إندونيسيا المقيمون في واشنطن العاصمة وولايي ماريلاند وفرجينيا من المجتمعات الإندونيسية المهمة في الولايات المتحدة. كما أنهم من الجاليات الأمريكية الإندونيسية ذات الأغلبية المسلمة. وتبحث هذه الدراسة في ميلادها ووجود الإندونيسيين، بما فيهم المسلمون، في أمريكا وطرق وصولهم إليها، كما نقوم بتحليل عدم رغبتهم في الهجرة إلى القارة الأمريكية حتى وقت قريب. وتعتمد دراستنا على البحث العلمي حول العلاقات الهولندية الإندونيسية، والتجربة الإندونيسية المبكرة في الولايات المتحدة. وتأتي البيانات المتعلقة بمسجد الجمعية الإسلامية الإندونيسية في أمريكا (IMAAM) من المقابلات التي أجريت مع أكثر من مئتي مبحث من قادة وأعضاء الجماعة، كما أن مقابلات معمقة مع ستة وأربعين شخصا مختارا، وملاحظات أنشطة المساجد لأكثر من عام واحد (من إبريل ٢٠١٧ إلى يونيو ٢٠١٨) تشكل جزءا لا يتجزأ من هذا البحث الاستكشافي..

الكلمات المفتاحية: المسلمون الأمريكيون الإندونيسيون، مسجد IMAAM، الهجرة الإسلامية الإندونيسية إلى أمريكا.

Indonesia is the most populous Muslim nation in the world and the third most populous country in Asia. Despite its long history of maritime trade and seafaring adventurers, it has contributed a small number of immigrants to the United States, while the number of Indonesian Muslim immigrants is even smaller. Theories of migration are multifaceted, involving a double focus: the original cultural context, and the new social and cultural home. Attention is given to how indigenous values are transplanted into and take root in the new environment, as well as reasons for migration. Some emphasize the historical context of population movements as part of the human experience, occurring in the past and continuing into the future (McNeil 1978, 3–19). It is intrinsic to human nature: searching for food and resources, travelling to explore, and conquering to possess (King 2012; McNeil 1978, 3). The connections between Islam and migration are well-known phenomena, notably the famous *hijrah* of the Prophet, and thus the interconnection between transnational faiths and migration lies at the heart of contemporary migration debates. Economic, political, and geographical factors have also governed peoples' aspiration to migrate as a "push–pull process" — unfavourable conditions at home and favourable situations in a target environment. It is clear that Indonesian movements to the US exhibit these complex migration phenomena.

Since Indonesian Muslims are a very small community in this new environment, their minority status in a predominantly Christian yet secular America makes them invisible, falling into what is characterized as a "hidden minority" (Rollins 1981, 1, 2) that attracts little interest. For example, when treating Indonesian Americans, Clark E. Cunningham (2009) describes Indonesian American Muslims in less than one hundred words, while he devotes more than one thousand five hundred words to Indonesian American Christians. Yet from an internal Muslim perspective they are not insignificant. Confronted by cultural pluralism in the American "melting pot," Indonesian Muslims actively negotiate with their host culture through slow integration and cultural appropriation that is often "minor and cosmetic" (consult al-Alwani 2004, 3; Elkholy 1966, 15). They are aware that Islamic core principles cannot be easily melted down, and their religious conviction is protected by individual human rights and a wide range of international instruments and American policy documents (Galtung 2012).

Similarly, they are deeply concerned about the rapid “Americanization” and assimilation of their children through public schooling and cultural domination. They see their children no longer speaking their language or cherishing their inherited values, nor behaving in the manner they are most familiar with. They worry about the impact of atheistic culture and the disregard of Islamic tradition, and this prompts them to make efforts to preserve their children’s Islamic identity through education and value inculcation.

Education, as the cornerstone of Islamic culture, is one of the most important requirements for developing a Muslim community. It aims at cultivating the human mind and soul by implanting knowledge of religious beliefs and practices, inculcating esteemed values for attaining good human character, and also providing skills for livelihood. For the contemporary Indonesian Muslim diaspora community, religious teaching is simplified into learning how to read and memorize the Qur’an and acquiring a basic knowledge of Islam. The method children are taught the Qur’an through reading and memorization under the guidance of teachers, “is very much like the way described for the Old World Islamic settings” (Leonard 2003, 112). This emphasizes the centrality of oral recitation and instruction, and the personal rather than institutional nature of the student-teacher relationship, highlighting the importance of social reading and hearing (Leonard 2003, 122; Messick 1993, 84–92). Although the way of teaching in the American context remains similar to that of the Old World, the results are rather different: the level of students’ achievements in the US is limited due to time constraints, commitments, and their social environment. Nevertheless, Indonesian American Muslims continue to encourage their children to study and uphold Islam as a way of life.

This study explores the birth and development of the Indonesian Muslim community in the United States, with a special focus on the District of Columbia (Washington DC) and the nearby states of Maryland and Virginia. We examine the makeup and history of this community from its inception in the 1950’s, which culminated in the establishment of the Indonesian Muslim Association in America (IMAAM) mosque as a center for Indonesian Muslim immigrant existence, and for maintaining their Islamic identity and their children’s commitment to Islam as a practice and way of life. Part one discusses the first Indonesians to set foot on the American continent and the

ways they arrived. It also explores why America was unattractive to Indonesians until relatively recently. Part two surveys the birth of the Indonesian Muslim community in the Washington DC area, assessing its vision and expectations for the future, as well as the many facets of its development. The final part examines the IMAAM *masjid* and its memberships, reviewing this community's activities and efforts to realize an Islamic spiritual mission and fulfill its socio-cultural expectations. Analyzing the challenges faced by this community, we review the dynamics of adult-youth relations, and the experience of "un-mosqued" Indonesian Muslims and their reasons for keeping at a distance from the *masjid*.

Early Indonesians in America

The presence of Indonesians in America may be determined by various routes. The well-established theory is associated with colonial Holland. Studies show that during the Dutch era Indonesians arrived in the continent in four different waves. The first was the transportation from the 17th to early 20th centuries of a few undocumented Indonesian servicemen who were working with Dutch families, administrative entities or Dutch trading vessels. There is no clear account of their number or movement, but a report by an Indonesian student sailing in 1922 on the ship 'Oranje' from Jakarta to Europe indicates that "all crew members [*pelayan-pelayan*] were 'inlander' [i.e., Indonesians]" (Sastroamidjojo 2012, 27–28). The question arises: were "inlanders" also utilized by other Dutch vessels sailing to the New World? Although no hard data is available to support this theory, such a hypothesis is possible. The shortage of labour in Holland's economic system is one reason for entertaining this possibility. Thus, *pelaut* (seamen) appear to have been among the earliest Indonesians in America (Balbed 2006; Sastroamidjojo 2012, 447). The same student named Ali Sastroamidjojo (who later became Indonesia's first Ambassador to the US) reported on another type of early arrival of Indonesian servicemen in America. When he left Jakarta for Washington DC in 1950 he was accompanied by the foreign ministry official Darmanto. The latter was sent as "he had experience in America when he served the Dutch Government there" (Sastroamidjojo 2012, 427). Darmanto was probably one of several Indonesians sent by the Dutch to staff their American offices prior to World War II.

The second group of Indonesians who arrived in the New World were Indonesian slaves serving Dutch families (Balbed 2006), concubines or wives of colonial Dutchmen. Most Hollanders arriving in the Archipelago were single men, along with a very few European women (Fox 1983; Hellwig 1993). In fact, the idea of providing Dutch women for these men was abandoned in 1633, encouraging them to take local women and concubines. The practice was so widespread that by the beginning of the 18th century “there – [was] hardly a single Hollander of any consideration in Java who does not have a concubine” (citing Valentijn, in Fox 1983). Although Holland initially had a strict prohibition against transporting such women and other slaves to the Netherlands, this ordinance was loosened in August 1700 permitting Dutchmen to take one or two slaves back with them. In fact, the October 1713 ordinance removed this limitation provided that “their upkeep and the voyage costs to and from Batavia were covered” by the slave owners (Fox 1983). There is no clear number of female and male slaves to have been transported to the Netherlands during the course of 17th to the early 20th century, yet the figure could have been in the thousands. It is possible that some of these women and slaves, as well as their families, found their way to the New World (Balbed 2006) settling both in North and South America.

The third wave of Indonesians to arrive in this continent was a group of Javanese workers sent to Suriname in South America. Following the abolition of slavery in this Dutch colony in 1863, the Dutch plantation owners brought contract workers first from British India and then from Java. The first group of forty-nine Javanese men and women arrived in August 1890 (Hoefte 1998, 47–48) and the last group reached Suriname in December 1939. From 1890 to 1939 the Dutch transported 32,962 Javanese indentured labourers to this country recruited from Batavia, Semarang and Surabaya (Hoefte 1998, 44–55, 2008). All Javanese immigrants were brought to work on plantations except for a group of seventy-seven sent in 1904 to work for the colonial railways. Poor living condition and weight deficiency made these Javanese dream of returning home to Indonesia. Over the following decades some twenty-five percent of the Indonesians returned to the Archipelago, while twenty thousand others left for the Netherlands in the 1970’s on the eve of Suriname’s independence in 1975. Many others remained in Suriname. Today the

Javanese comprise fifteen percent or the third largest ethnic group of the total 568,000 people of Suriname. The Javanese workers brought to this country were some of the earliest documented Indonesians to have reached America.

The fourth wave of Indonesians associated with the Dutch to have arrived in the New World were those known as *Indo Belanda* (Dutch Eurasians). This refers to people with mixed Dutch and Indonesian parentage or Europeans with partial Indonesian or Asian ancestry (Bosma and Raben 2008, 46–51; Errington 2008, 138; Imhoff and Beets 2004). *Indos* could also be Indonesians who had adopted Dutch cultural elements such as language, lifestyle, religion and national affiliation. Among these Indonesians were students of aristocratic lineage or women who adopted Christianity and became wives or concubines of Dutch colonial officers. It was estimated that in 1854, over half of the 18,000 Europeans in Java were Eurasians (Kroef 1953) and by the 1890's there were about 62,000 Dutch and Europeans in the country with most of them being *Indos* (Therborn 2004, 54). During Dutch occupation, most Eurasians sided with the Dutch colonial policy and generally benefited from it (Imhoof and Beets 2004). However, the Eurasians experienced a setback during the Japanese occupation from 1942 to 1945 (Sidjaja 2011; Touwen-Bouwsma 1996), resulting in the Indo migration to Holland and elsewhere.

Upon the defeat of the Japanese in 1945, Indonesia declared its independence but the Dutch, assisted by the Allied Forces, tried to re-occupy the Archipelago (Vickers 2005, 97), instigating bitter fights that dragged on until 1949. Once again Eurasians sided with the occupiers, making them, as with all Europeans and Japanese, the enemy of Indonesia. During this revolution and its aftermath nearly all Eurasians and Europeans, totalling about three hundred thousand, left Indonesia for the Netherlands and a score of other countries including America (Asrianti 2010; Janoski 2010, 163, 168). It is estimated that roughly sixty thousand Indos migrated to North America during the course of the 1950's to 1960's (Amerindo 2013; Imhoff and Beets 2004), and by 1973 this community could be found in practically all fifty states, with a majority in southern California. Today however there is a great concern that this community will soon disappear as a separate identifiable group, being assimilated into the American mainstream (Krancher 2003).

The non-Dutch route for Indonesian early arrivals in the New World occurred after their independence of 1945. Indonesians began to come to the US in different groups. During the diplomatic settlement efforts with the Dutch at the United Nations in 1945-1949, Indonesian leaders came to negotiate the agreement, which was followed by the creation of Indonesia's *chargé d'affaires* in Washington DC, led by Sumitro Djojohadikusumo (Ransom 1970; The Jakarta Post 2001). When the first Ambassador, Sastroamidjojo, arrived in New York on his way to Washington DC in January 1950, he was assisted by Indonesians, who "had lived for a very long time in New York." This is another clear indication of Indonesian presence in America before this period. Shortly after this, Sumitro returned to Indonesia and spearheaded a plan to send university teachers (*dosen*) to study in America. With the support from the Ford Foundation about forty-five *dosens* of economics from the University of Indonesia were sent to study at the University of California in Berkeley between 1956—1962, with the first group sent in 1957 (Mohamad 2003, 55–60). There were other Indonesians who had studied in America before 1956, and these include Mohammad Sadli who left Indonesia in 1954 to study at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, with the support of the Rockefeller Foundation (Ransom 1970). In addition, Ishak, the father of the retired Indonesian Embassy staffer Isweni I. Bakri, was sent to study in America in 1951, and upon returning home two years later he founded the first cooperative (*koperasi*) in Medan, North Sumatra (Interview, Bakri 2018).

Indonesian students attended other universities, such as Selo Soemarjan who enrolled at Cornell University in 1956. But the number of Indonesians sent to UC Berkeley were the largest at the time, and they were the most influential Indonesian economists during the Suharto era. Since then, hundreds of Indonesian students arrived in the US for training, including in the joint program between the University of Kentucky and the Bandung Institute of Technology, which trained nearly 500 graduates during a ten-year period (Ransom 1970). At about the same time, Indonesian intelligence units and military personnel were also sent to study in the US, including those enrolled at the University of Pittsburgh, and in a one-year training for "Foreign Student Leadership Project" (Ransom 1970). Most of these Indonesians, like many others who came after them, returned to the

Archipelago, making Indonesia one of the smallest contributors to America's rich immigrant population.

Why was America unattractive to most Indonesians? Several reasons contributed to this lack of interest. Despite being known as seafarers, the long distance over the rough waters of the Pacific Ocean, coupled with the limited transportation connectivity, is one logical reason discouraging Indonesians to take the lengthy journey to America. In the early years of the sultanate, for example, the Sultan of Aceh's ships travelled east up to China, and some Acehnese traders and delegations reached India, the Gulf and Istanbul but they did not seem to travel west to America, for at the time this land was not yet on the world map. Similarly, the Bugises and the Makasarese, boarding on the famous Pinisi (Kasten 2001) travelling south to Australia and around the Archipelago, did not appear to sail the rough sea of the Pacific Ocean either. Further, due to its religious significance, hundreds of Indonesians sailed for the pilgrimage to Mecca, spending months on the difficult sea voyage (Goksoy 1998; Vredenberg 1962). These pilgrims show that traveling by sea was possible, but America was not yet on the Indonesians' radar.

During the 18th—20th centuries, other reasons seem to be in the making. First, by this time the Indonesian entities with an international outlook had lost the ability to project their global orientation, as they were busy fighting one another or resisting the colonials. Most of the islands' trading ports that had sent vessels to the known world before were either being controlled by the colonials or were too weak to guard their own interests. Since most of the energy was directed against the Dutch, the distant New World was not within their reach. Secondly, the strong anti-Dutch sentiment was being played in the Muslim discourse as wars against the *kafir* (from Ar. *kāfir*, pl. *kuffār* or infidels) were intensified (Hasjmy 1971, 27–28; Hurgonje 1906, iii–xvii, II, 81, 337). These *kuffār* were both Christians and white. America as a white and Christian country was not an enlightening land for Muslim travellers. Third, when Indonesian students of the early 20th century travelled to Europe to study, some could have come to America. But, as stated by another retired Embassy staffer, who had arrived in Washington DC as a student in 1960 after studying in the Netherlands, "America was too expensive for us Indonesians" (Interview, Mangoenkoesoemo 2018).

Another important reason for the lack of Indonesian interest to migrate to America was their country's relative stability and economic improvement beginning in the late 1960's after the establishment of the New Order (Castles 1974; Hill 1994). In spite of Indonesians' increasing familiarity with America due to the introduction of television in the 1960's and better transportation, very few Indonesians migrated to this country, while immigrants from China, Japan, Vietnam, the Philippines and other Muslim countries tripled, especially after the 1965 Immigration Act. In fact, almost all Indonesian students studying in America in the 1950's—1970's returned to Indonesia to assume important positions in the government or on campuses. The aspiration to return home to Indonesia remained true until the economic crisis of 1997—1998. However, an exception occurred during the communist crackdown of 1965—1966, when Indonesian Chinese accused of supporting communism and a few others migrated to the US. During this period the number of Indonesians arriving in the country increased to several thousand. Nevertheless, this surge was short-lived due to improving conditions at home (Yang 2001). In fact, during the first twenty years of Suharto's presidency, Chinese and Christians were in the position of power and wealth, while the Muslims were considered "the enemy of the state" (Kingsbury 2005, 75–76; Ramage 1995, 98–102). Thus, despite being a large majority, Muslims "resemble those of the minority" (Wertheim 1974). Nevertheless, the Muslims tolerated Suharto partly because they were the majority, and partly because Suharto's brutality was secluded to certain areas such as Aceh and Papua. Suharto's authoritarian regime provided stable government, economic development and educational opportunities. So Indonesians were nationalistic, where home was better than a foreign country — as the Indonesian proverb: *hujan emas di negeri orang, hujan batu di negeri sendiri* (gold rains in a foreign land, [not as good as] pebble rains in one's own land). Therefore, there were only 29,920 Indonesians in 1980 and 48,387 in 1990 according to the American government census (compared Cunningham 2009), and this was very small indeed, from a country with a population of 180 million in 1990.

However, the situation has changed since the 1997—1998 economic crisis. The financial meltdown hurt Indonesia hard as the price of basic necessities jumped and job opportunities grew scarce. People sought opportunities to work overseas, including in America.

Being citizens of “a quintessential labor-surplus nation,” Indonesians moved around the world for work — unskilled workers travelled to the Middle East and elsewhere in Asia, and skilled ones to more developed nations, making the US one of a few countries at the top of a list of Indonesians’ “new” migration orientation (Hugo 2017). American census and community surveys estimate that 63,073 Indonesians resided in the United States in 2000, 95,270 in 2010 and 113,000 in 2015 (Pew Research Center 2017). These figures show that the impact of the economic crisis is reflected in two opposite directions. Between 1990 and 2000, less Indonesians migrated to the US (14,695 in the ten-year span compared to 18,458 in the previous ten-year period). On the other hand the number increased significantly to 32,197 between 2000 and 2010. Another significant point is that unlike the post-communist crackdown migration of predominantly Chinese and Christian, Muslim Indonesians now contributed a sizable share of the post-1998 migration. For example, the Indonesian Muslim community in Washington DC experienced a significant increase of its *jamā'ah* during the *Īd al-Fiṭr* prayer at the Indonesian Embassy in 2000. “For the first time the *jamā'ah* was tripled. They filled up the whole hall and some had even to pray in the hallway” (Interviews, Kadir 2017; Helmi 2017; Chassah 2018). Despite an important surge, the Indonesian American population remains small, being listed as the 14th largest group of Asian Americans in the 2013 Pew Study, while Indonesia is the third largest nation in Asia.

Indonesian Muslims in America and Washington DC Area

The history of Indonesian Muslims in the American continent reflects two perspectives: the Dutch connection and the non-Dutch role. The Dutch connection refers to the Indonesian Muslims reaching America during the Dutch colonization, who arrived in the four routes discussed earlier: undocumented Indonesian servicemen and seamen; slaves and concubines; Javanese Surinamese; and *Indo* Eurasians. The undocumented Indonesians sent to the United States serving Dutch businesses and political interests could have come from different ethnic backgrounds. Some of them would certainly have been Muslim. The Dutch diplomatic service man Darmanto mentioned earlier was most likely a Muslim, for his name is typical among Javanese, and Java at the time of the Dutch was known to be a Muslim island, and thus Islam was

the religion of the Javanese (Geertz 1960, 124, 125; Koentjaraningrat 1989, 316–445). Segments of Indonesian *pelaut* settled in America could also be Muslim. Similarly, some slaves and concubines of the Dutchmen brought to the Netherlands who later found their way to the US could have been Muslim. Abeyasekere (1983) (in his study of slaves in Batavia in 1816) shows that 42.99% of 12,480 slaves were imported from Sulawesi and 19.70% from Bali. He also highlights the high prices for female slaves because they were desired as mistresses by the overwhelmingly male population of European and Chinese immigrants. Since Sulawesi had been Islamized between 1605–1611 (Pelras 1985), it is probable that many of the Dutch slaves and concubines brought to Jakarta, who then migrated to Holland and America, were Muslim.

The two other Indonesian groups in connection with Holland to have come to this continent were the Javanese labourers brought to Suriname, and those *Indo Belanda* arriving in the US. *Indo* Eurasians who came to America since the 1950's—1960's or earlier were largely Christian, but a small percentage professed the Islamic faith, especially those with Javanese and Moluccan ancestry. Since most *Indos* have fully integrated into the mainstream American culture, the small number of Muslims within this group would have followed the same path of steady assimilation. Therefore, if there was any form of *Indo* Islamic affiliation, it has been completely watered down. Unlike *Indo Belanda*, the Javanese sent to Suriname were all Muslim. Despite the Dutch colonial policy to assimilate them into “a Western, Christian society,” and the missionary activity by the Protestant Moravian Church and the Roman Catholic Church to convert these Muslims to Christianity, their mission was not very successful. Several factors are attributed to their failure including: “the Javanese ... equated Islam with Java, and Christianity with Dutch colonialism and exploitation” (Hoeft 1998, 158, 171–73). Today, the majority of Javanese Surinamese remain Muslims and form the single largest Islamic grouping in that country.

After Indonesia's independence and the opening of the Indonesian Embassy in Washington DC, Indonesian Muslims came to the United States as diplomats and students. Most returned to Indonesia after the completion of their diplomatic service or study, but a few - especially their children - stayed. The latter remained in the US to continue their study and then to work. Upon entering the work force and establishing

their own families, they moved around the country, and major cities continued to be their first choice. These Indonesian Muslims were professionals, but their number was very small. Another early Muslim group to arrive in the US were new *pelaut* who joined major companies sailing around the world before settling in America. For example, early Acehnese settling in New York City in the 1960's—1970's were seamen. Although it is almost impossible to ascertain their number and status, such seamen could be found in major ports around the country. Indonesian *pelaut* still come to the shore of the United States even to this day (Interview, Napitupulu 2018).

These early Muslims were followed by others who came to this country through different means, including chain visas from their relatives who already settled in the US, or political asylum for those who ran away from war-torn Aceh. Such Muslim migration from Indonesia remained low even during the peak of Asian migration in 1980-2015 resulting from the 1965 Immigration Act, when America admitted approximately twelve million Asians to its shores (Lopez, Ruiz, and Patten 2017; Zong and Batalova 2016). In 1990 Indonesian Muslims were about fifteen percent of the total 48,387 of the Indonesian American population, despite Muslims being the large majority in their native country. However, this figure has changed since the 1997—1998 economic crisis, as many Muslims are more interested in migrating to America for both economic and socio-cultural reasons. Furthermore, many Indonesian Muslim students who came to study have now decided to stay in the US, whereas in the past Indonesian students happily returned to Indonesia after graduation.

The Pew Survey estimates 113,000 Indonesian Americans in 2015, while the Indonesian Embassy accounts for 151,443 in February 2018. The data include newcomers who reached the US through working visas, family chain migration, and those who had settled in America earlier. Economic hardship back home and Indonesian familiarity with the American socio-political landscape made the US attractive to Indonesian Muslims. Although today Christians remain the majority of Indonesians in this country, the Muslim migration percentage has increased since 2000. The recent Embassy data show that 21.5% of Indonesians residing in America are Muslim; while in the Washington DC area 39% are Muslim, 24% Christians, and 33% “blank.” Muslims are believed to be a significant majority of this 33% “nothing.” Christian

leaders agree: “Muslims are three times more common than Christians in this area” (Interviews, Ticoalu 2018; Rendakasiang 2018).

The Indonesian American Muslim community in the Washington DC area was born in the 1950’s out of a diplomatic Islamic circle of *pengajian*. The initiators of this *pengajian* were called *kelompok 50-ah* or ‘the fifties grouping’ by the IMAAM founder, Abdul Nur Adnan (Interview, 2017). They were diplomats and local staff at the Embassy, such as the Ambassador Moekarto Notowidigdo (1953—1960), Munawir Sjadzali, Abdullah Balbed and Sujono Djono, as well as a few Indonesians working for the World Bank and Voice of America. Adnan who came to the US to work for VOA in 1969 reported that when he arrived in Washington DC the *pengajian* was already very active and was hosted in different Indonesian houses two to three times every month. In addition to the diplomatic core and professionals, it was also attended by Indonesian students and community members who lived and worked in the Washington DC area. On average, fifty to sixty Indonesian men and women attended this *pengajian*, while the most knowledgeable members took turns to lead this Islamic discussion. In addition to the *pengajian diplomat*, there were several other religious discussion groups including student *pengajian*, *pengajian Nusantara* and women’s *pengajian*. But these groupings were much smaller than that of the diplomats (Interviews, Adnan 2017; Umar 2017).

The Indonesian Muslim community was refreshed every three to five years with the return of the existing diplomats or Indonesian professionals and the arrival of new ones. Such exchanges prolonged the list of Muslim activists contributing to the development of the Indonesian Muslim community in the area. Among the newcomers in the 1980’s were Professor Harun al-Rasyid and Navizon Djohan who served as the Deputy Attaché for the Educational and Industrial Affairs respectively. A new development occurred in 1986 or 1987 when the Indonesian Muslims were allowed to use the Garuda hall of their Embassy to perform the weekly congregational *Jumu’ah* prayer by the then Ambassador Soesilo Soedarman, giving birth to the Embassy Muşallá, better known as Muşallá KBRI (Interviews, Adnan 2017; Harun 2018). The factors leading to this development were both internal and external. The external factors transpired in the 1970’s and early 1980’s when the only mosque in Washington DC, which had been inaugurated in 1957 by the American President Dwight

Eisenhower, was being drawn into pro-Saudi or pro-Iranian divides in the aftermath of the 1978 Camp David Accords and the 1979 Iranian Revolution, as well as other issues engulfing the Muslim Middle East (Shahid 2014). These conflicts caused the mosque's closedown for three months in 1983, and the Indonesians who had only known this *masjid* for their *Jumu'ah* had to find an alternative (Interview, Adnan 2017).

According to Adnan: "At the time, there were only five or six Indonesians praying *Jumu'at* at the Islamic Center." Other Indonesian diplomats and professionals did not perform their Friday prayer. "They found that the walk to the mosque was a bit too far" (Interview, Harun, 2018). The twenty-minute walk between the Embassy and the Massachusetts Avenue Islamic Center is relatively far especially in the winter. Being aware that some Indonesian diplomats and staff did not perform *Jumu'at* concerned al-Rasyid and his colleague Djohan. This internal reality combined with the shutdown of the Islamic Center strengthened the efforts of the Indonesian Muslim activists to appeal for the opening of the Embassy for Friday prayers. It was not an easy undertaking since two Indonesian Ambassadors before Soedarman had rejected their plea. However, when the latter allowed the Garuda hall to be transferred into a *muṣallā* on Friday, he argued that this hall had been used many times in the past as a mosque during the *'Id* prayers (Interview, Harun 2018). The hall had also been used to host *ceramahs* (public discussions) on celebration of other Islamic holidays, such as the Prophet's Night Journey (*al-isrā' wa al-mī'rāj*) and Revelation of the Qur'an (*nuzūl al-Qur'ān*). The utilization of the Garuda hall for *Jumu'ah* was the beginning of the birth of the KBRI Muṣallā. This is also the foundational seed for the emergence of the Indonesian Muslim community with its IMAAM *masjid*.

The thought of establishing a mosque had emerged from every segment of the Indonesian Muslim community in the 1980's and 1990's, but the opening of ICMI strengthened this idea. Established in 1990, ICMI was a positive development for Muslims during the Suharto New Order. In his efforts to curb political Islam, Suharto and his military leaders had regarded Muslims as the enemy of the state, seeking to replace Pancasila ideology with an Islamic state. The ruling clique considered Muslims to be *musuh kanan* or right-wing extremists, as opposed to the Communists, considered *musuh kiri* or left-wing extremists (Adam 2016; Ramage 1995, 23, 26). At that time under

Suharto, Christians, especially Catholics, were in a position of power, while Chinese were in the position of wealth and influence (Ramage 1995, 27, 28). For example, the Catholic JB Moerdani, known for his role in Indonesian intelligence and defence since 1974, vowed “to crush” the Muslims (The Jakarta Post 1991). Consequently, suspicions between Suharto or the Indonesian military and Muslims were immense, causing trauma and bitterness in the Muslim community (Ramage 1995, 30–31), as the latter watched their leaders being jailed one by one. The trauma and mistrust were intense, prompting Suharto’s Minister of Religious Affairs Alamsyah Ratu Perwiranegara to argue for the impossibility of Muslims being against the nation’s foundational philosophy, as Pancasila was “*pengorbanan dan hadiah ummat Islam* [a sacrifice and a gift of the Muslim community]” for nationhood (Abdillah n.d.; Perwiranegara 1995, 73; Ramage 1995, 14–15). He is referring to the event on the eve of independence in 1945, when Muslim leaders accepted the more neutral form of the Pancasila rather than pressing for the Islamic version of the Jakarta Charter. This *pengorbanan* was indeed their gift to unify the country.

Efforts by Perwiranegara and others like him slightly eased tensions, yet the trauma lingered. The foundation of ICMI was therefore both the beginning and a continuation in the Muslim-government relations during the Suharto era. Led by ⁶⁴ J. Habibie, who was then Suharto’s Minister of Technology and later his Vice President, ICMI provided a new voice for Muslims and alleviated their bitterness and trauma (Ramage 1995, 90–94). ICMI was a manifestation of Muslim cultural revival and a fruit of Suharto’s more than twenty-years of development, which increased Muslim education and enlarged the middle class. Enthusiasm and hope for the foundation of ICMI was enormous, as government officials, university presidents and professors joined the club. It was felt everywhere in the country and beyond. Indonesian embassies and consulates around the world helped open its chapters. In the American capital of Washington DC, this organization was chaired by an Indonesian economist, Burhanuddin Abdullah, who was then working for the Asian Desk at the International Monetary Fund (IMF). “In Washington DC, ICMI became a platform for us Muslim intellectuals to increase our knowledge in Islamic activism and for network-building. We regularly discussed among ourselves an Islamic vision for a modern, pluralistic [*majemuk*] Indonesia” (Interview,

Abdullah 2018). Such enthusiasm reflects “ICMI as the peak of Islamic [cultural] revival in Indonesia” (Interview, Adnan 2017).

In addition to Abdullah, the ICMI leadership in Washington DC were those who had been active in the diplomatic *pengajian*, the KBRI Muşallá and the community at large. These same people would later serve the committee for the establishment of the mosque. Therefore, it was not a coincidence that the aim in founding the *masjid* was adopted as one of the ICMI programs, since it was a hope and an expectation of the Indonesian Muslim community. ICMI provided them with confidence. Faizal Marzuki, who served as one of ICMI Secretaries at the time, indicates that many Muslim activists were concerned for their children’s religious education. “We were sending our kids to different *masjids* but the culture of those mosques was different from our Indonesian tradition.” He continued: “I sent my children to study at the Shi’ah Mosque in Potomac because there were not many *masjids* around. My children asked why their *adhān* is different from the one they had learned in Indonesia, and why the people in that *masjid* prayed by placing a stone on their *sajadah* (Interview, 2017). Aware of cultural differences between Indonesian Islam and that of other communities, Marzuki argued for the necessity of an Indonesian mosque.

Another ICMI leader and mosque founder agreed that sending children to an Arab mosque or praying there was an issue. “We see a few major differences. Women are not allowed on the main floor while in our mosque women are as active as men in the welfare of the *masjid* and our community” (Interview, Kadir 2017). Language was also a concern. “Our community wanted religious discussions to be given in Indonesian, so they could fully understand it. Having our own *masjid* could fulfil such a need” (Interviews, 13 Women 2017; Zubir 2018). Adnan and Umar provide another reason. Indonesia is the largest Muslim country in the world and the community gradually became larger. “We Indonesians want to contribute in the distribution of Islamic knowledge not just for Indonesian Muslims but also for other American Muslims. We wish to engage in the Islamic discourse and growth. The community believes the mosque could help this orientation and ICMI facilitates such an initiative” (Interviews, Adnan 2017; Umar 2017).

The effort to set up the mosque was not an easy task, but the commitment of the community was extremely strong, and thus by

1993 the committee for establishing the *masjid* was formed. Together they discussed the name, which they agreed upon after some reflections on the meaning of the Islamic sounding IMAAM (Ar. *imām* “leader”), the acronym for the *Indonesian Muslim Association in America*. They also selected the Indonesian name *Himpunan Muslim Indonesia AS* (*HMI Amerika Serikat*) to remind themselves of their affiliation with HMI, or the Association of Muslim University Students, back home in Indonesia. The first funds of \$ 1,500 for the mosque were raised in January 1994 during a farewell dinner for the ICMI head Abdullah, who was to return to Indonesia after finishing his service at IMF. Over one hundred members of the community also contributed a monthly donation through bank drafting for many years. All community *pengajians* raised money, so did the *Waspada* newspaper in Indonesia. Community bazaars, summer camping, Muslim community outings all generated funds for the mosque. Indonesian American Muslims of significant wealth and Indonesian visitors to America donated for this initiative. After twenty-one years of fundraising and collective work, and with the financial assistance from the then Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, the committee purchased an old church building and turned it into a mosque which was inaugurated on 26 September 2014.

IMAAM Mosque: Activities, Challenges and Subgroupings

Located in Silver Spring, Maryland, the IMAAM mosque was the thirteenth or fourteenth *masjid* in the DC area. Established to meet the needs of the growing Indonesian Muslim population in the locality, it is one of the four Indonesian *masjids* in the US: the other three are in New York City, Sugar Land on the outskirts of Houston, Texas, and Los Angeles. The leadership estimates that currently there are about 5,000 Muslims or 1,500 families living in the WDC area (Interviews, Kadir 2017; Sukasih 2017); while the Indonesian Embassy documents 3,027 as of February 2018. The difference in these two records reflects several issues. The first estimation looks at the term “Indonesians” in a broader sense to include all those who still maintain some sense of Indonesianness, including the second or third generations of Indonesian Muslims. Secondly, the *masjid* account includes Indonesians who have never reported their arrival or whereabouts to the Indonesian Embassy and thus live in the US illegally. Cunningham (2009) believes that

“perhaps half as many more [than the official number] reside illegally.” The Embassy version on the other hand documents those Indonesians who report to the Embassy their presence and movement. These include temporary residents such as students and exchange professionals as well as Indonesians of America’s citizens and green card holders.

A Pew Study shows that 77% of Indonesian American adults aged twenty-five or older received college education, while 32% hold bachelor degrees and 16% postgraduate degrees (Rodriguez-Gitler 2017). My study of Indonesian American Muslims reflects the same figure. Most Muslims, just like their non-Muslim counterparts, are well educated. Of twenty-five women interviewed, twenty-one hold a college degree, including three with postgraduate degrees. Similarly, seventeen men interviewed are all with college degrees, including four who attained postgraduate degrees. Pew also reports the income level of Indonesian households in 2015 was \$55,000 to \$57,000 annually, slightly below Korean Americans who made \$60,000 and above Bangladeshis who made \$50,000 (Lopez, Ruiz, and Patten 2017). My own study confirms the same income level of the Indonesian Muslim men, but much lower for the women. The income level of single women is \$35,000, while the household income of husbands and wives is \$50,000. So, despite having a college degree, most women earn less than their male counterparts. Many of these females work in the informal sector, including as babysitters, homemakers, and cleaners.

Most Indonesian Muslims described above are *jamā’ah* of the IMAAM mosque, who participate in many of the *masjid* activities. Among these *jamā’ahs* are teachers who lead different *pengajians* for children or adults. There are more than ten such groupings including the two *sufi tariqahs*. Some of these *jamā’ahs* are small, with fifteen to twenty members, others with thirty to fifty students, while the two largest ones each have over one hundred pupils. In addition to these teacher-led groupings, there are about ten other largely female *pengajians* not led by specific teachers, yet each meet regularly and invite different teachers for their specific discussion needs. Some groups meet weekly through teleconferences, others bi-weekly, and the rest monthly. Imam Fahmi Zubir, for example, leads at least five such non-teacher *pengajians* weekly, in addition to his work for the IMAAM mosque (Interview, Zubir 2017). There are a few differences between non-teacher groupings and the teacher-led *pengajians*. The

latter are initiated by specific teachers at the request of students or their parents, and each student pays a small monthly fee to *mengaji* (study religion) with these teachers. Secondly, the students of these groupings are beginners, so many of them are young children or adults who never properly learned how to read the Qur'an in their youth. Thirdly, the teachers of these *pengajians* design their curriculum largely devoted to learning the Arabic alphabet and recitation of the Qur'an, as well as basic principles of Islamic faith and practice. Finally, these *pengajians* are hosted in specific places, often in the homes of the teachers or students.

In contrast, the non-teacher groupings are initiated by persons who have already acquired basic Qur'anic recitation skills but formed *pengajians* as both religious and social gatherings in order to improve their knowledge of Islam. Members pay monthly membership fees and together contribute to any other expenses of their *pengajians*. All members of these groupings are adults who are friends or live in the same neighborhood. The curriculum of these adult *pengajians* is based on themes selected by members. These groupings may invite specific teachers to lead the discussions on certain themes or task some of the most knowledgeable members to guide their deliberations. Finally, the adult *pengajians* move from one member's house to the next depending on the readiness of the members to host such gatherings. Both adult and teacher-led *pengajians* share a common principle: "to safeguard their faith and to increase their Islamic knowledge." It is a form of *da'wah* (lit. mission or calling) to increase their Islamic authenticity.

In terms of affiliations and *madhāhib*, Indonesian American Muslims fall into different types of moral connections and, with the exception of the two sufi groupings, their affiliation appears informal. This informality refers to their initial affiliation to student activities or religious training when they were back home in Indonesia before migrating to the US, or to their family's active memberships in certain Indonesian Islamic organizations during their formative years. Therefore, many see their connection to the Muhammadiyah, the Nahdlatul Ulama, the Students' Islamic Organization of HMI, campus mosque, or the Justice and Welfare Political Party (PKS). In terms of school of juridicial thought, only the most educated members value their Shāfi'ī *madhhab* or other legal *madhāhib*, while some subscribe to the *lā madhhabiyah*. The favorite community response towards this issue

is: “We are Muslim, and we follow the Qur’an and Ḥadīth”, or “We are *ahl al-sunnah*.” From what I can observe, the mosque’s *jamā’ah* follow the classical Shāfi’ī *madhhab* of Islam, or a combination of different Sunni *madhāhib* on this issue, while some subscribe to the traditional Indonesian *lā madhhabīyah* of Muhammadiyah, compared to the more strict *lā madhhabīyah* promoted by modern salafis. Similarly, the two sufi *tariqahs* are of Shāfi’ī Sunni orientation: one led by a female *wakīl* and her American husband and the other by a male *wazīr*. Both view themselves as official representatives of their *murshids*, who reside in Indonesia.

Da’wah and services are the work of both the mosque and the *pengajian* subgroups. The *masjid* fulfils its mission through numerous spiritual and educational activities including the daily and *jumu’ah* prayers, Ramadan activities, the *masjid*’s weekly *pengajian*, Sunday’s *madrasah* for children, and monthly book launching discussions. Similarly, the *da’wah* work of the private *pengajians* is also spiritual and educational, being both a prelude and a continuation of the IMAAM activities. It is a preamble because a number of these groupings existed before the foundation of the IMAAM *masjid* in 2014. It is a continuation because these *pengajians* complement the mosque’s religious circles and other activities. To highlight the characteristics of the IMAAM work and its connections with the private *pengajians* our discussion here will focus on three *masjid* activities: Friday prayer, the annual fasting Ramadan program, and the Sunday *madrasah* for youth. These are selected because they are the most important and substantial activities of the mosque involving many volunteers: young and old, men and women, as well as Indonesians and non-Indonesians. These are also the activities that require great energy and preparations, not only on the side of the *masjid* leadership but also from the community volunteers.

Ramadan activities last for an entire month, comprising three major programs: *iftār*, the evening ‘*ishā*’ prayer followed by tarāwīḥ devotions, as well as the public Festival prayer of *Ṣalāt al-‘Īd*. The daily *iftār* or breaking-fast meal at sunset is hosted and organized by the mosque. On weekdays about two hundred men, women and children attend this communal *iftār*, but on weekends there are four hundred or more (Observation, Ramadan 2017 & 2018). Preparing food, setting up the room for the *iftār*, cleaning up afterwards and managing the parking are the most

strenuous tasks related to *iftār*. Food is cooked and donated by women of different *pengajians* who take turns throughout the month. The setting up of the room and cleaning are performed by both men and women, while parking arrangements are managed by men. All these men and women happily share the tasks and consider their contributions as a fulfilment of “the Ramadan spirits of charity, togetherness and generosity”; “feeding those who fast is one of the best things we can do in Ramadan. We hope for Allah’s reward” (Interviews, 17 Ramadan Volunteers 2017 & 2018). Similarly, *ṣalāt al-tarāwīḥ* (extra prayers performed during the nights of Ramadan) following the obligatory night prayer (*ṣalāt al-‘ishā*) require preparation, for it is attended by four hundred people on the weekends and three hundred on weekdays. The worshippers were extremely happy with their mosque because it invited an outside *imām* with beautiful recitation technique to serve for the whole month of Ramadan. “When you listen to his recitation of the Words of God your spirits elate. I love to come to this mosque because of the *imām*. I am grateful to the IMAAM *masjid*” (Interviews, 15 Indonesian and Nine non-Indonesian Worshippers 2017 & 2018).

Ramadan is consummated by *Ṣalāt al-‘Īd* that was attended by about 2,500 worshippers in 2018. My observation of the 2017 *Īd* prayer and interviews with worshippers thereafter demonstrates that people had mixed feelings of the overall celebration. While everyone I interviewed agreed with the venue and preparations, some were unhappy with the *khaṭīb* (sermon giver). “The *khuṭbah* [sermon] was too chatty and shallow. Its contents did not stay in your heart” (Interviews, 13 Worshippers 2017). A board member agrees that the 2017 *Īd khuṭbah* was “too ordinary. We picked up the *khaṭīb* based on recommendations” (Interview, Kadir 2017). However, worshippers with a high school degree or two years in college think that the *khuṭbah* was fine (Interviews, Nine Worshippers). The two different reflections indicate that educated Muslims expect a high quality *khuṭbah* on *Īd* since it is only once a year, while the less educated pay less attention to this. However, both classes agree that the *Hari Raya* (Indonesian reference for the *‘Īd* Festival) is valued not just due to *ṣalāt* and *khuṭbah*, but also for a whole set of celebrations: *zakāt al-fiṭrah* (obligatory donations of foodstuffs at the end of Ramadan), *berma’af-ma’afan* (ceremony of mutual forgiveness), social and family visits, and the spiritual sense of accomplishment having finished the entire month of fasting.

Ṣalāt al-jumu'ah is the most visible activity of the *masjid* by far. Due to parking limits, Friday prayer is conducted in two successive waves. Each session is attended by three hundred to four hundred worshippers including fifty to one hundred women. About 70% of worshippers are non-Indonesians of mixed backgrounds, and the fifty-two we interviewed are happy with the sitting arrangement inside the mosque. Women are pleased with the fact that “the main floor of the *masjid* accommodates men and women under one roof. This *masjid* is respectful of women. I like the Indonesian way of treating women” (Interviews, 15 Women; 13 Men 2017). “I always come to this mosque, because we are not put in the basement or in a separate room away from the *khātib* and *imām*” (Interviews, Five Worshippers 2018). While all are delighted with the overall ambience of the IMAAM mosque, their views on the *khātib*s and *imāms* are mixed.

The Friday *khuṭbah* at IMAAM *masjid* is generally delivered by various *khātib*s who themselves serve as *imāms* of different *masājid* (sg. *masjid*) in the WDC vicinity, and the assigned duty *khātib* is also tasked to lead the Friday prayer. The IMAAM's own *imām* from Indonesia is also given the task to serve as the Friday *khātib* and *imām*, along with several other Indonesians. While recognizing the language barrier and the issue of Arabic Qur'ānic *fasāḥah* (eloquence), worshippers appreciate different *imāms* and *khātib*s (Interviews, 14 Worshippers 2017). “Inviting local *imāms* to serve as *khātib*s is our creative undertaking (Interview, Kadir 2017). This creative effort is commendable as many local *khātib*s do deliver “insightful *khuṭbah*s that stay in our heart for days for reflection” (Interviews, 15 Worshippers 2017). Professor Karim Crow who is a regular worshipper at this *masjid* agrees: “These *khātib*s provide insight into local mosque leaders, and their *khuṭbah*s are reflective and deep. For this very reason I like this mosque” (Interview, 2017). Everyone agrees that the mosque leadership demonstrates utmost dedication to making the Friday prayer meetings run smoothly and being as beneficial as possible.

Like *ṣalāt al-jumu'ah*, IMAAM's Sunday *madrasah* is also a weekly program. Founded in May 1994 with only twenty-three children and five teachers, today the *madrasah* has over two hundred pupils with fifty-eight teachers. It meets every Sunday in the County's rented public school, some blocks from the mosque. In addition to students, teachers and the management, more than fifty parents, largely

women, gather in different groups of social or study circles, while their children are in class. The classes are divided into two segments: Qur'ān and Islamic knowledge. The Qur'ānic classes run from basic introduction to Arabic Qur'ānic alphabets, to proper recitation of the Qur'ān. The students in these classes are quite mixed, from a young age to teenagers depending on their ability to correctly read the Islamic scripture in Arabic.

My observations of the classes and drills of students show that less than 20% of students in the highest classes can truly recite the Qur'ān with a sound recitation. "It is not easy; we only meet once a week for ninety minutes. Those students who recite well are those whose parents pay attention and teach their kids at home" (Interviews, Sukasih 2017; Wati 2018; Nine Teachers & Five Assistant Teachers 2017). Parents not only teach them at home daily but also send their children to study with private teachers in various *pengajians*. One of the pioneer teachers and first vice-principal of this *madrasah* who was also a private teacher for many years, states: "studying with private teachers has a success-failure ratio of 70:30 but the success ratio of our *madrasah* is reversed to 30:70" (Interview, Istiadi 2018). Parents interviewed for this study agree: "There is a limitation of what our children can learn in this *madrasah*. Yet, it is very important. Those of us who want our kids to achieve mastery, we further teach them at home or send them to a private teacher" (Interviews, 17 Parents 2017).

Islamic knowledge classes perform better than Qur'ānic classes, and are divided into primary, secondary and high school. Unlike the division of the Qur'ānic classes based primarily on students' ability, the knowledge classes are split according to age group. Fifty to sixty percent of students in these classes are extremely active and show serious interest in the subject matter. Most teachers are highly motivated although a few are sometimes incapable of handling tricky modern issues. For example, the issue of 'divine gender' was raised in one of the primary classes, and the teacher was not equipped to deal with such a "typical" American question, although he was born and raised in the US. However, during my three class observations, the high school level single class comprising between 25 and 29 students demonstrated the students' lack of interest. Less than 15% of students were highly motivated, 30% paid attention to the subject, while the rest looked bored. In fact, two students in the class were just there in body alone.

My interviews with thirteen students indicate that the active ones (the first two groups) have learned Islam from a young age, and their parents pay close attention to cultivating better Islamic understanding and practices. Similarly, parents of less interested students encourage their children to study and practice Islam, but do not have time to monitor their progress. These students said they attend class under parental pressure. One inattentive student added: "If I have a choice I would rather be elsewhere." The teacher of this class is also a factor. He does not encourage all his students to be active saying: "If half of the class pays attention it is good enough; I cannot force everyone to be active." Overall the teachers try their very best, and there is a limit to what the *madrasah* management can hope for, since all of the teachers except one are volunteers.

In addition to the role of the teachers, students' progress depends on their parents. Seventeen parents interviewed included five non-Indonesians. "We are here for our children, for our culture, and for our own spiritual uplifting," said a mother of two young girls. Seven other women sitting around her agreed. An African American father also expresses a similar sentiment. "This Indonesian *madrasah* is important for my children. They are learning very well" (Interview, 2017). All these parents stress the importance of religion for their children's lives. "Religion is the path to *jannah* [paradise]," said four women. "It guides them to know what is right and wrong" and "It is '*rem*' [a break] for their existence." Seven parents voiced this view. Three women mentioned the importance of *akhlāq* ['good character-traits'] taught by religion. All parents want their children to become "good human beings", and two women added: "going to college or not is not important to me, but I do want my children to be good persons and have decent lives."

Eleven Indonesian parents expressed a nationalist concern for essential Indonesian culture gained through attending the *madrasah*. "I want my children to know Indonesian culture and be proud of their Indonesian ancestry," two women told me. Four women added that "learning religion in this *madrasah* is not very effective, but it is good for inculcating culture. I send my children to study Islam with a private teacher and it is a lot better. But this *madrasah* is very important for exposure to Indonesian and Islamic culture." Three parents voiced the importance of being with other Muslim children in the *madrasah*. "I live in a very white neighborhood with no Muslims around. All of

my children's friends are either Jewish or Christian. So, I want my children to know that they are not the only Muslims," two of the three specified. All of these parents are "very" concerned about the urban social problems faced by their children: pre-marital sex and internet pornography, drugs and alcohol addiction. They believe religion may serve as a "controller" for their children's lives and wellbeing. Finally, the parents are also there for their own social and spiritual uplifting. "This is a form of *silaturahmi* [observing the bonds of blood kinship]. While sitting here waiting for our children, we form study circles and listen to the *ceramah* [religious sermon]," which is given every Sunday from 1:00-2:00 by the mosque's *imām* or his wife. Overall, both the parents and their children consider this *madrasah* an important institution for their spiritual and social enrichment.

The issue of Indonesian Islam referred to by the *jamā'ah* may be understood from their self-expressions presented throughout the paper. It can be summarized by the following: First, they are Sunni Muslims representing moderate versions of Islam as practiced in their country of origin, Indonesia. Secondly, they recognize religious and cultural differences even among themselves, and therefore are more tolerant of differing schools of thought and cultural practices. Thirdly, they are proud of Indonesia's rich culture and ethnicity, and see their Islamic religious affiliation as the essential "marker of Indonesian national identity" (Kingsbury 2005, 88–92). Further, they value more open, healthy relations between men and women in both mosque and community, which is different from the more segregated gender demarcation of certain Middle Eastern American Muslim communities. Finally, they see Indonesian Muslims as more polite and respectful of others, especially towards parents and the elderly, as well as softer and more loving in child rearing and value inculcation, which are important cultural and religious ingredients to be handed down to their children. Such an understanding of Indonesian Islam is an important factor uniting them as Muslims and Indonesians.

This mosque faces a number of challenges especially youth and "un-mosqued" Muslims. Youth is an issue of great concern among the IMAAM adults. So much so that the founder, Firdaus Kadir, even talked about it during his 2018 Ramadan speech counsel on Friday, 25th May (= 10th Ramaḍān 1439). "There are over two hundred of us here in the *masjid*, where are our youth?" reiterating his concern. When

interviewed Kadir said: “We are rather selfish that we think more of ourselves than about our youth. We have not found a way to reach out to them” (Interview, 2017). Eighteen youth interviewed agreed that they have not been on the top of IMAAM’s list of priority. Seven of these young adults function as both students and teachers at the *madrasah*, seven as students, and four as teachers only. They express a double struggle: on the one hand, while trying to be true to their faith, some encounter external pressure to fit-in among their peers, others are being judged for their faith, four experience discrimination personally such as name calling, and three know Muslim girls whose head scarves were “pulled off by someone” on the street. Eleven say that they are often “forced” to talk or defend Islam among their peers or even teachers.

These young adults’ internal challenges are of two types: Family and the IMAAM Islamic community. They refer to these two institutions as “adults,” “our parents,” or “our *masjid*.” They all love their parents and the mosque but feel that they are not well understood. Five express that the adults are so afraid that “we lose our Islam,” and for them “Islam and being Muslim is a single most important issue, while for us Islam is one of the many issues of concern. We think about our education, jobs, friends, etc.” Nine believe that there is the issue of trust. “Our parents are worried about us and therefore they do not trust us. They think of us as being westernized.” Four others said: “They want us to uphold their Asian Indonesian culture, while we no longer share such aspirations. We are actually more Americanized than we admit.” Three girls utter the issue of marriage. “Our adults want us to get married as soon as we reach our age, while marriage is not on the top of our priority.” “They want us to continue being Indonesian as they are, but this is not possible,” said two others. Seven think that “our parents are not open-minded when it comes to the issue of religion. The fact that they mingle only with Indonesians makes them think of one way of being Muslim: the Indonesian way.”

All criticize the *masjid* for catering largely to the needs of the adults. “They bring speakers from Indonesia. Although they are famous speakers, they don’t talk in our language of English with American idioms. We want them to understand that we are American speaking youth.” Two said: “85% of the *masjid* programs are for them [adults], and even when they create programs for the youth, we do not feel connected.”

Three others think: “Our parents and the elders want us to be just like them. They criticize everything we do and try to micromanage our lives. They know that we are no longer children but young adults who can be responsible for our lives.” One says, and her friends agree: “Our parents and *masjid* should let us grow and make a few mistakes along the way. They should trust us.” Kadir believes the criticism of these young adults reflects the reality, while Sukasih thinks otherwise. “We understand their points, and these are not new. We try our best to accommodate their needs. We gave them roles and responsibility a few times, but they did not perform their tasks.” The differences in view of the two leaders reflect the challenge of understanding young minds, and Sukasih’s opinions reinforce the complaints of these young adults that the “elders don’t trust us.”

Furthermore, the IMAAM leadership also expresses concern over un-mosqued Muslims, namely, those who do not affiliate themselves with Islamic religious institutions, or those “who have become non-religious, or who do not identify themselves primarily by their religion” (Leonard 2003, 43). “There are over five thousand Indonesian Muslims in the DC area. Only 20% participate in our weekly or Ramadan events, while another 25% attend the *‘Id* prayers. The rest are succumbing to the dominant secular culture” (Interview, Kadir 2017). Umar and Sukasih agreed: “We failed to reach out to them.” The young adults also think that more than 80% of youth “do not come to, or care about the *masjid*” (Interviews, 2017); IMAAM founders and the leadership agree. Some un-mosqued youth belong to parents who are active in the *masjid*, but many others are children of un-mosqued parents themselves. The issue of un-mosqued youth falls outside the purview of this study, since their concerns and conditions are different from those of adults. Nineteen un-mosqued adults were interviewed for this study. Nine of these are working class men and women, including three who have lived in America illegally from between four and twenty-one years. Two of the nine were seamen before settling in the United States. Seven others are women whose husbands or former husbands are Americans of different backgrounds, while three are male, one of whom married a Dutch American woman. These last ten are professionals or wives of high-income families.

The un-mosqued Indonesian Muslims can be divided into two categories: secular and non-IMAAM Muslims. The secular group

consist of two types: the working class and upper-middle class. Nine individuals of the working class all consider themselves Muslim but seven have never come to any IMAAM functions nor to any other mosque; while two of them do attend the *Ṭd* prayer. Four are married to other Indonesians; three with non-Indonesians; and two are single, one man and one woman. Five from this working-class group use American names at work and among friends, while the other four keep their Indonesian names. None of the nine eat pork but four consume alcohol occasionally. They do not attend the mosque, because they have “no time,” or “are busy,” or “it’s too far from my home.” The seven married men and woman of this class are parents with young children or youth and recognize themselves and their children as “having been Americanized.” Two women stated: “I want my children to learn Islam but I am myself not a good Muslim. I forgot what I had learned as a young girl in Indonesia.” Two men believe that “it is very easy to forget religion in this country especially when we struggle to make ends meet.” Two men and three women utter that “I regretted having gone away from my religion and hope one day to return to Islam. I still keep the Qur’ān that I brought from Indonesia.” Two women with young children say: “I want to take my children to the *madrasah* but I don’t drive while my husband is working on Sunday.” The life experience of the secularized working-class Indonesians demonstrates they have not completely forgotten Islam; thinking of their parents back home in Indonesian is one factor that “could bring me back to my religion—I want to pray for my parents,” one man remarked.

The second type of secular Indonesian Muslims is the wealthier class represented by four women and three men, with three other women representing the non-IMAAM group. The upper-middle class and the non-IMAAM group share a great deal in common but also exhibit differences. The difference between them lies in the issue of religiosity and observance of Islamic practice. The non-IMAAM Indonesians are practicing Muslims who occasionally go to a non-Indonesian mosque to pray. Two previously joined the Indonesian *masjid* but now stopped going, because “I can no longer associate myself with the mosque”; while the third has never participated in IMAAM’s activities. The three women also think that the IMAAM community is “judgmental of other Muslims who are different from them.” These three women insist on their being good Muslims and the importance of community. “But

to be with one you don't have to be just at the Indonesian mosque," said one woman. Therefore, these three are not truly un-mosqued.

Unlike the non-IMAAM Indonesians, the upper class do not perform Islamic practices, including *ṣalāt* and fasting. Nevertheless, in response to the question about religious affiliation, all but one think of themselves as Muslim. The one person who does not was a professor of philosophy at a university and thinks of herself as being 'humanist'. Knowing that humanism is often aligned with atheism, I pressed her further: "Do you believe in God?" Her response was: "I cannot say that God exists or does not exist." In spite of her adherence to humanism, she still attends IMAAM's *Ṣalāt al-ʿĪd* to celebrate the end of Ramadan. The others acknowledge that they do not pray or fast regularly but insist on their identity as Muslim. "Even my husband who converted to Islam to marry me thinks of himself as Muslim," said one woman. Another who used to volunteer at the *madrasah* said: "my *ṣalāt* is *bolong-bolong* [full of holes] and so is my fasting. But, I still believe in God." One man says of himself: "I don't pray or fast. I also drink occasionally. Yet, I am still Muslim, I guess a Muslim by culture. I learned the Qur'ān when I was young but living in this country made me adopt a new culture, the dominant American culture." Another man adds: "I did not plan that way—it just happened; if I were to befriend Muslims, I may again become observant." The experience of these men and women show the complexity of human religious experience and the difficulty of maintaining one's faith in the absence of a supportive cultural and religious environment.

As we indicated, the secular Muslim upper class and the non-IMAAM group have a few things in common: they are relaxed about their children's religious upbringing, pro-government politics, and critical of Indonesian Islam and the IMAAM mosque. Children's education is important to these men and women, and so is their religious upbringing. The three non-IMAAM Muslim women think of religion as "very important" in life. One wants her children to remain Muslim. "My husband and I take them to different mosques. They are doing fine and are proud of being Muslim." The second one has children from her first marriage, and all are adults now living in Indonesia. The third one acknowledges that her children "have been completely Americanized. They grew up in different countries and the circumstances did not help their religious education." She continues:

"Although I myself know Islam well, I could not properly teach them. Like many parents we can sometimes teach other children but not our own. I cannot blame my children as they are good human beings." This woman who was a *dosen* at a university in Indonesia before marrying her American banker-husband acknowledges that given a chance to do it all over again, "I would like my children to be more Islam-oriented, but of course a peaceful and merciful Islam, *rahmatan lil'ālamīn* [mercy to the worlds]."

The seven upper class interviewees are even more relaxed when it comes to their children's Islamic education. One woman sent her two children to the IMAAM *madrasah* and its Summer Camp for some time, but when her son was insulted over his attire, the mother was upset. "I removed my son and daughter from the *madrasah* and stopped attending the Camp. I teach my children that Islam is about peace, love and respect, but IMAAM ⁴⁹ not embody these values. Why should I send my children to them?" Two other women and one man said: "I don't trust my children to people whom I don't know, and I especially don't trust the *imām* they brought from Indonesia. I would rather teach them myself." Still another woman stated: "I want my children to understand Islam but at the same time respect other religions, so I teach them myself. Occasionally we listen together to lectures by Shaykh Hamzah Yusuf or Seyyed Hossein Nasr." All of these men and women except one acknowledge that their children "have been Americanized," and are now given "the choice to select their own religions as they grow up." For these men and women, as well as for the non-IMAAM Muslims, "religion is a private matter" and believe that all faiths uphold values that teach "goodness and truth." Similarly, they recognize that their children "cannot read the Qur'ān in Arabic but may learn through its translation." The woman humanist indicates that her son is learning Arabic and thinks of himself as Muslim: "His faith is not yet settled." All of the upper class think of their children as "fine human beings" and are "proud of them."

Other characteristics shared by both secular upper class and non-IMAAM group are pro-government politics, and being critical of Indonesian Islam and the IMAAM mosque. These men and women are staunch supporters of the Jokowi government in Jakarta and think that the President's policies are pro-poor and "great for Indonesia." Four are extremely bitter about the 2017 Jakarta election with Ahok's failed

reelection, while all ten blame the politicization of Islam for his loss. They criticize the blasphemy law and consider him a victim of “radical Islam.” From their perspective, Ahok did not do anything wrong to cause his own downfall, for it happened due to Muslim mass street protests. They view radical Islam as “intolerant Islam,” while “the actual Islam is *rahmatan lil ‘ālamīn*”— and ask: “where is *rahmah* for Shi’ahs, for Ahmadis, and for different interpretations of Islam?” “This is not the Islam I grew up with,” affirmed one man and one woman. They think Indonesia has today become “an intolerant country and Muslims are extremely intolerant of differences.” They all emphasized: “I care about Indonesia because my extended family are all there.” They feel such intolerant Islam is being practiced by the IMAAM *masjid* here. Their criticism arises from the following complaints: the *imām* they brought, the speakers they invite, the *hijāb* requirement upon entering the *masjid* and the weekly *madrasah*, and the community’s interpretation of Islam, as well as its anti-Jokowi anti-Ahok sentiments.

I posed their concerns to the IMAAM leadership and *jamā’ah*. “I don’t think our *masjid* is practicing ‘radical Islam.’ We are open and tolerant.” (Interviews, Umar 2018; Harun 2018; Chassah 2018). “We conduct interfaith dialogues and intra-faith meetings with a Shi’ah mosque” (Interview, Kadir 2018). “Head-cover is not required by the mosque; but of course there is the etiquette of entering the *masjid* or being in the *madrasah*” (Interviews, Umar 2018; Zubir 2018; Wati 2018). “Those customs are not formally written, and many women cover by their own choice” (Interview, Zubir 2018). Seven community members as well as six parents who do not cover outside *madrasah* and *masjid* all confirm: “It is just the proper manner of conduct!” Two other women who cover when accompanying their children to the *madrasah* gave this reason: “because everyone else is covered,” recognizing there was a sense of communal pressure to conform. Parents and the un-mosqued agree that the change happened after 2000 when many new Indonesian Muslims arrived in the aftermath of the 1998 economic crisis.

Regarding the anti-Jokowi anti-Ahok sentiments, the leadership thinks that many Muslims ⁶³ associated with the *masjid* voted for Jokowi “including myself and my family” (Interview, a Board Member 2018). However, many were anti-Ahok, not because he is Chinese or Christian but rather because of “his policy and uncivil manners.” Nineteen

community members and eleven parents shared the above points. Fourteen (or 49%) voted for Jokowi in the 2014 presidential elections, thirteen (or 43%) voted for Prabowo, while three did not disclose their choice. However, five who had voted for Jokowi have now become critical of his policy. Similarly, if they were to vote in the 2017 Jakarta election, 69% would have voted for Anies Baswedan. They did not like Ahok, not because of his race or religion, but rather because “he is *kasar* [rude] and not as clean as his supporters made us to believe.” They are especially critical of Ahok’s policies on the reclamation of Jakarta Bay and the eviction (*penggusuran*) of the poor.

This political debate demonstrates several points. First, there is a clear distinction between the secular working class and the upper-middle class, as the former are more self-centered, avoiding Indonesian politics, and have a more neutral view of the IMAAM mosque. This is largely because they struggle daily in order to make a living, and thus “have no time for politics.” Second, there is a misunderstanding between IMAAM *masjid* and the un-mosqued. This misapprehension is exacerbated by the fact that Indonesian Muslims as a whole, both here in America and in Indonesia, have become more religious, both publicly and privately, and this new sense of religiosity creates additional complexity. The Muslims influenced by Arabian style Wahhabism develop a flat, conformist understanding of Islam and are intolerant of differences, although a large majority remain open and respectful of others. However, there is a sense of communal pressure that everyone should think in a certain way and act outwardly in the same manner. This, and the increasing Islamicity of the Muslim population, whether in Indonesia (Chaplin 2018) or in America, is uncomfortable for both secular Muslims and non-Muslims. In their discomfort they seem to equate religiosity and intolerance, Islamicity and radicalism. In the context of the IMAAM mosque, this misunderstanding must be understood by the leadership if they wish to sincerely reach out to the un-mosqued.

Conclusion

Our study of the Indonesian American Muslims demonstrates significant immigration and integration phenomena. It confirms well-established theories on the complexity of human migrations and population movements within wider political and economic contexts. A

combination of factors including economic, political, geographical and religious, governs peoples' choice to migrate as a "push–pull process" — unfavourable conditions at home and favourable situations in a target place. The Indonesian Muslim movements to America are driven by a range of factors, while socio-economic opportunities remain the primary pull. Upon arrival in the continent and the United States, many Indonesians adjusted by adopting the prevalent culture as with the *Indo Belanda*. Many others, however, demonstrated resilience and capacity to act independently, despite strong structural forces tending toward assimilation or complete integration. The experience of the Javanese in Suriname in preserving their Indonesianness and Islamicity is an outstanding example. Many circumstances regulated the choices of the two communities, yet religious identity is a powerful factor. Similarly, Indonesian Muslims in the Washington DC area reflect the same acting agency. Their capacity, as individuals or groups, to negotiate with the structural secular culture of the United States, resulted in two different responses. The un-mosqued upper class Muslims chose to assimilate due to economic and cultural comforts, while the secular working class did so because of their economic and cultural struggle. The IMAAM community on the other hand determined to maintain their Muslim identity and culturally religious practices in spite of social or financial limitations and structural obstacles. Many struggled economically but religion provided them with a sense of meaning and purpose in life. This is the most important factor that kept them in check. Finally, both the *jamā'ah* and un-mosqued Muslims, as did the *Indos* and Javanese Surinamese, made choices as agents in their efforts of adjusting to their new environment. Whatever the choice is, it is a reflection of human free-will.

Endnotes

1. The 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act is an American law designed to admit immigrants of all nationalities on an equal basis. The law eliminated the use of national-origin quotas, under which the overwhelming majority of immigrant visas were set aside for people coming from northern and Western Europe.
2. Rianto Adi (1996, 123–24) in his study on Indonesia’s international labour migration reports that between 1969–1974 the country sent 23,849 documented workers to the U.S.
3. Fridus Steijlen (2009) estimates that two & one-half percent of the Indo Dutch of Moluccan lineage living in the Netherlands in 1950 were Muslim. See “Indisch en Moluks Religieus Leven in na-Oorlogs Nederland.” Retrieved May 13th, 2018, from <http://www.tongtong.nl/indische-school/contentdownloads/steijlen.pdf>.
4. Sjadzali was the Political Attache at the Indonesian Embassy in Washington DC in 1956–1959, and the Minister of Religious Affairs in 1983–1993.
5. Balbed and Djono arrived in the US in 1956 after touring the world by foot and bicycle. Their adventures were reported both in Indonesia and the US (for the US reports refer to *The Indiana Star*, August 19th, 1956; and *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, September 17th, 1956).
6. It is true that the Twelver Shi’ah call to prayer contains certain phrases like : *ḥayya ‘alā khayr al-‘amal* (after *ḥayya ‘alā al-ṣalāh*), and *asbhadu anna ‘Aliyan walī-Allāh* (after *asbhadu anna Muḥammadan rasūlullāh*). The first phrase was actually an original part of the adhān at the Prophet’s era but was dropped under the second caliph ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb [see article “*Adhān*” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed.]. The second phrase asserting the first *imām* ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib’s status as God’s vicegerent was a doctrinal addition popularized under the Shi’ah Safavid Shahs ruling in Iran from the sixteenth century CE.
7. Shi’ah prostrate in prayer on things deemed part of the earth following the tradition of the Prophet as reported by Jābir bin ‘Abdullāh: “The earth has been made for me (and my followers) a place for praying and a thing to perform *tayammum*. Therefore, my followers can pray whenever the time of a prayer is due” (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, *ḥadīth* 331 on *tayammum*, and *ḥadīth* 429 on *ṣalāt*). Clay lumps used by Shi’ah are called *turbah* (from Ar. *turāb*, soil), or *mubr* in Persian.
8. *Lā madhhabīyah* is a rejection of established legal rites (*madhhab*) arguing that Muslims should not exercise *taqlīd* (following authoritative juridical opinions) but individually draw their legal practices directly from the Qur’an and the Ḥadīth. However, it has been viewed by many scholars as dangerous since the Muslim masses who have not attained the rank of *ijtihād* (independent legal reasoning) do need to follow the *mujtahid* (authoritative juridical expert implementing *ijtihād*). For the debates on this consult Muḥammad Sa’id Ramaḍān al-Būṭī, at www.sunnipubs.com, www.marifah.net.

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Guidelines

Submission of Articles

Studia Islamika, published three times a year since 1994, is a bilingual (English and Arabic), peer-reviewed journal, and specializes in Indonesian Islamic studies in particular and Southeast Asian Islamic studies in general. The aim is to provide readers with a better understanding of Indonesia and Southeast Asia's Muslim history and present developments through the publication of articles, research reports, and book reviews.

The journal invites scholars and experts working in all disciplines in the humanities and social sciences pertaining to Islam or Muslim societies. Articles should be original, research-based, unpublished and not under review for possible publication in other journals. All submitted papers are subject to review of the editors, editorial board, and blind reviewers. Submissions that violate our guidelines on formatting or length will be rejected without review.

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2. Booth, Anne. 1988. "Living Standards and the Distribution of Income in Colonial Indonesia: A Review of the Evidence." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 19(2): 310–34.
3. Feener, Michael R., and Mark E. Cammack, eds. 2007. *Islamic Law in Contemporary Indonesia: Ideas and Institutions*. Cambridge: Islamic Legal Studies Program.
4. Wahid, Din. 2014. *Nurturing Salafi Manhaj: A Study of Salafi Pesantrens in Contemporary Indonesia*. PhD dissertation. Utrecht University.
5. Utriza, Ayang. 2008. "Mencari Model Kerukunan Antaragama." *Kompas*. March 19: 59.
6. Ms. *Undhang-Undhang Banten*, L.Or.5598, Leiden University.
7. Interview with K.H. Sahal Mahfudz, Kajen, Pati, June 11th, 2007.

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