

# **HALAL FOOD AND HUMAN-GOD RELATIONSHIP: THE STUDY OF MUSLIM INDONESIAN STUDENTS IN STOCKHOLM**

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## ABSTRACT

One of the rules written in the Quran is that Muslims shall consume only *halal* food and drink. Since Indonesia is a Muslim-majority country, the society accommodates Muslims with easy access to *halal* products, or at least such is the common assumption among Indonesians. This thesis follows a group of Muslim Indonesian students who study in Stockholm and their reactions to the lack of options for *halal* food. The findings suggest that the freedom of interpreting the Quran plays a pivotal role in producing the diversity of decisions of how and what to eat among Muslim Indonesian students. Moreover, since such difficult decision making is not required when these students are in Indonesia, they are then forced to rearticulate their perception towards their own belief and reinvent themselves as full-fledged religious beings as soon as they step into the secular environment of Stockholm.

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## Chapter One: Introduction

There are three well-respected universities in Stockholm: KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm University, and Karolinska Institute. The three of them have been attracting Indonesian students to pursue their graduate studies there. Thus is not because these universities do not offer undergraduate programs, but because it is easier for Indonesian students to get funding for overseas graduate studies. Every Indonesian students I met in Stockholm are in their graduate studies, master's programs and doctoral programs. Most of them are studying engineering and computer sciences, I am only aware of one communications science student, one sociology student, and one public health student. That is the reason why I often heard them talking with each other about topics like renewable energy, mobile applications, or electrical waves. If I was not interviewing someone, I would usually be silent within the conversations because I had not enough knowledge of such topics to not sound unintelligent in front of the others.

Most of these Indonesian students are in Stockholm for master's programs. I only noticed three students out of every Indonesian student that I am aware of who are in their doctoral programs: two in KTH and one in Karolinska Institute. Out the 17 Muslim Indonesian students that I interviewed, only four of them who do not go to the KTH: three go to Karolinska Institute and one goes to Stockholm University. Thus is the reason I only have been to the KTH to conduct interviews and observations (I have been to both KTH buildings, it has two buildings in Stockholm). Because it was easier for me to meet the KTH students face-to-face and conduct multiple interviews in one day, I preferred to go to KTH and make multiple appointments for one time I visited KTH.

These Indonesian students come from various parts of Indonesia: Sumatera, Java, Bali, and Sulawesi. Most of them come from Java, yet this does not mean that the Java students speak the same language with the same accent. Of course they speak Bahasa Indonesia, but they have different regional languages and accents. Those who come from Jabodetabek (area consisting of the cities Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, and Bekasi) do not have apparent accent, but those who come from West, Central, and East Java have thick accents. West Javanese have thick Sundanese accent, Central and East Javanese have thick Javanese ('*Jawa*' accent, we call it '*medhok*' accent) which only Javanese who can differentiate the varieties. Central and East Javanese usually talk in Javanese when they are around each other, while everybody else (including the West Javanese) do not usually talk in their regional languages.

This kind of diversity usually can only be found in popular public universities in Indonesia: universities like University of Indonesia, Gadjah Mada University, or Bandung Institute of Technology attract tens of thousands of applicants from across the country because they are considered 'prestigious'. By 'prestigious' I mean there is a common notion that graduates from these universities would get better chance of getting jobs in big companies. I suppose that is also the aim of students who get their graduate degrees from overseas: at least there is a blatant proof that they have better experience in using English every day. Good English skills are always in the requirement lists of big companies.

Indonesia is a Muslim majority country which also happens to be the country with the most Muslim population worldwide. Islam first came to Indonesia around the 13<sup>th</sup> century through trading activities (Boellstorff, 2005: 576). Based on the national census done by the BPS (*Badan Pusat Statistik*: the Indonesian body of statistics) in 2010, the number of Muslim population in Indonesia reached 207,176,162 which is 87.18% of the country's population at the time (*Hasil*

*Sensus Penduduk – Kewarganegaraan, Suku Bangsa, Agama, dan Bahasa Sehari-hari Penduduk Indonesia*, BPS, 2010: 10). Out of these 200 million plus Muslims, I managed to meet with 17 of them who are in the middle of their graduate studies in Stockholm. I was aware of other two Muslim Indonesian students, but I did not have the chance to meet either of them. To keep in mind, these 19 are not the only Muslim Indonesians who live in Stockholm. Other than students, there are Muslim Indonesians who work in Stockholm at various companies and at the Indonesian embassy itself. My sister is one of the special cases: she came to Stockholm to study but she decided to stay and work there as a software developer. She, as can be inferred by her inclusion in this context, is a Muslim.

Compared to the place where these Muslim Indonesians come from, Sweden is the home of only approximately 500,000 Muslims (in 2009) which is only 5.38% of the Swedish population (Kettani, 2010: 161). Sweden itself has officially been a secular country ever since the national Lutheran Church was separated from the state in 2000 (Lovheim & Axner, 2011: 58). The apparent statistical difference between Indonesia and Sweden regarding the number of Muslim population must have taken an apparent different as well in people of both countries' attitude towards religious issues. I would like to substitute the everyday term of 'attitude' with the concept of 'habitus' coined by Pierre Bordieu.

The conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce *habitus*, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. (Bordieu, 1980 (1990 trans.): 53)

The Muslim Indonesian students have been spending most of their lifetimes living in a Muslim-majority country, and it shapes their unconscious dispositions towards other people in

general and towards any life obstacles that they may have. For a Muslim, he/she is obliged to obey the rules of Islam in order to be considered a ‘good Muslim’ by him/herself, by other people, and especially by god himself. Regarding that obligation, one of those life obstacles for a Muslim is finding the right food and drink to consume. This is where this research comes in: to study the transformation of habitus, the dispositions—the (un)conscious ones—of the Muslim Indonesian students who temporally move to a country where Muslims are the minority. That transformation within their habitus, of course, I argue that it may bring about a new way of how these Muslim Indonesian students perceive and handle their belief within the broad sense of everyday activities.

### **Muslim Indonesians and *Halal* Food**

The life of a Muslim is highly regulated from the food that we eat, the clothes that we are wearing, the words that we said, and the moment we get into bed and to the very moment we open our eyes in the morning. Every act done is a form of worship and to be taken as fulfilment of one religious obligation. Similarly, eating halal food is *wajib* (obligatory) upon every Muslim and will be rewarded in this world and the hereafter and eating haram food is prohibited. For a Muslim to eat animal meat and animal meat based products it has to be slaughtered in the halal manner. (Ramli, 2014: 156)

As explained above by Noriah Ramli, eating proper *halal* food is a must for a Muslim. It is a sin for those who consume non-*halal* food or drink. Every sin is counted and accumulated, having more sins than merits would mean punishment in the afterlife. Thus, logically, it is better for a Muslim to avoid non-*halal* food/drink in order to guarantee his/her place in god’s heaven.

Since Indonesia is a Muslim-majority country, it is a common practice there to eat and cook only *halal* food. Even restaurant owners who do not believe in Islamic teachings would normally put *halal* label in front of their restaurants to assure Muslims that they could eat there. When there is a restaurant that uses pork/lard in their dishes, people would already know about it since such

information spreads quickly: because the mindset of Muslims in Indonesia is to avoid non-*halal* food not to find the *halal* ones, such restaurant would normally gain more attention. Since there are more restaurants that sell *halal* food only, the mindset of Muslims in Indonesia can be illustrated like this: “among 1,000 restaurants around this area which I cannot remember most of, we cannot eat at restaurants numbers 60, 71, 721, and 920.” Out of 1,000 restaurants, one person can remember precisely which of them sell non-*halal* dishes.

### **Research Problems and Question**

The community of Muslim Indonesia students in Stockholm come from the place where the production of *halal* food is even guaranteed and controlled by the state (see chapter III). On the other hand, the state of Sweden does not assure that Muslims would always get easy access to *halal* products. This resulting to a situation where these students must do extra efforts to find the right food, the right place to find food, and the right way to make food in order to keep themselves from *haram* food. Thus, the research question raised is: “how do Muslim Indonesian students keep their piety when the state and the society do not accommodate them in their mission to become ‘good Muslims’?” Through the analysis of in-depth interviews and observations, this thesis would give the answer which involves the spectrums of ‘morality’ and ‘interpretations of religious teachings’.

### **Literature Review (Contribution)**

In his 2009 article, Samuli Schielke explains a temporal change of moral state happening to the Egyptian youth during one month of Ramadhan.

Ramadan football is an ambivalent exercise. It is one of the gatherings so characteristic of the sense of community that prevails in the month of fasting, and a way to kill time that is not deemed immoral or un-Islamic. But at the same time it shows a very complex understanding of religion and morality. Not only does it mix ascetic discipline with fun and entertainment, it is also part of a time of exceptional morality that, by its nature, will only last as long as Ramadan lasts, and that by its virtue of temporally limited nature indirectly legitimizes less consistent approaches to religion and morality for the rest of the year. (Schielke, 2009 (2012): 175)

In the explanation above, Schielke explains how these youth try to fill their time with activities which are conform to the Islamic values (in this case it is football). Only, what Schielke tries to show is that this kind of pious way too pass the time only happens during Ramadhan and not sustained during the other months of the year.

This thesis is aiming to show a different example to what Schielke refers above as ‘exceptional morality’. What will be show in the next chapters are how Muslim Indonesian students react differently to their time staying in Sweden: some of them would keep themselves ‘pious’ and give their efforts to eat *halal* food only while others would make ‘exception’ and try to rationalize towards their action of not eating *halal* food 100%. Although the latter category would be seen as the ‘inverted’ example of the one explained by Schielke, I would like to argue that in the case of Muslim Indonesian students, the concept of the common notion of ‘piety’ is non-existent. Thus, it would feel rather incorrect to perceive this exceptional morality as the temporal morality of being impious.

In his 1973 book titled “The Interpretation of Culture”, Clifford Geertz explains the concepts of a people’s ‘ethos’ and ‘world view’.

In recent anthropological discussion, the moral (and aesthetic) aspects of a given culture, the evaluative elements, have commonly been summed up in the term "ethos," while the cognitive, existential aspects have been designated by the term "world view." A people's

ethos is the tone, character, and quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood; it is the underlying attitude toward themselves and their world that life reflects. Their world view is their picture of the way things in sheer actuality are, their concept of nature, of self, of society. It contains their most comprehensive ideas of order. (Geertz, 1973: 126-127)

Related to Geertz's explanation above, this thesis is aiming to try to give an important addition to the discussion: when the 'ethos' and the 'world view' are enforced to the people, the people would never completely understand the difficulties of enforcing them to themselves. The state holds a central role in enforcing the Islamic values to the Indonesian Muslims, and in this context in the food spectrum. In the next chapters I would like to show how the Muslim Indonesian students lose the notion of their Islamic 'ethos' and 'world view' as things upheld by Muslim Indonesians as one people. This explanation would add to Geertz's argument on how 'ethos' and 'world view' could lose their places in the mind of a member of a people under certain circumstances.

The two discussions mentioned above are directly related to a concept Mary Douglas coined and called 'moral situations'.

We should start by recognising that moral situations are not easy to define. They are more usually obscure and contradictory than clear cut. It is the nature of a moral rule to be general, and its application to a particular context must be uncertain. For instance, the Nuer believe that homicide within the local community and incest are wrong. But a man may be led into breaking the homicide rule by following another rule of approved behaviour. Since Nuer are taught from boyhood to defend their rights by force, any man may unintentionally kill a fellow villager in a fight. (Douglas, 1966: 131)

Douglas explains this concept to explain that 'moral rules' could not always be applied in the most literal sense as people have to assess the situations first when there are restrictions violated. This concept when, explained alongside the explanation of ways of interpreting the Quran, would explain the different reactions the Muslim Indonesian students show regarding the lack of options for *halal* food. Yet, there is a twist in this thesis in the application of the concept as the ideal 'moral'

in each person in this research is not always the same. Thus, the way each Muslim Indonesian student assesses the ‘moral situation’ also differs with the others.

## Chapter Two: The Indonesian Community of Stockholm

I found it quite surprising to see that many Indonesian students in Stockholm when I first met them in December 2015. My sister hosted a house party at her apartment, and the number of students who confirmed to come reached 25 (although I think I saw more than 25 at the party). I had never seen Sweden as a favorite country for Indonesian students to study. One of my informants, Kamal, said that he chose Sweden because it always ranked high in various metric tables based on the quality of education, sustainable energy management, and waste management.

Only one of every Muslim Indonesian student I interviewed is a non-exact science master's student. It was Iqko, a communications science student who goes to Stockholm University. My sister told me of a male student from Yogyakarta who studies Sociology, also at Stockholm University, but I had not the opportunity to meet him. Stockholm University is one of the three universities that all Muslim Indonesian students go to apart from the KTH Royal Institute of Technology (KTH stand for '*Kungliga Tekniska Hogskolan*') and Karolinska Institute. Yet, I have been only to KTH. Most of the interviews I conducted outside of university premises: since most of the Muslim Indonesian students that I interviewed go to KTH, the chance for me to go to KTH to conduct interview was better.

There is an official organization which organizes (more like 'harbors') all the Indonesian students who study in Stockholm. It is the PPI Stockholm which stands for "*Perhimpunan Pelajar Indonesia Stockholm*" (translates to 'The Indonesian Students Association of Stockholm'; '*perhimpunan*' means 'association' and '*pelajar*' means 'student(s)'). At the time of my field research, Ian was the head of PPI Stockholm. Ian is a 23 year old engineering master's student at the KTH. Ian is not a Muslim but I could still interview him about PPI Stockholm and its role in

binding its members together. Ian only took the role of the head of PPI Stockholm sometime in January 2016, he succeeded Iqko who would be graduating in mid-2016.

There is actually a more reliable mean of binding all the Indonesian students of Stockholm together and it comes in the form of a Whatsapp chat group. The Whatsapp group was named *Kampung Stockholm*. '*Kampung*' is an Indonesian word (in Malay it is '*kampong*') for 'village' or 'rural' areas. The term '*kampung*' itself is more seen as a term for the place someone is originating from, thus the term can be translated to 'hometown'. The chat group *Kampung Stockholm* has been a room for any Indonesians who reside in Stockholm, but only Indonesians who have close affiliation to at least one student in the group (this group is not only for students). The group was created and dominated by students of Stockholm, so for non-students it is more likely for them to get access to the group from students.

I got in contact with the Indonesian students through *Kampung Stockholm*. There is a separate Whatsapp chat group for the PPI Stockholm which obviously I am denied access to, but then again *Kampung Stockholm* is a more reliable lively group. It is often when I open my Whatsapp after three or four hours, I see the notification for *Kampung Stockholm* reaches twenty plus chats. That is the reason I had to mute the group's notification so I would not see it popping out every five minutes on my mobile phone's home screen. The good thing is I need not leave the chat group since they always make a new *Kampung Stockholm* group every academic year, so the group I am in will not be filled with students I do not know, it will not be filled with conversations that are not remotely of my interests.

PPI Stockholm operates under PPI Sweden, so does in the PPIs of other Swedish cities like PPI Gothenburg and PPI Lund. That is how PPIs all over the world work: there are PPIs operating on country level, and there are PPIs operating on city level. Except, when there only a handful of

Indonesian students in a country, there would only be the PPI of the country, or even there would be no PPI at all. In Hungary, there is only PPI Hungary, and PPI Hungary was only founded in September 2015. I was in fact one of the founding members of PPI Hungary and I am its first to be in charge of treasury.

Since this research only covers the Muslim Indonesian students of Stockholm, I only needed to infiltrate PPI Stockholm. But what truly occurred was that I infiltrated *Kampung Stockholm* rather than I infiltrated PPI Stockholm. PPI was generally absent during all observations and interviews, even when I interviewed Ian as the head of PPI Stockholm. Ian stated that his reign is all about the sense of being in a family, not an organization. Ian asserts that he does not desire a PPI that is bureaucratic, stiff, and felt ‘official’. Ian explained that his role as the head of PPI is just to deliver announcements and invitations from the Indonesian embassy and other PPIs to the members of PPI Stockholm. Apart from that, he does not want to ‘organize’ his members, he wants his members to interact ‘naturally’. Thus, the only way for me to see the presence of PPI within *Kampung Stockholm* was through the presence of Ian.

There are other organizations which organize the Indonesian communities in Stockholm. Aside from PPI, I was also informed of the existence of Kamus and SIS. Kamus is short for ‘*Keluarga Muslim Swedia*’ (means the ‘Muslim Family of Sweden’), while SIS is short for ‘*Svensk Indonesiska Skallskapet*’. Kamus consists of Muslim Indonesians of any occupations. They hold Quran recital every month (which according to Dintan mostly they only recite surah Yaasin), and according to the head of Kamus, Indra, they also hold events for ‘special occasions’. What he means by special occasions is various: they could be led prayers, Quran recital plus money collecting when an Indonesian is in need, or just a gathering of members.

Dena (not her real name) is the only student who always attends Kamus's events, she even helps with the cooking in the events. Although students from PPI may join Kamus, there is no visible coordination between the two according to the heads of both organizations. Nor is there between PPI and SIS. Ian even stated that he had never been to an SIS event. Ian also has no notion of someone from the PPI ever attended an SIS event. Yet, regardless of the situation between the three organizations, all of their members see each other whenever the Indonesian embassy holds an event. According to Ai, a communications officer from the embassy, people from these organizations may actually start to know each other during events like the Ied celebration or Christmas supper.

For the male Muslims students it is not difficult for them to find mosques to go for Jum'ah prayer. I am aware of four mosques that these male students can go to every Friday: one in Kista, one in the Centrallen area, one in Sollentuna, and the other one is—not necessarily a mosque—a prayer in the KTH main campus. I have been to the mosque in the Centrallen area twice when I visited Stockholm in August 2014. The mosque there has an imam that delivers his *khotbah* (means 'preach') in three languages: Swedish, Arabic, and English. After finishing one sub-topic in Swedish he continues to repeat it in Arabic then in English—that applies also to every sub-topic after that. When I conducted my thesis fieldwork, I went for Jum'ah in the prayer room in the KTH main campus. In both occasions, I met my informants Taufiq, Firman, and Syafiq who all study there. In both occasions, the imam was always the same student. The *khotbah* is always short, it was approximately three and a half minutes in the second Jum'ah I went there. That second *khotbah* I attended was about *shalat* and *zakat* ('*zakat*' is the act of giving away a small portion of wealth to the ones in need), after that the imam continued to talk about how Muslims must possess the 'spiritualism' that can set good example for other Muslims.

The KBRI itself (*'Kedutaan Besar Republik Indonesia'*, meaning the 'Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia') has only administrative and registration roles for the Indonesian nationals living in Sweden. According to Ai, the communications officer of the KBRI, Indonesians who just arrived in Sweden must report to the embassy so that the embassy will know their activities and will be able to help if they are in trouble. KBRI is not responsible to co-organize activities with the PPI, Kamus, or the SIS. Yet, KBRI may occasionally ask for help from these communities to spread important information or borrow manpower to help them organize events such as the Independence Day or presidential voting. In return, these communities may ask for funding assistance if they want to hold bigger events. The KBRI would usually ask for a proposal and consider if they would give the money or not.

For this research, I would argue that the group being studied are the Muslim Indonesian students associated with *Kampung Stockholm*. Even though it is not an official organization, it is the vehicle that makes the Indonesian students less dispersed. Through *Kampung Stockholm*, Indonesians students make primary contact with each other to organize activities like lunch, dinner, or casual coffee time together. For me, *Kampung Stockholm* is the main hub to, not only students, but also to Indonesians who work in Stockholm who are in the chat group.

## Research Method

I gathered the data mostly by conducting in-depth interviews. I interviewed 17 Muslim Indonesian students, 2 of which I interviewed twice. According to the list made by Ian, the head of the PPI, there are 36 Indonesian students in Stockholm and 25 of them are Muslims. I also interviewed the head of the Kamus, the head of PPI, and one person who works for the Indonesian

Embassy as a communications officer. I also conducted observations to three local grocery stores to check the availability of halal products: these three grocery stores are the most mentioned within the interviews. Other observations conducted are the studying of how the Muslim Indonesian students eat and drink in restaurants and cafes (I also went with them once to a bar), also studying the Jum'ah prayer activity in the KTH main campus prayer room.

I choose Muslim Indonesian students of Stockholm because the Indonesian students there are not dispersed with only 36 students (in Paris, there are 500 plus Indonesian students each year). With the little number, the number of informants that I have to interview is less than the number of informants that I have to find in a city where there are 50 plus Indonesian students since I have to keep the ratio between all the students, the Muslim Indonesian students, and my informants all in balance (I aimed at least to get interviews from 50% of Muslim Indonesian students in one city). I managed to interview 17 Muslim Indonesian students which are more than 60% of the total 25.

### Chapter Three: Comparing Islam in Indonesia and in Sweden

Almost every Muslim either fully practicing Islam or not is seriously concerned about what he or she eats. Muslims observe the divine laws in every aspect of life. There is a complete code of dietary laws present in the Holy Quran for the followers of Islam. Some basic principles are described as all foods are permitted except those mentioned clearly in the Holy Quran. (Khattak, Mir, Anwar, Wahedi, Abbas, Khattak, and Ismatullah, 2011: 385)

The Quran is the main guide to a Muslim's life. The Quran is the center of the Islamic teachings as Muslims believed that the words written in it came directly from Allah through his last prophet Muhammad. There is one simple way to convert to Islam: it is to say and uphold the words of *syahadat*. "*Ashadu ala ilahailallah wa ashadu ana Muhammadarasulullah*"; this translates roughly to "I believe that there is only one God who is Allah and I testify that Muhammad is his messenger." With the *syahadat* comes the conviction of Quran as the ultimate representation of Allah and Muhammad in a Muslim's life.

Through the Quran, Allah constitutes the distinction between what can and cannot be eaten. '*Halal*' is the label given to food Muslims are allowed to eat, while '*haram*' is the label given to the opposite. The Quran lays out the explanation of *halal* and *haram* food in different verses within different *surahs* ('*surah*' is equal to 'gospel' in the bible, what I mean by 'gospel' is for example the 'gospel of Luke' or the 'gospel of Matthew'). To get a complete understanding of the rule of food, Muslims must study all of these verses. Yet, the most notable of these verses is one in the *surah* Baqarah which explains, in a rigid fashion, what foods are forbidden to Muslims.

He has forbidden you only the *Maitah* (dead animals), and blood, and the flesh of swine, and that which is slaughtered as a sacrifice for others than Allah (or has been slaughtered for idols, on which Allah's Name has not been mentioned while slaughtering). But if one is forced by necessity without wilful disobedience not

transgressing due limits, then there is no sin on him. Truly, Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. (Quran, Baqarah, part 2 verse 173)

What we can infer from this verse is: 1) animals which are not slaughtered through the mentioning of Allah's name are not to be eaten and 2) swine products are not to be touched whatsoever. To give a clear example of the first point, drawing from my lifelong observation, I have witnessed a lot of animal sacrificing (*qurban*) in the Iedul Adha, and the executioners usually recite the words of *taqbir* in order to signify Allah as The Greatest. Iedul Adha itself is one of the two main celebrations in Islam, the other one being Iedul Fitri which is celebrated the day after the last day of Ramadhan (Marranci, 2008: 25). The *taqbir* that I hear during the animal slaughtering in Iedul Adha is recited through the whole process of killing until the animal is deemed dead.

The Indonesian government issues a policy regarding the production of *halal* food. Through the UU ('*Undang-undang*', meaning 'constitution') number 33 issued in 2014, the Indonesian government commits to assure Muslims' 'safety' to consume all sorts of products (Padmo, 2007: 153). This UU, of course, relies on the *halal* certification issued by *Majelis Ulama Indonesia* or MUI (means the 'Assembly of Indonesian Ulamas') (Hakim, 2015: 90). MUI is the organization which issues the official *halal* certification for packaged foods or for restaurants. The UU and the MUI certification are the devices used by the state to interfere (or assist) the lives of the Indonesian Muslim population.

The accommodation of Islamic beliefs is not only limited to the national constitution, some provincial governments are also trying to incorporate *sharia* laws into their policies (Bowen, 2003: 4). The ever apparent province that already applies *sharia* into its laws is the D.I. Aceh (the 'D.I.' stands for '*Daerah Istimewa*' which means 'Special Region'). There is a whipping punishment for everyone who commits sins—theological ones—most commonly and most notably prenuptial sexual intercourse. There is also a law in D.I. Aceh that forbids a man and a woman (who are not

married) to ride on a motorcycle together. Since Islam forbids man and woman who are not each other's *mukhrim* (not each other's husband/wife, parent, sibling, or grandparent) to touch skin-to-skin, it is considered a sin for them to ride on a motorcycle that requires close proximity.

In relation to the above issue of being *mukhrim* to someone, I would like to explain that the term '*halal*' and '*haram*' are not only used within Islamic discussions regarding food. The big picture of the dichotomy of '*halal*' and '*haram*' is actually the dichotomy of generally everything that are allowed and are not allowed with *halal* being everything that is allowed (Samori, Ishak, Kassan, 2014: 482). '*Halal*' and '*haram*' can be labeled to not just things but also activities. For example '*halal*' and '*haram*' can be used to discuss about having romantic relationship with someone who is not our partner in marriage. This kind of relationship can be considered *halal* if the motivation is 'religiously correct' (specifically: not to engage in a physical courtship), on the other hand it can be considered *haram* if the motivation is the opposite (Haqqi, 2013: 79). Still in this context, in Indonesia Muslims usually refer to married couple as being '*halal* to each other', meaning that the husband is *halal* for his wife (and *vice versa*) for them to engage in a physical courtship.

There is one more category of things/activities in Islam other than '*halal*' and '*haram*' which is called '*makruh*'. '*Makruh*' means something that cannot give sin to someone when consumed/done, but it will give merit if not consumed/done. To put it simply, it is suggested not to do/consume *makruh* things, but it does not mean that someone cannot do/consume said thing. Two examples of *makruh* activities are eating crab and smoking a cigarette.

The majority of the Indonesian Muslims are Sunni Muslims. Out of the 200 million plus Muslims in Indonesia, only 1 million of them are Shia Muslims (Buehler, 2009: 51). In early 2016, the police raided a Shia center in the city of Bogor, West Java. Being a Muslim other than Sunni

Muslim will make someone to be considered as '*sesat*' (meaning 'astray'). The label *sesat* also addressed to people who follow other forms of beliefs other than the six religions officially acknowledged by the state which are Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Confucianism. The term 'religion' itself (which translates into '*agama*' in Indonesia) is mainly used to address only these six religions (Arifin, 2010: 17). A religious guru called Lia Eden was imprisoned for trying to attract followers to her then newly-established belief. Eden admitted to be the messenger of Jibril (the Arabic name of Gabriel) and wanted to spread Jibril's messages to a wide following. The state is strict, an Indonesian must belong to one of the six acknowledged beliefs and it has to show on their national identity cards.

As already explained in the first chapter, Sweden is a secularized country with only a handful of Muslim population. For that, there is no assurance from the state for the Muslims there to be free from all forbidden things and activities. Most products, whether raw ingredients or ready-to-eat, do not show *halal* certifications on their packaging. As well as for the restaurants, even though a particular restaurant does not sell pork dishes, it does not mean that it must show *halal* certification somewhere in its premise. Only certain grocery stores and restaurants that I found are concerned with assuring customers that they sell *halal* food (will be explained in the next chapter).

Muslim population of Sweden mostly consists of immigrants from various Muslim-majority countries. Coincidentally, Muslims from Southeast Asia are considered as one of the major contributors as explained by Pieter Bevelander and Jonas Otterbeck.

In Sweden we find Muslims with their roots in for example: Turkey, the Balkans, Eastern Mediterranean, North-Africa, East-Africa, West-Africa, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Southeast-Asia, Central-Asia, Finland and the Baltic countries. There is also an increasing Swedish born Muslim population since many young Muslims who have immigrated to Sweden raise families. (Bevelander & Otterbeck, 2007: 2)

Otterbeck also explains in more detail that Bosnia and Iran are the countries that contribute the most to the number of Sweden's Muslim population with more than 40,000 each (Otterbeck, 2003: 35).

Ever since the state and the Lutheran Church were separated, Sweden ensures that religions to be seen equal in the eye of the government (Pettersson, 2011: 125). While this is a change that all Muslims of Sweden would welcome with open arms, the incoming Muslims from Muslim-majority countries might think differently. Just as what I would like to see in the next chapters: what does equal treatment bring about to the lives of Muslim Indonesian students in their endeavor to be good Muslims? How would they react when they find themselves in a situation when their needs are not the main concern of the society and the state? In the next chapter, I would like to show how exactly the Muslim Indonesian students react to this particular situation.

## Chapter Four: How Muslim Indonesian Students Eat in Stockholm

Sometime in December 2015, my sister took me to dinner with two of her friends. Both of them are students from Indonesia, both of them were studying in the same university in Stockholm, both of them are Muslims. One is a female who wears hijab who was born in 1989, one is a male who was born in 1988. The four of us went to a Thai restaurant located in the city center, an area known for Stockholms Central. My sister recommended the restaurant, she said it was the best Thai restaurant in town.

My sister and I both ordered cow meat dishes, my sister's female friend ordered fried carp, while my sister's male friend ordered a seafood white curry dish. The four of us are all Muslims (at least officially as shown on our Indonesian ID cards), and just like four good Muslims, we were supposed to eat *halal* food. We came to the restaurant without asking anyone who works there whether their dishes were *halal* or not. Thus is the reason why both of my sister's friends ordered only seafood: all water animals can be eaten without a proper sharia slaughtering process. My sister and I are the kind of Muslims who are never really concerned about this particular matter. For us, as long as the dish does not contain pork meat or lard (more specifically as long as we do not know that the dish contains pork meat or lard), we will eat the dish.

The event that occurred not long after our orders were served to the table was the event that inspired me to write this thesis in the first place. When my sister and my dishes were served, my sister's female friend said that she would make that dinner as an 'exception' if it turned out that our cow meat dishes were delicious. By 'exception' she meant that she would eat cow meat that night: she would take the risk of eating *haram* food in order to try delicious cow meat dishes. Then,

when my sister and I said that our dishes were delicious, my sister's female friend then started to eat these cow meat-most likely *haram* dishes. Yet, my sister's male friend did not even taste the sauce from any of the cow meat dishes.

In this thesis, my sister's female friend would be known as 'Mawar'. 'Mawar' is not her real name, she told me that she would prefer that I do not reveal her real name in my thesis. She chooses the name 'Mawar' herself (I asked every informant to choose their own pseudonyms if they would prefer to go with another name), 'Mawar' is the Indonesian word for rose. My sister's male friend, on the other hand, said that there should be no problem if I use his real name in my thesis. His name is Taufiq, he even mentioned his full name during our interview: it is Taufiq Hilal Tawab. I consider Mawar and Taufiq as the two most important informants in this thesis: although my interviews with them were not the most intriguing of all interviews, but they gave me an example of how two Muslims would act differently towards the limited choice of *halal* food.

I came back to Stockholm on April 2, 2016. I came back for the specific purpose of conducting research for this thesis. If I had not visited my sister back in December the previous year, I would not have decided to come back to Stockholm. All credits go to Mawar and Taufiq: they inspired me to write my thesis on this particular topic. I also have to acknowledge my sister, Aidilla, who has introduced me to her peers. My sister is not a student, she works in Stockholm as a software developer. Yet, because she first went to Stockholm as a student, she still keeps good relationship with the PPI (stands for *Perhimpunan Pelajar Indonesia*, meaning Indonesian Students Association). In fact, most of her peers consist of students that she knows from PPI. This was an advantage for me while I was conducting my research: my sister includes me in the Indonesian students Whatsapp group, all I had to do was send a message to all the Muslim students in that

group and introduce myself as Aidilla's little brother. As far as I remember, I did not use other means of communication to invite my informants for interview other than Whatsapp.

On the first day I arrived in Stockholm, my sister took me to watch a football game with some of her friends at O'Leary's bar, located in the just recently opened Mall of Scandinavia (to avoid confusion, my 'football' means 'soccer'). There were six people who joined us: three students and three non-students. Out of all the six, only one who ordered alcoholic beverage, and it was my sister's PhD student friend who is not a Muslim. Out of the six, three are Muslims, three are not. In more detail: one is a Muslim student, two are non-Muslim students, one is a spouse of the one Muslim student, one is a spouse of Muslim student who was not present at the time, and one is a worker whom I am still not sure whether he is a Muslim or not.

Just several days before I left Budapest for Stockholm, I met with three other fellow Indonesian students in a sports bar near Vorosmarty Ter. Three out of four of us are Muslims, yet in that bar the four of us all ordered alcoholic beverages. I have known the Muslim Indonesian student of Budapest for quite a long time, and I also have never seen any of them being concerned towards their food: all of them eat chicken and beef even though they are not sure whether they are properly slaughtered or not. All of them agree that as long as they do not see pork in the food they eat, it is not a concerning problem.

Either it is just coincidence or not, unlike in Stockholm, Muslim Indonesian students in Budapest are more uniform in the way they deal with the lack of *halal* food/drink options. I was having the impression then whether all of the Muslim Indonesian students in Stockholm, for some reasons, are completely different with the ones in Budapest in the way they react to the exposure of non-*halal* food/drink. That is why I tried to get as many interviews as I could, I wanted to disprove this and avoid the difficulties to find the explanations behind the phenomenon. I was

relieved to find that after several interviews in, I finally found students who deal with the lack of *halal* food/drink options the same way the Muslim Indonesian students in Budapest do.

According to my first informant who chose to go by the pseudonym Abuzar (a Muslim master's student originated from Depok, Indonesia, who is married with two daughters), every Muslim Indonesian students that he knows have their own interpretations towards the teachings of Islam, and that is something that he does not want to interfere with. Abuzar explains that he knows two kinds of Muslim Indonesian students in Stockholm: those who are 'careful' with their choice of food and those who are not. I see Abuzar comes from the first category, he even showed me the website (through his phone) where he usually checks a list of additives to make sure he buys *halal* packaged products (like chocolate candies or cookies). Yet, he never tries to tell a fellow Muslim to be careful with their food—he said that he would only comfortable to remind a fellow Muslim who is a close friend of his about his/her choice of food.

Based on my findings from the interviews, I would like to distinguish between two types of food/drink purchasing activities: buying food/drink in grocery stores and buying food/drink in restaurants/cafes/bars. What I can infer from the interviews is that a person can be more 'careful' when they go buy food/drink in local grocery stores: they can avoid buying something *haram* better in grocery stores. When they decide to cook at home, they can gather their own ingredients from grocery stores and they can make sure that everything they buy is 100% *halal*. Thus, when they are in a situation when they have to eat in restaurants, they see it as a time when they can give themselves some dispensation: as long as the dish only consists of seafood, regardless of what the cook might use to make the dish taste delicious, they see it as *halal*. Yet, when in grocery stores, they make sure that every product they buy is 100% without alcohol and without lard.

There are certain grocery stores that are often mentioned during the interviews: Kista Grossen, Willys, Lidl, and ICA. These grocery stores are visited regularly by the Muslim Indonesian students when they look for raw ingredients that they can eat. Apart from Kista Grossen, all of these grocery stores are franchised stores that can be found in various areas in Stockholm. Kista Grossen is the most convenient store for someone to find *halal* meat. I went there myself for observation and I did not see any *haram* products being sold there. All the cow, chicken, turkey, and lamb meat are *halal*: they put a visible *halal* label on every price board displayed. Even the canned corned beef and packed sausages are *halal* and we can see the *halal* stamp on the packaging. Kista Grossen is located in Kista, an area in Stockholm where, according to Abuzar, a lot of Muslim immigrants live in. Kista Grossen itself is the biggest grocery store in Kista apart from the ICA which is located inside Kista Galleria (the only mall in Kista).

Willys also sells *halal* chicken, lamb, and cow meat. When I observed the Willys which is in the Fridhemsplan area, I found one specific brand of *halal* meat being sold there which the ‘Qibbla *Halal*’ brand. All the *halal* chicken, lamb, and cow meat sold at Willys are under this particular brand. I could also find the Qibbla *Halal* brand sold at Kista Grossen, but it was only for the seasoned ‘kebab beef’. This makes Willys as the only franchised grocery store to sell *halal* meat since I could not find any in both Lidl and ICA. If we want to gather 100% *halal* ingredients from Lidl or ICA, our only options are only in the seafood or vegetarian sections (in the vegetarian sections there are usually some artificial meat products made from soybean or mushrooms).

Even though it is easy to distinguish *halal* and *haram* products sold in grocery stores, it does not mean that every Indonesian Muslim student would be meticulous when shopping. When I did an interview with Alicia (a 26 year old master’s student at Karolinska Institute) and her husband Risan (a 26 year old software engineer who is forced to work remotely to follow his wife

to Stockholm), they admitted to not being ‘strict’ in choosing the products they buy at grocery stores. Risan said that he prefers to go grocery shopping at Lidl because he always buys two products sold there: Lidl’s apple pie and a product he calls ‘spicy-hot chicken wings’ (he did not mention the brand). While he cannot be sure whether these chicken wings are *halal* or not (since there is no *halal* stamp on the packaging), he still buys it simply because he likes it.

As mentioned above, a person can be more ‘loose’ when eating in restaurant than when he/she eats his/her own cooking. A 25 year old master’s student named Dintan admitted that while she always tries her best to cook dishes from all *halal* ingredients, she does not make sure whether the meat served is *halal* or not when she eats in a restaurant. Regarding this, she said “*bismillah aja*” (means “just say ‘*bismillah*’”; ‘*bismillah*’ is a common word said by Muslims before they do activities, means ‘in the name of Allah’), and she can proceed with eating the meat. Dintan admits that it is difficult to be ‘strict’ about food if one wants to eat in a restaurant in Stockholm. A lot of sweets in Stockholm are also made with the addition of rum anyway, and Dintan said she cannot distinguish which sweets are with rum. So, according to her, everything is determined by the true purpose of the person: if he/she hopes that the food he/she eats is *halal*, and does not consciously want to eat something *haram*, then he/she is right to eat the food.

Unlike Dintan, Taufiq said that he always tries ‘his best’ to make sure that everything he eats in a restaurant is *halal*. Before he came to Stockholm to study, Taufiq was an employee at the Toshiba headquarters in Tokyo for four years. Taufiq said that it was easier then when he was in Japan: most of Japanese restaurants always provide diet charts explaining the ingredients used to make every dish. Such is not the case in Stockholm and Taufiq is forced to always eat fish or vegetarian menus if he goes to a restaurant because he cannot be sure whether the meat there is *halal* or not. He said that most of the time he does not want to be in a difficult situation where he

has to ask the cook whether the meat is *halal* or not. This is Taufiq's 'best' effort to avoid *haram* food in a restaurant since he is also aware that the restaurant may also put lard into his food.

Syafiq, a 27 year old master's student, has a similar eating pattern as Taufiq's. The difference is that Syafiq checks first before he goes to a restaurant. He mentioned a website he calls *halalrestaurant.se* (yet, when I could not open the URL when I tried) where he can find all the *halal* restaurants in Stockholm (and also grocery stores that sell *halal* meat). Syafiq explained that he has several restaurants that he always goes to eat, restaurants that he is already sure that serve 100% *halal* food. When he goes to a new restaurant that he is not sure yet whether it sells *halal* food, he always asks first, when the answer is no then he will not eat at that restaurant. Yet, he said that there was one time that he went to restaurant in other city that sells food with non-*halal* ingredients (there was a possibility that Syafiq would order a menu with lard in it), but he decided to eat there anyway (but still ordered seafood). To him, he did not have any choice at the time because he did not know the area and he needed to eat.

A master's student named Iqko is more like Dintan, he would eat any dish as long as there is no visible pork meat in it. Iqko also still does his best to buy *halal* meat in grocery stores when he wants to cook at home. Yet, Iqko makes an exception for beverages. He said that when a colleague from his university (he goes to Stockholm University) asks him to go to a bar, he usually joins them ordering alcoholic beverages. He said that, for him, it is a social need. But he emphasizes that when he goes back to Indonesia, he will stop drinking alcohol completely. Jokingly, he explained that just like the saying "what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas", he would consider everything that he does in Stockholm will stay in Stockholm.

In my interview with Dintan (the second interview I did in the field, the first one being my interview with Abuzar), I had quite a surprising realization from one of her statements. She said to

me that in Indonesia, because the majority of the population are Muslims, people always assume that almost every restaurant serves *halal* meat while the fact that they cannot really be sure. I realized that Muslims in Indonesia are only aware about the use of pork meat in certain restaurants, yet they never ask about whether a certain restaurant cooks cow/chicken products which go through proper slaughtering process. Dintan argues that there is no difference between eating cow dish in a random restaurant in Stockholm and in Indonesia, the amount of uncertainty is the same. According to her, that is one strong reason for her to not assure herself about the cow and chicken meat she eats.

Recently, halal authenticity is an issue of major concern in the food industry. Many cases were reported worldwide involving adulteration of haram or mushbooh ingredients in foods productions. In addition, with the advent of modern science and technology, food had undergone many processes and was transported to different parts of the world which has raised concern among Muslim consumers and led to their curiosity, as to whether the processed foods contain any haram substances. (Fadzlillah, Man, Jamaludin, Rahman, and Al-Kahtani, 2011: 161)

As explained above by Fadzlillah, Man, Jamaludin, Rahman, and Al-Kahtani, the adulteration of *haram* ingredients in the processing of food has been a discussion among Muslims. Indonesian Muslims have been having the discussion ever since—especially since—*baso* (meatball) producers have been uncovered to using sewer rat flesh in their mixing of cow meat. This action may suppress the cost of production, and therefore, helps the producers to gain maximum profit. Dintan's statement may resonate to these kind of concerns towards adulterations such as the use of rat flesh in meatballs. Rats are *haram* to eat because Islam forbids the consumption of animals with sharp teeth or animals who have fangs. Thus is also the reason why cats and dogs are *haram* to eat.

Kamal, a 29 year old master's student, told me that interpreting the Quran is not a task anyone can do well. Thus is why Muslims always need '*ulamas*', scholars of Islam, scholars of Quran and *hadiths*. A '*hadith*' itself is a teaching that did not come from the Quran but from Muhammad himself (Ali, Liu, Humedian, 2004: 637). Kamal argues that learning Islam through Quran is not like learning from a text book where instructions are clear, and that is where an *ulama* comes in: an *ulama* is trusted by people to interpret the Quran, so people can interpret the Quran through the interpretation of the *ulama*. That is why Kamal thinks that no Muslim can be certain about what will be the consequences of their actions in life, no Muslim can be certain about whether they have broken the rule of the Quran or not. Nobody would if he/she has made a mistake, and as Kamal said, especially regarding the choice of food.

Every Muslim student that I interviewed agree that when a Muslim does not know that he/she eats something *haram*, he/she will not get a punishment in the afterlife. As Syafiq explained, in Islam someone who is '*jahil*' (this is an Arabic word for 'oblivious'), not knowing that he/she has made a mistake, will not be punished whatsoever for that particular mistake. But, for Taufiq, this rule is not to be played with. Taufiq argues that one of a Muslim's responsibilities is to avoid to become oblivious, especially about what he/she eats. That is why he thinks that he has to be a better Muslim as he never asks about the food he eats at restaurants which he is not sure serve 100% *halal* dishes. Taufiq aims to be less oblivious, he aims to do more efforts in finding information about the policy of a restaurant. But for now, as long as he is still lives outside of Indonesia, it would be difficult for him to change the way he deal with this particular matter.

Alicia and Risan know for sure that what they eat in their favorite Japanese restaurant, Arigato (located in Sockholms Central), are most likely not *halal* because of the slaughtering process. Furthermore, they know for a fact that Arigato sells pork dishes, and they admitted that

they have the assumption that every dish is cooked from the same frying pan or any other shared cooking tools. Swallowing lard, even a drop, is prohibited in Islam, and eating a fried dish (I interviewed Alicia and Risan in Arigato and Risan was in the middle of eating his fried karage chicken) processed with a shared frying pan is a risky choice. Alicia and Risan said that they are not really concerned with this, and they added jokingly: “what can we do? God, forgive us.”

Satu, a 29 year old master’s student, argues that it is allowed for Muslims to buy non-*halal* chicken in a country like Sweden where *halal* chicken is difficult to come by. I would like to connect this statement with the Quran verse that I have mentioned earlier in the previous chapter (*Surah* Baqarah, part 2 verse 173). In the second sentence it is said that a person who eats non-*halal* food out of ‘necessity’ will not be given sin. Satu takes this very rule and translates the condition he is in to be a ‘necessity’, thus he perceives that to eat non-*halal* chicken not as a sin.

Sarah, a 24 year old master’s student, chooses to also eat non-*halal* chicken or cow meat. Her reaction to my question of why she chooses to do so is one of the most simplistic amongst all of my informants: she just wants to make her life easier by not being picky towards food. Mawar also had a simplistic answer to the same question I gave to Sarah. Mawar explained that people may follow different *mazabs* (perception towards Islam), and for her food is never her concern. Both Sarah and Mawar seem to not be bothered to justify their actions by explaining to me their interpretations of the laws of food constituted by the Quran or *hadiths*.

It is rather interesting to see how these students can have different reactions to the situation that they face in Stockholm. In the next chapter, I would like to analyze this phenomenon through several concepts I have selected. My wider aim is to see this difference in reaction to the relationship between one’s ability to interpret with the social backdrop of Stockholm and Islam as a system of rules.

## Chapter Five: Analysis

The Quran is a book of rules or guidelines for Muslims to follow. As explained in the previous chapter, Kamal suggests that it is rather difficult to understand the Quran on one's own. That is why he prefers the help of *ulamas* to help him understand the Quran, and from there he can interpret the interpretations of the *ulamas*. Yet, although he perceives this way as the best way to study Islam as a whole, he puts emphasis on how any interpretation from any *ulama* may always be wrong. Abuzar also argues similarly but in an inter-personal context: he feels that anyone may have different interpretation and everyone should respect that.

If this is the case with what Muslim Indonesian students are currently facing in Stockholm, then the emphasis of what makes a good Muslim lies on the effort to become one itself. The formula is simply making the best of oneself out of what one believes to be true. Still, this does not apply to every one of them since some seem to make exception of their stay in Sweden: they deliberately put hold of their efforts to become good Muslims. For students like Kamal and Abuzar, they do not want to give themselves a dispensation for staying in a country where *halal* food is not common, on the other hand for students like Iqko and Mawar, they are willing to accept the fact that they would not be as pious as when they are in Indonesia. I see this as the inverted version of the temporal morality of the Egyptian youth during Ramadhan as they try to be better Muslims for one month, as explained by Samuli Schielke (Schielke, 2009 (2012): 175).

Abdullah Saeed proposes three types of interpretations towards the Quran when he explains about the application of the Quran's laws regarding ethico-legal matters in today's world. I argue that these three models can also be applied in the most general context of how someone approaches the Quran.

Among Muslims, three broad approaches may be identified in relation to the interpretation of ethico-legal content of the Qur'an in the modern period: Textualist, Semi-textualist and Contextualist. This classification is based on the degree to which the interpreters (1) rely on just the linguistic criteria to determine the meaning of the text, and (2) take into account the socio-historical context of the Qur'an as well as the contemporary context of today. (Saeed, 2006: 3)

A Muslim may obey the rules of the Quran and never consumes swine flesh whatsoever because he/she follows the exact words written in the Quran. Yet one may eat swine flesh when he/she thinks that in today's world it is difficult avoid doing so, especially when the Quran says that in necessity one may eat *haram* food. Again, what makes a believer a good believer is how much the believer stands by what he/she believes. What makes a good believer is that his/her action does not contradict his/her perspective towards life.

When we discuss about students like Iqko and Mawar again, I argue that since they are convinced of what they do even though they think that it is most likely be the wrong thing to do as a Muslim, one shall not immediately assume that they fail in their efforts to become good Muslims. This is still a matter of interpretation: it is not impossible for someone to believe that they can do wrong things and still be correct. Since Iqko said that he would not continue drinking alcohol when he goes back to Indonesia, and Iqko admits that it is not necessary to drink alcohol for him while he is in Sweden, he is aware this deed of his is wrong. But then again, the last sentence of *surah* Baqarah verse 173 says that "Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful," (Quran, Baqarah, part 2 verse 173). If Iqko believes that Allah will forgive him for what he has done, then does that make Iqko a pious person?

To clarify my argument: I strongly suggest that it is not correct to say that a Muslim can become pious or less pious when he/she is put in a less 'Islamic' setting. It is not his/her piety that changes, it is their recognition towards their own interpretation of the Islamic teachings and the

way they articulate it that change. As demonstrated by Dintan who was not aware that she actually never been concerned towards the *halal* slaughtering process, her being in Stockholm shows her how she really feels about *halal* meat when the comfort that she gets in Indonesia (where *halal* meat is easy to come by) is taken away. Of course, all of this is possible because Indonesia and Sweden offer two different religious atmospheres for Muslims.

Even though I focus on the practices of the mosque participants, this does not mean that their activities and the operations they perform on themselves are products of their independent wills; rather, my argument is that these activities are the products of authoritative discursive traditions whose logic and power far exceeds the consciousness of the subjects they enable. (Mahmood, 2004: 32)

As explained above by Saba Mahmood in her research paper, she comes to an argument that the rituals performed by her subjects do not come absolutely from free-will, but also driven by a tradition that harbors beyond their consciousness. In the case of Indonesian Muslims, they are taught from early age (even at kindergartens) about *halal* and *haram*, and it becomes a sort of unconscious predisposition, it becomes a habitus. Especially those who are put into *pesantren* (Islamic schools), not only they are taught the general Islamic teachings, their sense of belonging in a Muslim environment is strengthened (Shih, 2002: 115). So, when they are put even in a secular backdrop, that distinction between *halal* and *haram* is still upheld unconsciously by them. Even if there is no *halal* food at all in one place, they will try to be as *halal* as possible, at least they will try to avoid pork.

Muslims from Indonesia are shaped to have certain unconscious predispositions. That is to be obedient to the Quran without having to do extra efforts as the state and the society try to accommodate their belief all the time. When Ramadhan comes, restaurants put curtains to cover their doors and windows so that Muslims would not get tempted. The police in several big cities like Depok and Bogor are always ready to confiscate alcoholic beverages from local supermarkets

when they see them. Everything is organized in a meticulous manner so that the Muslims will stay good Muslims.

So what does this do to the Muslims' state of habit? It makes them do things without being aware of the real challenge of being a Muslim. The result is: they only become full-fledged religious beings when they are put in a new environment, meaning that they will develop new *habitus* as different types of beings. Thus it is important to emphasize this discussion on the ways of interpreting the Quran as it is the only *habitus* that they are not urged to change but to understand articulate thoroughly in order for them to make decisions.

One of the reasons that Muslim Indonesians are not particularly conscious about their decisions towards what is best to do according to Quran (aside from what Dintan explains about how Muslims in Indonesia assume that most restaurants only sell *halal* food, thus they never ask about the '*halal*-ness' of a restaurant) is that, as explained by Kamal, because in Indonesia Quran teachers tend to just teach their students to read Quran in Arabic without explaining the meaning. The teachers' main emphasis on teaching Quran are for the students to know how to read Arabic and know how to pronounce every word correctly. Dintan, on the other hand, explains that because most Muslim Indonesians are born Muslims, they are not encouraged to learn the Quran thoroughly. Dintan argues that when a person becomes a Muslim out of personal calling, he/she will most likely not take the Islamic teachings for granted.

The concepts of 'good' and 'bad' Muslims are also non-existent among the Muslim Indonesian students if they do not have the concept of an 'ideal pious Muslim'. To clarify, by 'good Muslim' I mean Muslims who are obedient to the Islamic teachings. There are also other definitions of 'good' and 'bad' Muslims which meanings are far different: 'bad Muslims' are the fanatics and 'good Muslims' are the opposite (Hadiz, 2010: 6). Simply put, there is no concept of the more

‘faithful’ Muslims among the Muslim Indonesian students. As for the concept of the more ‘fanatical’, let us just leave it for another research in another setting.

If we go back again to the Baqarah verse 173 (Quran, Baqarah, part 2 verse 173), we can see how the Quran enables Muslims to assess situations and take liberty to eat *haram* food if ‘necessary’. It is Mary Douglas’s concept of ‘moral situations’ (Douglas, 1966: 131) that resonates to this Quran verse closely. As it is not explained deeper in the Quran, the word ‘necessity’ could be interpreted to wide array of possible situations, thus making the liberty of interpreting a particular situation the more lax. The more lax such liberty, the more lax the ‘common ethos’ of the Muslim Indonesians. Then, if the ‘common ethos’ is no longer upheld by the community, then the identity of an Indonesian Muslim becomes more difficult to define.

To discuss about how ‘common ethos’ explains the identity of one people, we shall go back to Clifford Geertz’s explanation of ‘ethos’ and ‘world view’ (Geertz, 1973: 126-127). If both ‘ethos’ and ‘world view’ are supposed to be shared by a people, and if a member of the people can develop a different version of one of them, then in this case what would be of a Muslim Indonesian if he/she develops new ethos? The analysis that I would like to make might sound far-fetched as best, but bear with me as I argue that this is the best answer to the question I just raised.

When Muslim Indonesian students still live in Indonesia, they are forced to develop an ‘ethos’ of an ideal ‘Indonesian Muslim’ by the Muslim-majority society and the state. When they move to another country, Muslim Indonesian students lose the society that controls the ethos. In another society like Sweden which is secular, they cannot follow completely the ethos there: first because it is a secular society where the values of Islam are not carried, and secondly it is difficult for them to understand the ethos there within just a short period of time (the average of Indonesian students only stay there for one to two years). When there are different ways of interpreting the

situation of the lack of *halal* food between them, added by the fact that they are not controlled by a dominant society temporarily, they are forced to develop their own ethos. To be clearer: they are temporarily without ‘foster people’ and they are forced to create a new ‘temporal ethos’. This might also help explain the way they develop their ‘temporal morality’.

The knowledge of the ‘forgiving’ god is one that is the basis of making ‘exceptions’ to not obey the divine rules. That explanation in Baqarah verse 173 about Allah as a ‘merciful’ being is, let us say, ‘exploited’ by Muslims who assess their situations as being eligible as ‘necessities’ where they can break rules. This explanation does not emphasize its specificities: when and how does Allah merciful to people? What kind of obstacles that make Muslims’ misconducts as ‘correct’? In the case of Muslim Indonesian students in Stockholm, the answers to all questions may vary. Again, when there is no right or wrong ways to interpret, god’s mercies can go to any extent.

In his 2008 article, Justin L. Barrett explains how one concept of a being can be considered as a concept of a ‘god’.

Many cognitive theories of religion have as their backdrop a number of critical assumptions. First, they assume that god concepts or any other religious concept must be distributed. Put another way, concepts that are not shared by multiple individuals do not count as cultural or religious concepts. If a single individual believes that his bedside lamp is an intentional agent that controls the weather and grants wishes, such a belief does not qualify as a religious belief and the lamp concept is not a god concept. (Barrett, 2008: 150)

If we connect this to the case of this research, it is true that the notion of Allah as a god is shared and upheld by these Muslim Indonesian students. Hence, in this small group alone, Allah as a god is legitimate according to Barrett’s explanation above. Yet, what Barrett does not explain is that

while one being can be commonly considered as god, there is a possibility that every believer of said god may perceive this god differently.

If the Quran is the voice of Allah, then if there are different interpretations of it then there are also different interpretations of Allah himself. In this case especially there is one explanation in the Quran about Allah which my informants may interpret differently. Satu perceives that his action of not eating *halal* meat is permitted and Allah will regard it as a ‘forgivable’ exception, on the other Taufiq would try his best to avoid eating meat when he is not sure of its ‘*halal*-ness’. Thus, this experience of moving to Sweden temporarily also helps Muslim Indonesian students to be more conscious about how each of them perceives Allah as a god.

## Chapter Six: Conclusion

The way people handle their religious beliefs depends on situational conditions. While the rules in each beliefs are written and can be referred whenever needed, their believers always find it difficult to obey them the same way when they moved to other settings. In short: everything depends on how the society of one place put one particular religious belief within its everyday life. For Islam, it is difficult for the followers to obey every rule in every setting as the Quran constitutes almost every aspect of life. Food, most notably, has been the in the center of world Muslims' concern as not everyone in every country understands Islam's ruling of prohibited foods and *sharia* slaughtering.

Muslim Indonesian students are great examples for research on this issue of situational and temporal morality. This particular research has shown what this issue could do to a Muslim: he/she is forced to reinvent or rearticulate his/her perception towards the Islamic belief and towards god himself. From the effort to find *halal* food, then translates to new moral habitus, then to the general sense of being a religious being. Living in a secular country for a brief time has brought these Muslim Indonesian students to a new stage of their lives, the stage discovering the new religious experience they thought they always had.

Another important finding is that in this small group of Muslim Indonesian students, the emphasis on the freedom of interpreting the Quran plays a pivotal role in shaping their sense of identity as a group. If the all of them agree that there are no distinction between 'good Muslims' and 'bad Muslims', between 'good deeds' and 'bad deeds', then there is no shared ideal of

becoming an ‘ideal member’ of that particular group. Thus, what really distinguish one person as a member of Muslims Indonesian student community is the fact that he/she upholds the belief of Islam and he/she comes from Indonesia (to be specific: he/she has an Indonesian nationality). Other than these traits, anyone is free to exercise his/her interpretation of the Quran since there will be no social punishment or social control from anyone in the group.

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