

UP CLOSE BUT NOT PERSONAL: Non-Muslim Incomer Experiences in Yogyakarta Special Region, Indonesia

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Abstract: The research is an inquiry to understand the socio-cultural interaction between the native *Yogyanese* and the incomers within multiculturalism. The focus of the study is the perception of the incomers toward Yogyakarta and *Yogyanese*. Considering pluralistic and multicultural Yogyakarta's society is predominantly Muslim, the research explicitly detects the perception of non-Muslim incomers (*pendatang*), particularly Christians. The result of the study exposes the complexity of interaction between the natives and the incomers. The mood celebrates diversity, acceptance, cordial relationship, tension, and distance. The pressure might occur through the cultural contrast of Javanese and non-Javanese and the social, cultural, religious, and political dynamics at the local and national levels. However, the dynamic is an ongoing socio-cultural negotiation that attempts to befit the best molding.

Keywords: Yogyakarta; migrants; social interaction: inter-religious interaction.

Article history: Received: 05 June 2022; Revised: 21 July 2022; Accepted: 12 August 2022; Available online: 01 September 2022

How to cite this article:

Kaunang, Hendrikus Paulus, and Leonard Chrysostomos Epafra. "Up Close But Not Personal: Non-Muslim Incomer Experiences in Yogyakarta Special Region, Indonesia". *Religio: Jurnal Studi Agama-agama* 12, no. 2 (2022), 127-144. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15642/religio.v12i2.1846>

Introduction

The present research is an inquiry into the socio-cultural relationship between the “native” people of Yogyakarta (*Yogyanese*) and the incomers (*pendatang*) in the context of a multicultural and plural society. As a predominantly Muslim and cosmopolitan, Yogyakarta, the capital of the Special Region of Yogyakarta, is renowned as a “student city” (*Kota Pelajar*), “center of Javanese culture” (*Kota Budaya*), “city of independence struggle” (*Kota Perjuangan*), and eventually, a “city of tolerance.” It once celebrated the interreligious tolerance enjoyed by all walks of life to the latter. Beyond that rhetoric, research on interreligious lives demonstrates the complexity of perception among *Yogyanese* that challenges the smiley face of Yogyakarta.¹ There was perceived erosion of the spirit of openness and Javanese virtues within the engagement with the non-*Yogyanese* and the effect of the increasing religious politics of identity. The present research pursues further the perspective of the incomers who have lived in Yogyakarta for a more extended period.

The perspective of the incomers in Yogyakarta is scarce. The demographic record does not inform their presence. The 2020 Central Bureau of Statistics of Yogyakarta report did not address the incomers category under the population and labor rubric.² Therefore, the present undertaking is a preliminary study in understanding their views.

The research was conducted between 1 April and 20 June 2014. Therefore, there were some data updates and appropriation to catch up on some new developments. Twenty-seven incomers interviewed varied in occupations, origins, genders, and religions. They lived in Yogyakarta uninterrupted for at least five years. Five years was an arbitrary category to get a sense of engagement with the locals. Many of them indeed proudly identified themselves as *Yogyanese*. To qualify native *Yogyanese* is challenging, hence the qualification goes to the

¹ Siti Syamsiyatun, Leonard Chrysostomos Epafra, and Hendrikus Paulus Kaunang, “Dinamika Persepsi Nilai Luhur Kejawaan Di Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta: Konteks Hubungan Antar-Iman” in *Mendukung Keistimewaan Yogyakarta: Melalui Perspektif Keilmuan Multidisiplin Guna Membangun Kemandirian Bangsa*, edited by Hartono, Suryo Purwono et.al. (Yogyakarta: Sekolah Pascasarjan Universitas Gadjah Mada, 2014), 81–115.

² BPS Provinsi DIY, *Statistik Daerah: Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta* (Regional Statistics of Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta) (Yogyakarta: BPS Provinsi DI Yogyakarta, 2020).

incomers who are not ethnically Javanese and were not born in Yogyakarta. Ethnicity selection was based on the statistic of the prominence of non-Islamic religions, such as Protestant Christianity in North Sumatera, Central Kalimantan, Maluku, Papua, and Timor Island in East Nusa Tenggara, Catholicism in Flores Island in East Nusa Tenggara, and Bali for Hinduism. Then the team could not discover the representations of Buddhism and Confucianism, which met the criteria. The study employed literature, interview, focus group discussion, and discourse analysis.

Research questions that guided the study were on the story/history of the incomer's presence in Yogyakarta, their impressions of Yogyakarta and the *Yogyanese*, the extent and limits of adaptation, the ability, and scope of transformation. Furthermore, the research explored the tensions experienced by them as they were "torn" between Yogyakarta (Javanese) cultural appeal and their root in homeland culture. It sought to capture the new self-perception born out from the social encounters and negotiations with the people and culture of Yogyakarta.

The history of incomers in Yogyakarta could not be detached from the Indonesian political context. Although initially projecting Palangkaraya City in Central Kalimantan as the new capital, President Sukarno, in January 1946, eventually decided to accept the invitation of Sri Sultan Hamengkubowono IX to transfer the power to Yogyakarta due to the Dutch occupation of Jakarta.³ The decision resulted in a massive exodus of state officials and intellectuals to this area. It created a precedent that will become the social pattern in this region in the following decades. Yogyakarta furthermore experienced nationalization and *cosmopolitanization*.⁴ The establishment of Universitas Gadjah Mada in 1946 as a "revolutionary university" further boosts the image of a student city, which reverberates to this day.⁵

³ Christopher Silver, *Planning the Megacity: Jakarta in the Twentieth Century. Planning, History and Environment Series* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 97-98.

⁴ Mohtar Mas'od, S. Rizal Panggabean, and M. Najib Azca, "Sumber-Sumber Sosial Bagi Sivilitas Dan Partisipasi: Kasus Yogyakarta, Indonesia," in *Politik Multikulturalisme: Menggugat Realitas Kebangsaan*, edited by Robert W Hefner (Yogyakarta: Impulse, 2007), 206-210.

⁵ Selo Soemardjan, *Perubahan Sosial di Yogyakarta* (Jakarta: Komunitas Bambu, 2009), 429.

Incomers in Yogyakarta thus directly and indirectly contributed to the development of Yogyakarta. Likewise, the non-Javanese incomers colored the face of Yogyakarta's diversity, multi-ethnicity, multi-culturalism, and cosmopolitanism, and at the same time, the defender of Javanese culture. Figures such as Prof. Dr. Djamaluddin Ancok (West Sumatra's origin), a psychology expert, and Prof. Dr. Sofyan Efendi (South Sumatra's birth), former rector of Universitas Gadjah Mada, including the Christians such as the late Prof. Herman Yohanes, former Rector of Universitas Gadjah Mada, Silvester Kodi, former Rector of Atma Jaya University Yogyakarta, are just a minor example of the incomers' contribution to Yogyakarta.

The coming of the incomers was urged mainly by the common motives of people's urbanization and migration, namely economic motives. However, Yogyakarta provided further incentives as a student city. They come to Yogyakarta with the hope of getting a good and proper education to mobilize their social and economic life. The phrase, "If you want to get a good school, you have to go to Yogyakarta",⁶⁷ reflected the primary reason for Yogyakarta as a magnet for incomers. Our research finding confirmed it. "Education" is a symbolic entrance for social encounters and upward mobilization in this public space called "Yogyakarta." In addition to education, the strong perception toward *Yogyanese*, which is generally tolerant and open to incomers, also played a significant role in smoothing the social interaction. Arguably, there is a solid cultural framing that encourages the flexibility and openness of the *Yogyanese* in managing differences.⁸

The existence of the incomers can no longer be ignored in the socio-cultural constellation in Yogyakarta, including the political constellation. In the 2014 and 2019 local elections, several incomer's candidates were involved in the legislative polls. When there was a heated debate about the privileged status of Yogyakarta and the aspiration to appoint the Sultan of Yogyakarta as a permanent governor, generally, the voices of the incomers were in line with the

⁶ Djoko Soekiman, *Sejarah Kota Yogyakarta* (Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, Direktorat Sejarah dan Nilai Tradisional, Proyek Inventarisasi dan Dokumentasi Sejarah Nasional, 1986), 89.

⁷ Herry Zudianto, *Kekuasaan sebagai Wakaf Politik: Manajemen Yogyakarta Kota Multikultur* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2008), 89.

⁸ Ibid.

aspirations of the majority of the native Yogyakarta.⁹ People may understand this stance as submissive, but it can also be seen as the increasing importance of the voice of the incomers in the domestic political landscape.

Besides the shiny picture of that interaction, there was a melancholy atmosphere. Our observation sensed cultural tensions. Many of them are the tongue in the spit, as Indonesian proverbial, *api dalam sekam* (fire in husks), which can explode at any time. The “Cebongan Shooting” in 2013 showed how such undercurrent tension manifested in an extreme measure. It killed four inmates by a group of army troops, members of a nearby special force headquarter (Kopassus). The inmates were incomers from Eastern Indonesians and belonged to the local thug organizations. Although in this incident there was no clash between social groups, the reaction of the people “represented” the “native” *Yogyanese*, through banners and some minor public demonstrations indicated a long-time dissatisfaction with the presence of incomers. The feeling was directed at those ethnicities originated from the Eastern part of Indonesia, which often associated with criminal activities.¹⁰

For some informants, Yogyakarta is a barometer (benchmark) of Indonesia. Any efforts by the leadership and civil society to keep the nation intact can be gauged from the political dynamics in Yogyakarta. What happened in Yogyakarta reflected tensions at the national level and vice versa. Such includes the dynamics of interreligious relations, such as the increasing pietization of the public sphere and the aspirations to incorporate specific religious values into positive law, similarly challenges Yogyakarta landscape, as admitted by several informants.

Theoretical Framework

The process of migration and displacement, namely the movement of social entities from one location to another has been a common human activity since time immemorial. In today’s globalization, this process is complicated and dynamic since there are

⁹ Aloysius Soni B.L. de Rosari, “*Monarki Yogya*” *Inskonstitusional?* (Jakarta: Penerbit Buku Kompas, 2011), 263-264.

¹⁰ DetikNews, “Puluhan Warga NTT Menunggu Jenazah 4 Korban Penembakan Di LP Cebongan,” March 24, 2013. (<http://news.detik.com/read/2013/03/24/182157/2202256/10/puluhan-warga-ntt-menunggu-jenazah-4-korban-penembakan-di-lp-cebongan>).

many variables that drive migration and displacement. It is often associated with social, economic, political, and war conditions. More than just material concern and mobility, it includes the thinking process and worldview. There is a kind of awareness processing on the back of the human mind that any dwelling position in a location is always “transient,” and there is an urgency to move (mobility).¹¹¹²

The present study sensed the similar dynamics that social and economic reasons mainly drove the migration of incomers to Yogyakarta. At this juncture, Yogyakarta is both nexus and destination (*terminal*). It turns out to be an open space and society where anyone can enter and leave freely.

What makes Yogyakarta unique is the number of incomers, their ethnic diversity of them, and the dynamics of their relations. Regardless of the complicated relationship, like and dislike, incomers are always part of that society in any open society. The claim of Yogyakarta, a City of Tolerance, once manifested such a demographic reality.

Yogyakarta is also the second-largest tourist destination in Indonesia after Bali Island. Therefore, its appeal lies not only in its attributes as a “city of students,” “city of culture,” and others but also in the tourism industry’s growth. Capturing the perceptions of the incomers required a careful distinction from the discourse of tourism. Tourists are limited engagement with the tourist destination and the communities they visit.

A tourist visiting Yogyakarta may come with full expectation, interest, and curiosity. S/he anticipated experiencing something unique, which might escape her/him from the daily routine, to gain inner satisfaction and pleasure. Therefore, tourists and the world of tourism structure the world they face as a tourist gaze. This way of gazing is discursive and subject to the so-called scopic regime, a power to entertain the eyes. The tourist gaze is constructed, framed, and filtered by the tourists’ age, social class, and expectations.¹³ That is why the presented reality is based on the emphasis on the difference between the daily life of the tourist and the realm experience at the tourist location. Reality is also very selective and

¹¹ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

¹² John Urry, *Mobilities* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007).

¹³ John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2011), 2.

associated uniquely, curated by the tourist industry. The aggregation of experiences and impressions is absorbed selectively as well. These short-term encounters, superficial, pragmatic relations, and encounters in selective public spaces, limited the possibility of the alteration of perceptions of each party while producing artificial assumptions.

In contrast to the above, incomers in Yogyakarta undergo a different experience from the tourists. As migrants, they are more immersed in life as part of the local engagement and settings for an extended period. The experiences and impressions produced are more engaging, and they often experience the ups and downs and other social dynamics in their context. Nevertheless, their experiences go beyond the scenic regime. Indeed, their perspective toward the native could not escape from the discursive assumptions. An example of that is the uneasiness felt by our informants toward the dichotomous discourse of “Java” and “outside Java” (*Java dan luar Jawa*).

Two categories that will explain the results of this study, namely incomers as “strangers” or “sojourners,” and incomers as “migrants.” For the former, the presence of incomers may or may not be permanent. This is prominently experienced by the non-*Yogyanese* students studying in Yogyakarta. Even though they graduated and worked in Yogyakarta, they signaled the possibility to search for better opportunities to work outside Yogyakarta. As for the second category, as migrants, there is a possibility that they stay longer due to the existing conditions, such as marriage with the native *Yogyanese*, or as retirees.

For the first category, the notion of “incomers” used in this study was developed based on Georg Simmel’s sociological theory and William Gudykunst’s theory of intercultural communication about “strangers” and “sojourners”.¹⁴¹⁵ If tourists are people who come to a place “today and leave tomorrow,” according to Simmel, foreigners are travelers who come “today and stay tomorrow.” S/he decided to stay but controlled little power to come and go because of economic demands. S/he exists in the same spatial space as the native

¹⁴ Georg Simmel, *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, translated by Kurt H. Wolff. (Glencoe.: The Free Press, 1950), 402-408.

¹⁵ William B Gudykunst, “An Anxiety/Uncertainty Management (AUM) Theory of Strangers’ Intercultural Adjustment” in *Theorizing about Intercultural Communication*, edited by William B. Gudykunst (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE Publications, 2005), 419-457.

but does not fully participate, while on the contrary, s/he invested her/his qualities into that space.¹⁶ On the other hand, through the term “sojourner,” Gudykunst explained that s/he is also a “stranger,” hence s/he does not necessarily adjust the identity as the sojourner does not come to term to settle.

Therefore, strangers are always in tension between proximity and distance in their interactions with local residents. To be a “stranger,” in this case means to be always in a state of paradox. Proximity, is understood that strangers have always been part of an open society. They become an essential element that serves specific roles, such as traders, workers, inter-group liaisons, and so on. This process is even smoother if they share cultural and religious traits. On the other hand, they also at the state a distance if there are cultural differences and religious differences.

As migrants, various dynamics that are of concern in connection with this research. Incomers in Yogyakarta can be classified into internal migration, i.e., the migration process that occurred domestically within the scope of the same country. Urbanization and transmigration are examples of such internal migration. In contrast to the aforementioned “stranger/sojourner,” migrants have a greater opportunity to adapt their identity and culture to the host culture.¹⁷ They, therefore, trained techniques to adapt to ensure a more permanent settling and livelihood.

Language is an entry point for acceptance into a social group.¹⁸ Internal migrants tend to practice social adequation, namely efforts to gain an equal position with the host culture through language practices that are often alien to their own ethnic/social group.¹⁹ In the context of incomers in Yogyakarta, they adopted Javanese language or the “appropriation” of the Javanese intonation/accents in speaking the Indonesian language.

Some of our informants embraced several categories as initially they pursued higher education in Yogyakarta but ended as migrants, married with the native, and having a permanent occupation. Those categories served a limited purpose and were employed simply to help

¹⁶ Georg Simmel, *The sociology of Georg Simmel*, 402.

¹⁷ William B. Gudykunst, “An Anxiety/Uncertainty Management (AUM)”, 420.

¹⁸ Sarah B. Benor, *Becoming Frum: How Newcomers Learn the Language and Culture of Orthodox Judaism* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2012).

¹⁹ Zane Goebel, “Semiotic Landscapes: Scaling Indonesian Multilingualism,” *Humaniora*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (October, 2020): 4.

understand the field's dynamic. In reality, it is challenging to recognize incomers as strangers, sojourners, or migrants.

One of the critical issues in theorizing the present undertaking is measuring the perception of the incomers. Gudykunst introduced the term anxiety/uncertainty in explaining the relationship between incomers and their parent culture.²⁰ Anxiety/uncertainty (from now on AU) is an uncomfortable feeling and anxiety when someone encounters and communicates with the host. Each human accordingly has a maximum and minimum AU threshold. If the status is above the maximum threshold, then the feeling of the newcomer is discomfortable as such that effective communication is complicated, and a sense of threat arises. On the other hand, below the minimum threshold means that the newcomer is very comfortable communicating with the local people in such a way that there is no desire to make cultural adjustments. For incomers to adjust, the AU levels must be below the maximum and above the minimum.

Dynamics of Interaction

In general, the AU levels of the informants were more or less below and above the minimum. This shows a good process of acceptance and interaction between the informants and the local population. All informants acknowledged the uniqueness of Yogyakarta in terms of tolerance and pluralism. Yogyakarta has become an arena for their aspirations and participation, including political, academic structure, and regional administration. In line with this perception, there are also contradictions and tensions along their journey with the native *Yogyanese* as reflected in the following discussion.

A. Story/History of Coming to Yogyakarta

There are many narratives about how the incomers were “stranded” in Yogyakarta. Most of them stayed in Yogyakarta to study, especially to access to higher education/university. Yogyakarta is seen as a “nice and comfortable student city,” as stated by an informant from Bali. This social reality can also be understood as a sign of the critical education gap in Indonesia. Most of them came from areas with limited educational performance. Hence, from the perspective of social justice in Pancasila, Yogyakarta has become a

²⁰ William B. Gudykunst, “An Anxiety/Uncertainty Management (AUM)”, 422.

symbol of the state's "failure" in fulfilling its constitutional promises in other areas in Indonesia.

Some stay to pursue a better life, fulfill occupational demands, retire, or pursue religious endeavors. Yogyakarta was chosen as the place for retirement because their children are also studying in Yogyakarta. As an informant proposed, Yogyakarta holds a "mystical aura" that makes a deep impression on anyone who has lived in it. Most of the informants felt that Yogyakarta was their "home" to return to after they went on vacation to their place of origin. Meanwhile, Yogyakarta is also a place to develop religious endeavors as one informant displayed his concern on the moral decline among Yogyakarta students, reflecting on his own "dark" past.

Indeed, not everyone feels that Yogyakarta is special. Some see Yogyakarta simply as a place to study at a well-known university. For her, the uniqueness of Yogyakarta is a myth produced and reproduced by the natives, tourists, and incomers.

Some were stranded in Yogyakarta because of the experience of displacement due to the conflicts in Maluku (1999-2004) and Timor Leste (1999). Others are due to the impact of the natural disaster in Nias Island in 2004. All those difficult experiences eventually brought them to this city to start studies, new businesses, and looking for jobs. This sweet impression is wrapped in a "struggle" narrative because of the cultural contrast and alienation experienced by them. Indeed, this is a typical experience for anyone who has just set a new life in a new place. However, the uniqueness of Yogyakarta is incomers relative smooth adaptation process.

B. Impression of Yogyakarta and *Yogyanese*

One of the reasons that make Yogyakarta unique in the eyes of the informants is the cultural contrast. Most of the informants came from areas with a "tough" image, such as East Nusa Tenggara, Maluku, Papua, and North Sumatra. Concerning Java, one informant was even grateful and saw it as a gift from God that most of the Indonesian population were Javanese because "if Eastern Indonesians were the majority," he said, "I could not imagine what would happen." He deduced the national disintegration if such a projection was happening.

All the informants praised the positive tendency of the native *Yogyanese* as an open-minded people, accepting the newcomers and

interacting with them warmly. This attitude is a virtuous social capital, creating an aura of acceptance by most informants, even to the point of inter-ethnic and inter-religious marriages. It seems that this inter-ethnic marriage becomes a space for negotiation and manifesting the farthest end of acceptance by their host society.

Likewise, in terms of religious tolerance, some informants compared it with their place of origin and other places where they had lived. "There is no bigotry [of native *Yogyanese*]," said an informant from Nias Island. *Yogyanese* is tolerant to the extent that incomers can express their religiosity safely and comfortably. The education factor is considered one of the reasons for such quality.

To win the heart of *Yogyanese* required a particular strategy. Some informants volunteered to explore Javanese and *Yogyanese* customs as deeply as possible to be accepted by their circle. Those who took this measure have all married the locals. The children of an informant have even become *sinden* and shadow puppeteers. For them, it is essential to understand the hierarchical structure of Yogyakarta Javanese culture. They firmly believe that intercultural communication will be smoother through such efforts, and the acceptance process will be more straightforward.

However, paradox and ambiguity are also vital. *Yogyanese* were referred to by informants as "easy-going," "gentle," "friendly," "patient," "the upholder strongly the family virtues," "modern but also traditional," "*sepi ing pamrib*" (selflessness), "*mangan ora mangan asal ngumpul*" (strong communalism), as well as "slow," "unpredictable," "*nggih nggih mboten kepanggih*" (inconsistency), and "selfish." These create a kind of cultural shock, ambiguity, and paradox that complicates interactions with incomers.

The above tendency becomes a point of tension because of the obvious cultural contrasts, for example in terms of frankness ("outspoken") that characterizes the culture of most of the informants' ethnicity, as well as ambiguity in terms of "tolerance." For the latter, the irony is that the people of Yogyakarta are seen as "tolerant" even to those who are "intolerant." This can be seen in the response to the aforementioned *Cebongan* incident where for an informant (which was echoed by other informants), the people of Yogyakarta were "silent" as if they agreed with the violence. There were even various statements through banners supporting such an extra-judicial settlement. Besides that, some "intolerant" religious

groups also have a stronghold in Yogyakarta and freely encroach the public space unrestrained.

According to the informants, the above tension might relate to Javanese ethnicity, especially *Yogyanese* self-perception and their perception of the Other. The *Yogyanese* constantly emphasizes boundaries of identity, who is in the in-group and out-group positions, hence what has considered their acceptance of the newcomers becomes complicated and sometimes sensed artificially.

The tendency of the people of *Yogyanese* (and Javanese in general) to avoid conflict and pursue harmony, manifested in the above cases in which those immediately “wrapped” as soon as possible in maintaining the impression of security and peace. This was the concern of some of the informants as they were alarmed such issue is the tongue in the spit, *api dalam sekam* that can be exploded uncontrolled. The public slogan *Yogya berhati nyaman* (*Yogya*, the kind heart city) has become a hegemonic symbol to suppress this undercurrent.

Another paradox is that even though Yogyakarta is called a “city of students,” some informants detected discrimination in education. Quotas for incomers to study in certain universities and religion-based discrimination in several public schools became their concern. Furthermore, religious-specific boarding houses were increasingly present, limiting the daily interreligious interactions. Those complicated the social interaction between the incomers and the natives.

Informants who have lived in Yogyakarta for more than twenty years have witnessed a fundamental shift in Yogyakarta society. They recalled the rise of Javanese as the language of instruction and by *Yogyanese* maintains integrity between words and deeds. Present-day *Yogyanese*, according to them, loosed up their Javanese language heritage and inflicted by pragmatism.

Tensions also occurred in the religious arena, mainly because the informants were minority religions. Though most *Yogyanese* is Muslim, the informants generally perceive them to be more considerate toward minorities than Muslims elsewhere. However, in their observations, there has been a shift and increase in intolerance through particular aspirations of certain Muslim groups to encourage what one informant called “experiments” of regional regulations

based on Islamic sharia.²¹²² Inter-religious tensions are part of pluralistic Indonesian societies, but for Yogyakarta, it becomes a “wage,” as discussed in the earlier parts.

The factual form of this attitude for the Christian and Catholic informants is the “local level Islamization,” namely the deeper penetration of certain religious assumptions in public policy, and the difficulty of obtaining permission to build houses of worship. However, the latter has its dynamics because, according to one informant, the obstacles to establishing of places of worship come from the internal rivalry among Christian communities. If the tensions mentioned above are not appropriately addressed, it is ticking to the right moment to explode.

C. The Scope and Limits of Adaptation

Even though the *Yogyanese* are perceived as open and tolerant towards incomers, there is a strong dynamic between acceptance (flow) and limitation (closure). Some incomers, especially Bali, find it much easier to adapt to Yogyakarta culture due to the many cultural affinities and social structures. “In Bali we have kings ... in Yogya there is also a king,” is a manifestation of the relationship assumption.

As mentioned in the previous section, some informants tried hard to adapt to local customs. An informant from Papua was so successful in adapting that he was known among his friends as “*Paijo*,” “*Papua iso Jowo*” (Papuan mastery in the Javanese language). Several informants from Sumatra refer to the Sumatran proverb, “where the land steps, the sky is upheld” (*di mana bumi dipijak di sana langit dijunjung*) for adapting to the local realities.

Several other informants strongly criticized their circles living in Yogyakarta but immediately gathered only within their ethnic group. This process is “naturalized” through the presence of regional- and ethnic-based dormitories supported by provincial and regency governments outside Yogyakarta. According to an informant, the purpose of establishing these dormitories was to maintain group identity, as well as to facilitate coordination with the government of origin to ensure their utility after graduation. On the other hand, the

²¹ Joko Wicoyo, “A Discourse: Naming Yogyakarta as The Veranda of Madinah,” *Historia Vitae*, 25, no. 2 (2011): 146–61.

²² Joko Wicoyo, “The Decline of Pluralism in Yogyakarta,” *The Jakarta Post*, July 17, 2013. (www.thejakartapost.com/news/2013/07/17/citizen-journalism-the-decline-pluralism-yogyakarta.html).

informant deliberately skipped such arrangement as he wanted to blend with the native *Yogyanese* and considered the dormitory hindered this process.

It seems that a symptom of “encapsulation” of identity was undergone, that is a newcomer leaving her/his context of origin and reenters to the circle just like the original in the destination. In the context of Yogyakarta, this kind of socialization may occur through ethnic-based dormitories. So that differences in identity are immediately “neutralized” through the acceptance of the newcomer in his ethnic group and the same milieu as their place of origin. There were attempts by these newcomers either by their initiative or by group pressure to limit their interactions with the environment outside the milieu. At this point, “long-distance ethnicism” could occur, in which the new place is simply an extension of the existing assumptions of ethnicity.

A cultural contrast might be born from the self-perception of the incomers. From the discussion, such a feeling was surfaced when some of the informants considered Javanese culture is superior to theirs. An informant from Nias Island was willing to leave his “bad” habits of his own culture and adopt a better Yogyakarta culture, such as etiquette. Yogyakarta was then perceived as a cultural negotiation and symbolic space to “refine” their original culture, seen as “rough” and less favorable.

Such perception is ambiguous since according to others, *Yogyanese* have never entirely accepted the incomers, especially from outside Java, partly because they view themselves as higher grade (in civilizational terms) than the others. Even if the incomers attempted to learn Javanese or practice adequation, they are still considered “strangers who speak Javanese.” As indicated by two informants, the “binary opposition” and “dichotomous mindset”, namely “black and white,” “Java and outside Java,” “Java and Eastern Indonesia” are maintained by the *Yogyanese* as a frontier of interaction.

At this juncture, the stranger/sojourner complex in Simmel and Gudykunst’s construction is considered accurate by some of them. There is a feeling of alienation amidst the rhetoric of openness and tolerance of *Yogyanese*. After all, remarked an informant, the incomers are “the outsiders.” Such perception thickens in the interaction when the informants’ self-perception confirms the stereotype that “Eastern (Indonesians) are rude” is approved by the informants’ self-

perception. One of them was a police officer pointing out the frequent physical fights among Eastern Indonesian groups.

In addition to adoring Yogyakarta's openness, there is still a limit in which the culture of Yogyakarta is considered disharmonized with the religious beliefs of some of the informants. According to one of them, as a Christian, one should not "worship" the Sultan of Yogyakarta. Likewise, many Javanese values—referred to as *kejawen* by the informants—contradict and are unacceptable to the Christian faith. Hence, openness and closure were also the basic assumptions of intergroup relationships.

D. A Sought-After Self-Perception

A sought-after self-perception is a new identity yielded from the encounters and social negotiations with the people and culture of Yogyakarta after a long period. Yogyakarta, as transit/nexus and terminal space, implicated the incomers. The relatively favorable experience with the locals creates a rather complicated new self-perception. When were all the informants asked: which came first, being a *Yogyanese* or their ethnic origins (Balinese, Bataks, Floresians, Timorese, Moluccans, and others), or vice versa? There are various answers demonstrating ambiguity. The dynamics were coming from the immersive experience as part of Yogyakarta society but the unforgettable root of their native culture.

Some of the informants asserted they first belonged to their ethnic groups. As explained above, some of them underwent identity encapsulation as the impact of open space, such as Yogyakarta, which gives room to maintain its original identity with limited intensity to interact with its surroundings. This characterizes the "sojourner" mentality. An informant who is Bataks has lived in Yogyakarta for ten years, barely speaking Javanese, and has limited interaction with *Yogyanese*. His identity is primarily Batak, and he has little attachment with *Yogyanese*. He frequently spent with the Bataks association.

Others said firmly that he was from Yogyakarta, especially those from a conflict area. Immersing in Yogyakarta society becomes a kind of trauma healing from his previous condition, which was scary and painful. Others displayed the complexity of their identity. Even though they were aware of their ethnic roots, the experiences of being part of the Yogyakarta community were engaging in tension between the undeniable ethnicity and their *Yogyanese* identities. They

emphasized the layered identities and ambiguity, which elastic depended on the context of a conversation. This is manifested in the statements such as “while I was studying in Yogyakarta, I was *Yogyanese*,” and “I am an Atoni [one of the Timorese ethnic groups] but I always wanted to ‘come back home’ to Yogyakarta, every time I returned to my hometown.” This kind of ambiguity is typical of the conditions of migrants, diaspora communities, and incomers.

Conclusion

The informants are generally happy to be part of the Yogyakarta society. This is inseparable from the choices in the history of the formation of the “privilege” of Yogyakarta itself, which makes it a flexible open space to bear diversity.

However, one informant emphasized, “Yogyakarta privileges are costly” (*barga keistimewaan itu mahal*). He meant that *Yogyanese*, with all capacities to manage diversity, is costly, as there are many contradictions and tensions. For incomers, especially non-Muslims, this condition often creates mixed feelings that are not easy to ward off. It accentuated the sense that the incomers remained strangers/sojourners and out-group for the *Yogyanese*. Regardless of overlapping social spaces where the boundaries of these categories are fluid, this condition might be a challenge in the future.

However, amid the tensions mentioned above, there is some hope and appreciation for better opportunities for coexistence. Most informants believed that Yogyakarta’s government initiative to provide space for incomers, such as organizing cultural expressions to Javanese and non-Javanese through various activities such as Yogyakarta Festivals, to develop mutual understanding.

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