
KIBLAT AND THE MEDIATIC JEW¹

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kiblat 1. direction of Mecca (at the time of prayer)
2. direction; aim; compass point, esp. one from which the wind
arises
berkiblat: directed toward . . . ; e.g., politics directed toward the interests
of international communism.

From W. J. S. Poerwadarminta, *Kamus Umum
Bahasa Indonesia* (General Dictionary of
Indonesian) (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1966)

Practically speaking, there are no Jews in Indonesia. Nor do Indonesians usually claim that there are. But it is now said that there is strong Jewish influence corrupting Islam, sometimes disguised as orthodox Islamic truth and producing political unrest. There has long been anti-Semitism in Indonesia, but the amount of anti-Semitic material increased greatly during the regime of President Suharto. The *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* have been republished several times, as well as much else in the way of anti-Semitic literature.² Nor is it unusual to hear Jews referred to as the cause of Indonesia's present economic crisis.

¹ I want to thank Anne Berger and Michael Meekeer as well as the members of the conference convened by Samuel Weber and Hent de Vries for their comments on this paper. In particular I am strongly indebted to Sam Weber for remarks which enabled me to rethink the issues that follow.

² Martin van Bruinessen, "Yahudi sebagai Simbol Dalam Wacana Pemikiran Islam Indonesia Masa Kini" ("Jew as Symbol in the Discourse of Indonesian Islamic Thinking at the Present Time"), in *Spiritualitas Baru: Agama dan Aspirasi Rakyat* (New Spirituality: Religion and the People's Aspirations), ed. Y. B. Mangunwijaya, et al. (Yogyakarta: Institut Dian/Interfidei, 1994), pp. 253-268. Van Bruinessen points out that the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* were not republished in Indonesia from European sources but from Arabic. He traces the tendency to blame Jews for conspiracy in Indonesia not to Europe but to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Egypt. *Ibid.*, pp. 254-255. He notes four editions of the *Protocols* in Indonesian, the earliest of which was published in 1982.

In Europe and America Jews are thought to be knowable by their names. But in my experience, even Indonesians who have spent long periods in America or Europe often do not recognize "Cohen" or "Siegel" as indicators of Jewish origins. Nor do faces provide a clue. I was told several times by Indonesians, for instance, that my nose, long and pointed particularly by Indonesian standards, was admirable. It was admired in particular because it resembled the noses of Arabs. A Jew arriving in Indonesia, then, is likely to go unrecognized unless he says he is Jewish. But even this is not definitive. Once in Sumatra I told some Muslim friends I was of Jewish origin. They offered to take me to a coreligionist. Arriving at a house I saw through the window a large orthodox cross. The religious identity of the Jew, if this anecdotal evidence is worth anything, merges into that of the Christian, while the face of the Jew dissolves into the face of the Arab, the latter admired, the former feared. A Jew, even when he is present in the country, is without a face or an identity of his own. Even as he announces himself to Indonesians within Indonesia he seems to disappear.

Translating Allah

It seems useful to look at some examples of current anti-Semitic usage. The first of these was stimulated by a proposal for a new foundation for tolerance between religions. Nurcholish Madjid had been the leader of the Indonesian Muslim Students Association (HMI) during a critical moment in the establishment of the New Order, the term Suharto gave to his regime to distinguish it from that of Indonesia's first president, Sukarno. Nurcholish is well known amongst the figures who speak for Islam on the Indonesian national stage. In December 1992, he gave a talk about tolerance which aroused a furor amongst many Muslims and led to his being called a Zionist agent and a member of the International Jewish Conspiracy.³

Nurcholish provoked his audience in the first place by claiming that religion (*agama*) was a danger. It stimulated intolerance and violence. He had recently returned from America, and he relied on the self-designated "futuurologists" of the moment,

Media Dakwah, a journal which I shall discuss shortly, published tracts attributed to Benjamin Franklin and Martin Luther King warning against the danger of Jews. It quotes Napoleon saying, "The Jews are the Master robbers of the modern age. The evil of Jews does not stem from individual but from the fundamental nature of this people" (speech to the Council of State, April 30 and May 7, 1806), p. 53. (*Media Dakwah*, Research Team, "Fakta dan Data Untuk William Liddle" [August, 1993]) It also published translations of Roger Garaudy in the issues of March 1986, May 1986, and July 1986. For a commentary on Garaudy as seen by a certain Indonesian Muslim opinion, see Daud Rasyid, "Geraudy [sic] Vs. Sindikat Zionisme" ("Geraudis versus the Zionist Syndicat"), *Media Dakwah*, June 1997, pp. 17-18. Garaudy was frequently quoted also by Nurcholish Madjid.

Following conventional English usage I use "anti-Semitic" to mean "anti-Jewish."

³ A description of the institutional background of this talk can be found in Douglas Ramage, *Politics in Indonesia* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 75-122. See also Robert W. Hefner, "Islamization and Democratization in Indonesia," in *Islam in an Era of Nation-States: Politics and Renewal in Muslim Southeast Asia*, ed. Robert W. Hefner (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997), pp. 75-129. Hefner speaks explicitly of Nurcholish Madjid and describes the distribution of Islamic leadership, but he minimizes that leadership's complicated relations with the Indonesian military and makes no mention of their virulent anticommunism which renders, as we will see, the extension of tolerance quite limited. It is hard to find a Muslim leader of national stature who openly opposed the rule of General Suharto until the last years of his regime. Nurcholish Madjid was not an exception. His efforts rather, as Hefner says, were to gain influence with the regime.

people such as Alvin Toffler, to warn against certain dangers. Religion as he saw it needed to be saved from itself. He repeated something he had said twenty years earlier, when he had recently returned to Indonesia after studying in the United States at the University of Chicago. At that moment he coined a slogan, "Islam, Yes; Partai Islam, No" (Islam, Yes; Islamic Party, No). In sum, the problem with religion was its organized element. The religious spirit was valuable, but the institutionalization of religion provoked conflict and other difficulties. In the contemporary scene, in 1992, he thought the danger was cults. Cults—meaning the bands of sometimes violent devout then a concern in America—were the result of a perverted religious impulse. They were an effect of the "alienation" (a term he borrowed from Eric Fromm) caused by industrial society. They produced intolerance and even violence. Cults, said Nurcholish, represent the flight of the spiritual, for the spiritual has been driven out of industrial society by its characteristic confusion and loneliness. Organized religion cannot assuage this condition.

No one, Nurcholish added, claims that cults exist in Indonesia. Rather Nurcholish feared that, given the nature of religion and given also Indonesian social conditions, cults could arise:

But in Indonesia up till now, precisely the uneven distribution [of wealth] and inequality are characteristic; this emerges clearly in the distribution of information, opinion, and opportunity. Thus the crisis [*krisis*] here would be in fact much worse than in America, were it not for other factors which work to contain it. This crisis can take different forms of expression. One among them which can threaten and at the very least disturb stability [*stabilitas*] and national security. In other forms, it can be the emergence of cults and fundamentalism.⁴

There could be cults. They would arise just at the point where another danger threatened. When he speaks of threats and disturbances here, Nurcholish echoes conventional phrases employed by the New Order, which repeatedly warned the nation about dangers to "stability and national security." The New Order's "danger" referred to the menace of resurgent communism after its defeat, and after the massacre of hundreds of thousands of those accused of being communists in 1965-66. The danger arises from the maldistribution of opportunity and particularly of income in Indonesia that has come with the incursions of the international market. Nurcholish here expresses a distrust of destabilizing influences that he shares with his Islamic opponents, as we shall see. This opinion grows out of a warning spread by the government, the warning that both the government itself and the Indonesian public must be forever on guard against the attempted return of communists to power. Those who broadcast this warning point to the fact that in 1948, during the revolution, communists fought the forces of Sukarno. Despite their defeat, the Communist Party subsequently regained its position, reclaiming power to such an extent that in 1965 many expected them to win control of the government through elections. It was just at this moment that communists were massacred. Now, it is feared, communists will emerge again.

⁴ Nurcholish Madjid, "Beberapa Renungan tentang kehidupan Keagamaan di Indonesia untuk Generasi Mendatang." Nurcholish's talk and responses to it were republished by his opponents. See H. Lukman Hakiem, ed., *Menggugat Gerakan Pembaruan Keagamaan: Debat Besar 'Pembaruan Islam'* (Jakarta: Lembaga Studi Informasi Pembangunan, 1995), p. 47.

Nurcholish speaks of the danger of cults rather than the danger of communism as a way of introducing his criticism of religion. Cults, in his view, are a stunted form of religion. One must open religion up; he proposed making it as inclusive as possible. He suggested a way for Muslims to accept the religious life of others. The Koran recognizes two other people of the book, Jews and Christians, to whom prophets appeared bearing the word of God. Mohammed is the seal of prophecy, the bearer of the perfected message. But Muslim men are allowed to marry Jewish and Christian women in acknowledgment of the line of prophecy common to their religions. In the interest of inclusion and of the spirit of religion, Nurcholish wants to show that the God of the Muslims is also the God of others. It is in the first place a question of the name of God.

Because "Tuhan" [the Indonesian word for "God"] and "Tuhan" can have different meanings. As an example, the "Allah" of Arabs before Islam differed from the "Allah" of Islam. Among other things, the "Allah" of the Arabs had children and associates [in English] who were all "served" with offerings and prostration by humans. While the "Allah" of Islam has the sense of God who is the only God, who is pure; according to Max Weber it is "pure monotheism"—strict monotheism [in English] as is cogently stated in the Koran, the well-known Surat Al Iklhash.⁵

The name of God confuses. Nurcholish claims that the name is not relevant. "Allah" once meant not the monotheistic god of Islam, but a god of the polytheistic tribes before the foundation of Islam. What is important is that there is a single source of truth regardless of the name given it.

Everything that is true comes from the same source, that is Allah, the Truest [*al-haqq*]. And all prophets and apostles [*rasul*] bring the same message. The difference is only in the form of the response depending on the time and place of the apostle. Thus there are no differences of principle . . .⁶

It is a question of identifying "the same source." And that is only in part a question of prophets and apostles. Thus it is not only Christians and Jews to whom divine message was brought. It is also Buddhists and Hindus and others. For those who have *iman*—faith—there are no great differences. Nurcholish follows an Arabic interpretation which gives Muslims the right to marry not only Jews and Christians—people of the book—but Chinese and Japanese and others because "they too have holy books which contain the basis of Tauhid [unicity] of God who is uniquely One."⁷

The names of God can be confusing. The important thing is to understand that one cannot know God in his uniqueness, his lack of duplication. To try and do so is to fall into the error known in Indonesian as *berhala*, which means to picture god, to create an image of him, and perhaps a material image. This for Nurcholish is the Muslim equivalent of alienation. Man worships what he creates; this means that man no longer controls his own productions; they control him. This he calls *alienasi* as he Indonesianizes the word "alienation" that he borrows from Eric Fromm.

⁵ Ibid., p. 51.

⁶ Ibid., p. 55.

⁷ Ibid., p. 59.

Nurcholish Madjid had some defenders. They formed, in fact, one group of Muslim intellectuals on the Indonesian scene. It is his opponents, however, about whom I want to speak. They were numerous, but for the most part the arguments they put forward to challenge Nurcholish coincided. One assertion was that Nurcholish, in accepting that religion had undesirable effects and citing Westerners who made the same claim, no longer spoke from Islamic suppositions. According to Drs. Nabhan Husein,

It meant that he put in place a principle of use to measure a truth. This is the same as putting religion in the position of a tool [*instrumen*] subordinate to the criteria of the society concerned. When the society is flooded by change, a religion [Nurcholish thinks] has to be reexamined. And so on through the ages. A foundation of thinking of this sort might be compatible with certain religions but not with the Muslim religion.⁸

Such thinking, according to Lukman Hakiem, was based on a faulty understanding of the unknowability of God. Allah cannot be known, but He can be experienced. The result of working through contradictions, as he says Nurcholish does, by a method Lukman Hakiem labels Hegelian, is that it leads those who are naive into doubt, philosophy, and secularism. He claimed that Nurcholish's misunderstanding is based on his inadequate translation from Arabic.

Another critic, HM Hasballah Thaib, MA, warned, as did many others, of the danger of raising doubts through the use of inappropriate methods for the study of Islam, particularly secular ones.

Many people are already made nervous about their faith when *la ilah ilallah* [the first phrase of the confession of faith] is analyzed to mean "There is no god [tuhan with a small 't'] except God [Tuhan with a capital 'T']." Not to mention saying that "God never named himself Allah; only humans did that."⁹

Hasballah goes on to criticize Nurcholish for using Cartesian methods:

Imagine if someone who believed in Islam wanted to look for the truth. Would he have to leave Islam first? What would be the result? He would clearly be an apostate. In this way we see that *scientific research* [in English and italics] raises real danger when it is used in the area of faith.¹⁰

He concludes by finding fault with Nurcholish's translations of the *surat* Al Imran and other parts of the Koran:

In his piece, NM frequently plays with Arabic words which have multiple meanings to the point where changing the meaning just a trifle can deceive the Muslim community, especially those who do not really understand the language of the Koran.¹¹

⁸ Drs. Nabhan Husein, "Membedah Pemikiran Nurcholish Madjid," in *Menggugat Gerakan Pembaruan Keagamaan*, pp. 144-173, 160. Most of the articles in this collection were originally published in *Media Dakwah* in April, May, and June 1993.

⁹ HM Hasballah Thaib, "Mengkaji Gagasan Nurcholish," in *Menggugat Gerakan Pembaruan Keagamaan*, pp. 112-123, originally given as a talk in Medan on July 27, 1993.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

If Nurcholish is at fault, so too are Westerners who study Islam, usually referred to in these writings as "orientalists." Hasballah Thaib enumerated their faults. Like Nurcholish:

- a. They are not willing to accept the truth of Islam.
- b. They have an insufficient grasp of Arabic.
- c. They do not understand Islamic law.
- d. They look at Islam through Jewish or Christian lenses.¹²

Another critic explained why it is that orientalists are so influential:

After the West felt itself defeated in its attempt to control the Islamic community through political imperialism, the West struck out on another path. Among other things, they launched an attack from "within." For that they made an analysis of Islam in order to find its weaknesses (according to their assumptions). Then they disseminated this widely within their own areas and in the midst of the Muslim community itself in order to shake the faith of the Muslim community in its religion.¹³

This writer pointed out that various Muslims who studied in the West have exposed their strategy. The term "orientalists" lacked the specificity it has in Said's famous book, and, in fact, has little to do with Said's notion of scholars of the Middle Eastern tradition. In the works of these writers, only occasionally were orientalists named, and even then the line of connection between a particular scholar and his influence on particular Muslims, or, for that matter, the ideas of particular orientalists, went unmentioned. "Orientalists" as a term used by these authors was vague. Western scholars of Islam such as Jacques Berque, who are known to be defenders of Islam, went unmentioned. Vagueness of reference did not prevent the term from being consistently pejorative.

Several critics leveled the charge of orientalist influence against Nurcholish. A couple of them charged that he did not acknowledge his sources. Were he to do so, said Abu Ridho, it would mean acknowledging that many Muslim scholars who were students of Western orientalists are still under the control of their teachers. One has to understand that

the students of orientalists are their tools, scattered throughout every Muslim country, and continuously held in control by force of these orientalists.¹⁴

Misquotation and mistranslation often were said to be results of the influence of orientalists. Daud Rasyid, MA, pointed out that Muslims in their study of the Koran

¹² Ibid., p. 119. Hasballah lists the factors which cause a Muslim to be influenced by the understandings of orientalists: 1. They do not understand the legacy (*Legaci*) or the true heritage of Islam and do not look at the true sources of authentic Islam; 2. They are deceived by *scientific research* (Cartesian theory) used in the area of faith; 3. They want to think freely rather than through religious interpretation (*taqlid*); 4. They are influenced by desire. Ibid., p. 119.

¹³ Daud Rasyid, "Meluruskan Akidah, Menangkal Mu'tazilah," in *Menggugat Gerakan Pembaruan Keagamaan*, p. 240. (Originally published in *Media Dakwah*, June 1993).

¹⁴ Abu Ridho, "Hikmah Lain dari Polemik Itu" in *Menggugat Gerakan Pembaruan Keagamaan*, pp. 208; 195-213. (Originally published in *Media Dakwah*, April 1993).

and Hadiths have a certain method. They follow the etymology of Arabic words in order to be precise about their meanings, whereas Nurcholish does not.

Rasyid claims further that:

Those who are not disgusted by the contents of the thought launched at them will be stunned by the feverish use of foreign terms and the philosophical delivery.¹⁵

They “will be stunned and accept the ideas.”

It is in this context that anti-Semitism arises. Daud Rasyid points out that Nurcholish is not the first to return from abroad with shocking ideas. There have been others. And there have been secularists of this sort in the Arab world as well. One of these is the Egyptian Thaha Husein, who claimed, Daud Rasyid says, that Mohammed, rather than receiving the Koran from God, wrote it himself. Thaha Husein, he says, claims that there is important Jewish influence on the Koran. He made these assertions “following the suggestions of his teacher, Durkheim of the Sorbonne University in France, who was the director of his doctoral thesis.”¹⁶

Daud Rasyid repeats the charge of orientalism. He quotes Prof. Dr. Ismail Raji al-Faruqi from Temple University in Philadelphia, whom he claims “fell directly into the clutches of Jewish [Yahudi] Zionists in the study of Islam, from the giving of scholarships and professorships, and who was murdered by Zionist agents and who advised Muslims not to study Islam in the West.” The problem, Faruqi explained, was that America “was accustomed to taking in exiled intellectuals who went against the mainstream in Muslim countries and who were later given positions in the US as university professors.”¹⁷ Rasyid concludes that Western orientalists do not use scientific methodology which would insist on objectivity (*obyektif*) and an honest approach to Islam.

Returning to Nurcholish, he says that Nurcholish has mistranslated important words and has not followed the etymological methods that pertain in the study of the Koran and Hadiths. The results could be serious if, for instance, one translated in such way that it was no longer necessary to fast. Rasyid notes the declaration of Allah that exposes the tricks (*trik-trik*) of the Jews and of those who study Islam with the Jews, who twist the lines of Allah with devious turns of the tongue and stunning philosophical statements so that people will accept them as the truth. Maybe this is Nurcholish’s aim so that everyone will think that the duties contained in the *syari’ah* are unimportant and it is no longer necessary to carry them out.¹⁸

¹⁵ Daud Rasyid, MA, “Kesesatan Dikemas dengan Gaya Ilmiah” (Deviation Put Right Through Knowledge), in *Menggugat Gerakan Pembaruan Keagamaan*, p. 93. Originally given as an address on December 13, 1992 in the mosque of TIM where Nurcholish gave his talk.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

¹⁸ The Koranic verse he alludes to reads:

Some of the Jews pervert words from their meanings saying, “We have heard and we disobey” and “Hear, and be thou not given to hear” and “Observe us,” twisting with their tongues and traducing religion.

He goes on to criticize Nurcholish for his claim that the designated “people of the book” whose women Muslims can marry include not only Jews and Christians but also Buddhists, Hindus, and others. This conclusion, he says, is the result of another of Nurcholish’s mistranslations. Here is Rasyid’s conclusion:

Finally, how difficult it is to [have to] say that Nurcholish forces himself to be arrogant toward Islam but he does not have the capacity [*modal*] for it. It is even harder to say that Nurcholish who claims to be rendering a service to Islam in Indonesia in fact actually damages Islamic thinking. The most difficult thing to say is that Nurcholish is a Zionist agent who ruins Islam from within.¹⁹

Daud Rasyid assimilates Nurcholish to others who have returned from study abroad. Lukman Hakiem blames Nurcholish for having studied at Chicago at length. “It was at Chicago that Nurcholish made the acquaintance of Prof. Leonard Binder, a fanatical Jew who proposed to this Indonesian Muslim intellectual the title Doctor provided he deny the role of the Muslim community in Indonesian life in the past and the future.”²⁰

Certain critics charged that Nurcholish spoke as a secularist. But secularism in their estimation merely delivered Nurcholish into the hands of Jews. If we assume that the secular, by contrast to the sacred, is open to argument, then a close examination of the criticisms leveled against Nurcholish show us that his critics do not really locate him in a “secular” tradition, but in an alien, blasphemous “sacred” tradition, a system of falsified faith. It may be that he is open to argument within the limits of Cartesianism, but he is outside the possibility of argument with genuine Muslims, oriented as they are to the sacred word and understanding it according to prescribed principles. Nurcholish is not merely weak in his command of sacred Arabic, they say. His weakness is itself a sign that he translates the sacred books by other principles, those of orientalists. He is relocated or reoriented elsewhere, toward another sacred, in the sense of another foundation of translation and method of thinking, though of course only a secularist could speak of “another sacred.” Nurcholish’s deviation from *kiblat* opens onto the secular; the secular is another *kiblat*, another set of principles that make it impossible for him to exchange views with those who think in genuinely Islamic terms. At the same time he continues to communicate with those who are unaware of what informs his thinking. He can only corrupt belief, according to this view.

If they had said, “We have heard and obey”
and “Hear” and “Regard us,” it would have been
better for them, and more upright; but God has
cursed them for their unbelief, so they believe not except a few.

A. J. Arberry, trans., *The Koran Interpreted*, vol. 1 (New York: Collier Books, 1955), p. 107 (Surah IV, “Women”).

¹⁹ D. Rasyid, MA, “Kesesatan Dikemas dengan Gaya Ilmiah,” p. 105.

²⁰ Lukman Hakiem, “Nabi Gagal Menjalankan Missinya? Meuguji pemikiran Nurcholish” (“Was the Prophet defeated in Carrying Out his Mission?: Analysing the thought of Nurcholish”) *Media Dakwah*, December 1992, p. 4. Nurcholish is reported to have said later that Leonard Binder was never in a position to make such an offer. R. William Liddle, “*Media Dakwah* Scripturalism: One Form of Islamic Political Thought and Action in New Order Indonesia,” in *Toward a New Paradigm: Recent Developments in Indonesian Political Thought*, ed. Mark Woodward (Tempe: Arizona State University, 1996), p. 353, footnote 18.

Some writers in the monthly magazine *Media Dakwah*, where much of the criticism of Nurcholish was published, no longer consider Nurcholish to be a Muslim, but no one claims he is a Jew.²¹ According to his critics, Nurcholish is the agent, more often than not unwitting, of orientalists. He is in their power, unreachable by argument. In that sense, too, Nurcholish's understanding of the Koran is a mistranslation only from one point of view. The Jews who have, in the understanding of Nurcholish's critics, mistranslated the Koran have done so willfully. Their intentions, though nefarious, are fully transmitted in Nurcholish's discourse. The Koran may be mistranslated, but the words of Jewish orientalists are not. Generations after their studies were made, their work shows up intact without any slippage in translation from English or French or German into Arabic and from there into Indonesian. Unwitting Indonesian Muslims, duped by these studies, repeat the intentions of Jews who lived generations before on different continents.

There is no mistranslation at all. On the contrary there is a path of translation that is always accurate, preserving the inimical intentions at its origin. These bad intentions differ from those one encounters in daily life. One can reply to or even correct threats in daily life. But there can be no exchange of views with those of another orientation. They are under the control of others far away in time and place. Nurcholish at best could repent rather than modify his opinions. For their part, his critics could be influenced by him only at the cost of accepting something which would remain incompatible with everything else they think; alternatively they could change their entire manner of thinking. Words which originate from another *kiblat* cannot be assimilated within the true Islamic understandings of Nurcholish's critics. Taken in, they destroy one's capacity to understand correctly.

Many of those who responded to Nurcholish stress that Islam is itself tolerant and that Jews and Christians fare well under Muslim rule. The converse, they say, is not true. They do not fear the presence of non-Muslims within Islamic society, they say. They fear, rather, that someone or something shows up through the intervention of Nurcholish and others trained by orientalists; that someone, the originator of the dangerous messages, remains abroad. It is not the presence of Jews themselves that they object to. For all practical purposes there are no Jews in Indonesia, and it is not claimed that there are, as I have said.²² They fear, rather, Zionist influence, and they conflate Zionists and Jews. Furthermore, Zionist influence has nothing much to do with Israel. The misconceptions of orientalists originate in Europe or America, not in Israel, and it is not clear what political benefit there would be to Israel if, for instance, Nurcholish Madjid gained influence in Indonesia.²³ Zionist influence means harm to

²¹ See Hadiyanto, "Nurcholish Itu Neo Marxis" ("This Nurcholish is a NeoMarxist"), *Media Dakwah*, December 1992, p. 49; Muchlish Abdi, "Angap Saja Angin Lalu" ("Simply think of him as wind that has passed by"), *Media Dakwah*, December 1992, p. 50.

²² There are some who know of the Jewish community in Surabaya or who have heard that there is a Jew who lives in a certain part of Jakarta. But these people are not thought to be a threat, whereas Jews, always abroad, are.

²³ The closest one comes to a political notion in this thinking is when three reporters from Jakarta newspapers, including Islamic papers, went to Israel. It was said that they wanted to prepare the way for the recognition of Israel by Indonesia. The other political event came when a Jewish diplomat was nominated as American ambassador to Indonesia, evoking much protest.

Indonesian Muslims through the actions or speech of those taken to be Indonesian Muslims controlled by those at a distance.²⁴

Media Dakwah, to which I want to turn now in order to discuss its anti-Semitism, is not an organ of "fundamentalists" insofar as that word means religious figures who insist on a scripturalist interpretation of the Koran.²⁵ *Media Dakwah*, rather, is an organ of "modernists"; its chief ancestral figure is Mohammed Natsir, who was an important Islamic reformer. An Islamic modernist in the Indonesian context meant someone who, in the 1930s, in the name of Islam and of the Indonesian nation, advocated the establishment of Western-style education rather than Koranic schools; who worked for the emancipation of women, meaning he favored modern dress and education for them; and who, with independence, preferred the inclusion of all groups of the archipelago in the nation to the establishment of a state ruled by Islamic law.²⁶ *Media Dakwah* continued to welcome changes in Indonesian society. It looked on the new conglomerates to be found in Jakarta as promising vehicles for the spread of Islam. *Media Dakwah* introduced prayer sessions and religious instruction in those conglomerates run by Muslims and in certain government banks as well. On the other hand, they thought corporate enterprise largely favored Indonesian Chinese at the

²⁴ "Distance" can be historical. One *Media Dakwah* article claimed that Nurcholish's proposals closely resembled those of Annie Bessant and the Theosophical Society. The Theosophical Society was active in the early part of the century in Indonesia. The Research Team of *Media Dakwah* responsible for the article sees it as still operating in an important way. In their opinion, the Theosophical Society was a branch of British Freemasonry controlled in the early part of the century, at least, from Madras. They believe it is particularly dangerous as a front organization not only for Freemasonry but for Jews:

It is here that the Islamic community has to be particularly on the alert. And from now on no longer think of Nurcholish as the person who was once head of the HMI [Muslim Students Organization]. Nurcholish now, whether he is aware of it or not, is Nurcholish who, directly or indirectly, is campaigning [*mengampanyekan*] for the thinking of the Theosofische Vereeniging which very clearly forms part of the net of the Jewish International.

They go on to say that the Theosofische Vereeniging in colonial times did not seek to spread its teachings. It is all the more deplorable that Nurcholish is thought to be an Islamic figure; he uses his extensive knowledge of Islam to spread Theosophical thinking. "This is most effective for the group of Orientalists and Islamacists in misleading the community." See Tim Laporan Utama, "Penyerahan diri," Yes, Islam, 'No,'" *Media Dakwah*, December 1992, p. 47; 44-47. They conclude: "We have to be very careful about whatever Nurcholish launches at us. He can zig-zag in the astonishing way peculiar to the character of Jews. Islamic community, beware." p. 47. See also the accompanying article by the Tim Riset, "Nucholish Madjid dan Annie Besant," *Media Dakwah*, December 1992, pp. 44-45.

²⁵ For another view, see William Liddle, who indeed thinks of this strain of Indonesian Islam as scripturalist. "Skripturalisme *Media Dakwah*: Satu Bentuk Pemikiran dan Aksi Politik Islam Masa Orde Baru," *Ulumul al-Qur'an*, July 1993.

²⁶ On the question of the Islamic headdress, *jilbab* in Indonesian, *Media Dakwah* reports various Islamic opinions as to whether or not it is required dress. The periodical is most concerned with cases where in public schools and factories, the wearing of the *jilbab* had been banned. See the issues of February 1983, April 1984, September 1985, November 1985, March 1989, January 1991, February 1995, and March 1995 for numerous articles on the subject. For a discussion of the place of the *jilbab* in Indonesia today see Suzanne Brenner, "Reconstructing Self and Society: Javanese Muslim Women and the Veil," *American Ethnologist* 23,4 (1996): 673-697. For a general discussion of the issue see Anne Emmanuelle Berger, "The Newly Veiled Woman: Irigaray, Specularity and the Islamic Veil," *Diacritics* 28,1 (Spring 1998): 93-119.

expense of small-scale Muslim traders. Their objections to “capitalism” seem to be linked to their concerns about the Chinese.²⁷

The genealogy of *Media Dakwah* is found in the Indonesian elite; that is, its ancestry comprises people who had benefited from Western-style education and who had worked for the enlargement of opportunity of those considered less privileged. In the 1930s and in the 1950s they were eager to have the benefit of Western learning. If their attitude in this regard has changed now, it is in part because the notion of the foreign which impinges on Indonesia has changed. “The foreign” is no longer the source of ideas whose assimilation by Indonesians led to independence and promised to generate economic and social development. It is now identified in the first place with the market. The writers of *Media Dakwah* are not against the market as such, but they recognize that neither the elimination of the communists nor the introduction of an internationalized economy has closed the gap between themselves and “the people,” now the underclass, in whose name the revolution was fought; rather the opposite has happened. The assumption that others, foreigners, knew how to construct a just society and that the adoption of methods, means, and ideas from abroad would lead to a united national community, has been shaken.²⁸

Nurcholish Madjid addressed himself precisely to such reformist, modernist Muslims, saying that it was time to go beyond them. In turn, *Media Dakwah* devoted much space to Nurcholish. The cover of one issue largely given over to him bears the title “Where Nurcholish’s Thought Comes Out” and has a design showing someone entering a maze. At the end of the maze is a Star of David. This reference is to the hidden twists of the tongue whose effects, transmitted at a distance, issue from Nurcholish’s mouth and to those misled by such tricks and twists, who end up as Jewish Zionist agents.

Media Dakwah by no means has a monopoly on Indonesian anti-Semitism, but it is nonetheless noteworthy for its position near the balancing point of a debate about Western influences and Indonesia. The writers and audience of *Media Dakwah* constitute a group that is (or was once) open to Western ideas, that does not absolutely oppose the introduction of the global market and the changes it brings, and that favors technological change. And it is also anti-Semitic. *Media Dakwah* points to another sort of anti-Semitism, one which does not issue from communal tension nor from the suspicion of traders in a peasant society, but rather from the conditions of communication that fall under the rubric “globalization.”

²⁷ See the articles in *Media Dakwah* on conglomerates as an opportunity for Islamic activities, October 1991. Regarding the Chinese and capitalism, see the collection of articles in *Media Dakwah* in August 1991 and May 1993.

²⁸ Of course there was always the fear in the Sukarno regime that Indonesia would be dominated by foreign ideas. This, however, was an effect of Sukarno’s attempt at syncretism as he sought a basis in the state by accepting diverse non-Indonesian ideologies, including Marxism and “religion” (*agama*). Today, by contrast, the idea of a model for the nation is not at issue. It is assumed that “development” (*pembangunan*) is first of all economic, and the economy is that of the market. In this view, foreign influence loses its particularity of origin; capital and technology have no smell. Or at least that is true up to the point where capital becomes “Chinese” and occasionally “Jewish.” Cf. Sobirin, “Sindikata Cina dan Islam dalam Dunia Bisnis” (“Chinese Syndicates and Islam in the World of Business”), *Media Dakwah*, May 1993, pp. 47-48.

Perhaps the leading Western authority on the current state of Indonesian Muslim thought and organization, Martin van Bruinessen, suggests that Indonesian Muslim support for the Palestinian cause, particularly since the Six Day War, is one reason for the great increase in anti-Semitic material during the Suharto period. He is surely correct, though as he notes, the conflation of Jews and Zionists is inaccurate and unnecessary, making anti-Semitism aberrant.

With the defeat of the communists in 1965-66, Muslims, who were instrumental in the overthrow of President Sukarno and who supported the efforts of his eventual successor, Suharto, hoped to find their influence increased in the state. They were disappointed for a long time. President Suharto promoted a number of Christians to important positions in the military and the government, a move that some Muslims resented, and when Suharto also granted concessions to Indonesian Chinese in order to attract their capital, these signs of favor led some to complain that though Muslims formed the majority of the nation, they were politically marginalized. As the New Order came to an end, Suharto turned more and more to Muslim groups for support, but resentment about being kept out of power persists among certain of them, particularly those who write for *Media Dakwah*.²⁹ Other Muslim groups and leaders, including Nurcholish Madjid, found a place for themselves with Suharto.³⁰ One has to take into account the changed place of religion in the Indonesian state. Before the New Order there was much less conflict between religions than certain Muslims, at least, felt to be the case in the 1990s and that has developed into serious violence in certain regions since then.

In general, religious sentiment or at least activity has gained in strength in Indonesia as the left has been eliminated from the political scene. There were also reports of many (one cannot say how many) former leftists who became Christians or, less often, Muslims to avoid the consequences of having been party members. One has to add as well that with the end of populism as practiced by Sukarno, some of that

²⁹ The *Media Dakwah* editorial offices are in the yard of a mosque not far from the University of Indonesia, in the same building as that of the former Islamic political party, Masjumi, headed by Mohammed Natsir, which was banned during the Sukarno period and failed to reestablish itself in the Suharto era. A good deal of *Media Dakwah*'s resentment stems from the bitterness of its political failure, in my opinion. In the post-Suharto period it hopes to make up for this failure. This was made clear to me when I, along with Henri Chambert-Loir of the Ecole Françaises d'Extrême-Orient, spoke at length with a number of *Media Dakwah* writers in June 1998.

I might note here that while the Masjumi was modernist in its orientation, Mohammed Natsir was an anti-Semite of long standing. Here, for instance, is a statement from a book of his published in 1970. Describing "the characteristics of Jews," he says "It is in their character no matter where they are to be like worms on the leaves of banana trees. The leaves are destroyed, riddled with holes they made, while their bodies get fat, just like worms on leaves. For that reason, they are a people who for centuries have been hated everywhere. Thus a few decades ago, before the Second World War, they were chased from Western Europe and Eastern Europe. They became a hated people. When Hitler was in power they were put into camps where, it is said, several million were killed." He goes on to say that nonetheless Jews were allowed to live in Arab countries. M. Natsir, *Masalah Palestina* (Jakarta: Penerbit Hudaya, 1970), pp. 12-13.

³⁰ Nurcholish, for instance, was a member of ICMI, the group of Muslim intellectuals formed by Habibie when he was vice president.

movement's ideological fervor passed into the mode of religion. At the same time, new divisions have separated Muslims from each other. In the Sukarno era the main distinctions were between Muslims closely tied to local traditions and the proponents of "modernization." Nurcholish Madjid directed his remarks, we have noted, at the latter, not in the name of regionalism but of a changed world in which the "modern" no longer could comprehend Indonesian realities. In my opinion he reflects the segment of the population whose point of reference is first of all the large city and for whom the contention between reformers of another period and their rural opponents is without much relevance.

This does not mean that the majority of Indonesians, neither those living in the regions nor the urban lower classes, have been forgotten. *Media Dakwah*, for instance, sometimes sees them within the context of a certain embourgeoisement; it reports that the conglomerates who support Islamic activities in their businesses appreciate the "increased discipline" that regular prayer and sermons produce in their employees.³¹ For the most part, however, it regrets that the great underclass, assumed to be Muslim, is not represented in national or even local affairs. Nurcholish's remarks, in fact, address the failure of Islam in its present condition to appeal to these same people, people he wishes to raise in the social scale and whose actions he fears if the situation remains as it is. He speaks of toleration of Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, and so on. In doing so, he calls on the power of a certain Islamic belief to encompass others, including this neglected underclass. His toleration would make possible the inclusion of everyone currently a citizen by law in the nation. The danger he sees when he speaks of cults is not from Buddhists or Christians, but from those, underprivileged, who might disrupt national security because of the "gap" between them and people in Nurcholish's own class. Those who are potential disrupters of the social order are usually referred to as the *massa*, the masses, and they are thought to be Islamic. The power of the state and the nation to encompass its citizens is more severely challenged by their discontent than it was by the regionalism of the early period of the republic. The implicit assumption of the debate on tolerance is the lessened ability of the Indonesian nation to encompass its citizens through the assumptions at work in the founding of the nation. Islam, in some form or another, is needed to accomplish what people fear the state can no longer accomplish.

In the view of *Media Dakwah*, the Indonesian Chinese pose a problem because they incite the underclass. The writers of *Media Dakwah* also fear the "gap" between the middle class and the underclass. They, and many Indonesians, focus on division caused by the inequities between wealthy Indonesian Chinese and poor Muslims. This formulation conceals the non-Chinese middle class to which the writers themselves belong. It perceives the Indonesian Chinese as the cause of disruption and popular discontent. The writers of *Media Dakwah* both justified the anti-Chinese rioting of 1998 in terms of the need and long suffering of the people, and, at the same time, they feared it. In their opinion, once the underclass has proper Muslim leadership, which was blocked under the New Order, the problem will be solved.

³¹ In another example, the "management of Bank BNI in fact feels it benefits—even though [prayer] takes time away from business hour—it has the certainty of firmer belief of its employees and that will lessen dishonesty, corruption and manipulation." From Aru Syeif Assad, "Bias Dakwah di Lingkungan Bisnis," *Media Dakwah*, October 1991, p. 41. This is the introductory article to a series on *dakwah* in business.

For Nurcholish, toleration of Christians and Buddhists, meaning “Chinese,” is one issue; the question of cults is not altogether another. The cults he fears would be Islamic, appealing to the underclass. Many middle-class Muslims themselves fear Islamic “fanaticism” in a way that is not always different from the sentiment of some Americans. To include and tolerate Indonesian Chinese in the nation would ideally make them less alien, and thus neutralize them as an object of unwanted attraction for the underclass. Indonesian Chinese would no longer incite envy and desire, and therefore no longer incite fanatical, “fundamentalist” Islamic notions which are actually expressions of that envy. To propose a more tolerant form of Islam is to oppose cults and to prevent Indonesian Chinese from (indirectly) playing a role in their formation.

Nurcholish wishes to renew Islam so that it may play its necessary political role. His opponents wish to return Muslims to power by overcoming those who have prevented their accession to power—particularly Indonesian Chinese and Christians—and who have thereby prevented the full inclusion of the Muslim underclass in the nation. They want a Muslim political party that would speak for this underclass in Islamic terms. They perpetuate the thinking of an earlier period in Indonesia, when the various cultural strains of the nation each had its own political party. Despite these differences, the underlying problem for both *Media Dakwah* and for Nurcholish, as for the entire Indonesian political class, is the “gap” between the middle and lower classes. In the issue of religious toleration, questions of class and religion intersect.³²

The state’s insistence on religious tolerance is part of its policy of overcoming differences within the category “Indonesian.” The first of the Five Principles or *Panca Sila* of the Indonesian state, “God is One,” requires Indonesians to be believers. They can choose between the five religions recognized by the state: Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Buddhism and Hinduism, each with its own department within the Ministry of Religion. This first principle was adopted to appeal to Muslims who wanted a stronger Islamic basis for the state, but were unable or unwilling to have a provision obliging Muslims to follow Islamic law adopted at a time when to do so threatened national unity.³³

Tolerance is guaranteed within the framework of the state. This is the outcome of Indonesian nationalism and, in particular, the result of an attempt by Sukarno to include all the peoples of the archipelago in the nation. If the monotheism of the first principle, belief in one god, was understood to include other religions as well which were not monotheistic, this happened because the Five Principles, taken as a whole, were thought of as making a place for all the peoples of Indonesia. Perhaps also it was because of the syncretism Sukarno practiced, which had its roots in Javanese tradition,

³² Religious toleration is an issue in the New Order because religion itself has become more important. Its relation to fear of the underclass and, in turn, the connection between fear of the underclass and anti-Semitism is complicated. As noted, the question of religious toleration is not precisely a question of ethnicity. Indonesia has nearly nine hundred regional languages and as many ethnic groups. Certain of these are Christian, including some Chinese. But “Muslim” is not a coded word for particular ethnic groups; it is a category that transcends ethnicity precisely as an element of national identity. Christians too in large cities often worship in churches with congregations from diverse ethnic groups.

³³ For the history of *Panca Sila* and particularly of the First Principle, see Ramage, *Politics in Indonesia*, pp. 10-20 and the literature cited therein.

whereby diverse and even incompatible ideas were routinely brought together as proof of the power of the kingdom.³⁴ Later Sukarno announced other principles, such as NASAKOM, an acronym of the words meaning "nationalism," "religion," and "communism." These incompatible elements were nonetheless joined in a unity which found its force in the nation. The proclamation of NASAKOM was again an attempt at inclusiveness, another word for which might be "tolerance." The very capacity to hold together disparate elements proved the power of the state and the nation. It attested to its cultural and even religious force beyond even its political power.

Why *Panca Sila* survived and NASAKOM did not is a question to be answered by political history. But syncretism in any case was out-of-date in the New Order. Syncretism was derived, as I have said, from Javanese tradition. But its force outside Java, in the nation as a whole, rested not with a fundamental belief in Javanese ideas, but with belief in the state as the heir and even the continuation of the revolution. If Hinduism, for instance, could be comprised under the monotheism of the state's first principle, it was not merely thanks to a political compromise. It was because the nation itself, realized during the revolution, had a capacity to include its peoples. Under this dispensation, Muslims could be satisfied with the strict sense of "monotheism," while Hindus could be assured that somehow it applied to them as well.

There were, then, multiple *kiblats* from the beginning of the Indonesian state. If it was possible in 1945 to ask Muslims to moderate their claims in the interest of national unity, it was because the prestige of the revolution made conflict between Indonesians insupportable. Now the Islamic faction represented in *Media Dakwah* asserts that its status as a majority within the state gives it the right to decide the terms of toleration, and that in religious terms. Nurcholish Madjid, for his part, is not content with a purely national source of ethnic inclusiveness; he too turns to Islam. One is left wondering what is considered fundamental. The wavering between principles reflects the inability of the state to continue to incarnate the revolution in the minds of Indonesians.

Nurcholish continues Sukarno's impulse to include. But to raise the basis of tolerance is also to show its limits. Nurcholish does not mention Communists, but his references to the "gap" between classes is a coded reference to the possibility of their return, no doubt in a different form. If he wants to include "everyone," it is not everyone in any form at all. His notion of tolerance would overlap with that of the state. It would include all Indonesians, but only within the definitions that spell out the terms of the first principle. Nurcholish wants to include Christians and Buddhists within the limits of acceptability of Islam and of the Indonesian nation. If some of these are former Communists, it is not in that capacity that they would be acceptable. As we will see, *Media Dakwah* also fears the inclusion of the same groups. It is more forthright in its insistence on exclusion.

At the time of the foundation of the state, the problem was to make national identity prevail over regional and religious definitions of person. Today, in the conflict over toleration, the problem is different. Class differences have emerged with the prosperity of the New Order. These are obscured by the place of Indonesian Chinese, who were integrated into the economy by Suharto in return for their investment in the

³⁴ Benedict R. O'G Anderson, "The Language of Indonesian Politics," *Indonesia* 1 (April 1966): 89-116.

Indonesian economy, but kept out of the national universities, the government bureaucracy, and the armed forces. This left them available to be considered the wealthy, obscuring, as I have said, the newly prosperous non-Chinese. There is also the fear of a return to power of Communists, who are unrealistically blamed for social unrest. By identifying the Indonesian Chinese and resurrected Communists as the chief causes of disunity, the people we have been discussing maintain their belief that unity of the nation is still a possibility. If only the rich and the ineradicable force of communism did not threaten us, the nation would be unified, and there would be no need to have discussions about toleration.

Questions about tolerance (the word is taken from English) and about the foundation of the nation are raised together.³⁵ In this context, one's opponents do not voice ordinary disagreements. They seem, rather, to speak from somewhere else, from presuppositions out of reach of certain interlocutors. One adds to this complication the complications raised by voices which are meant to be kept out of the discussion entirely, including the voices of Communists somehow left over after the massacres and imprisonments of 1965-66, and, for some, the voices of Indonesian Chinese and the voice of "the people" (*rakyat*) who, in the form of the *massa*, threaten to speak in the form of uprising. It becomes a question of who one hears and who one is afraid of hearing.

In this situation, one does not fear statements themselves, but instead one fears the origin of the communication. The anthropologist and Islamicist Martin van Bruinessen tells how a religious scholar from a remote eastern island of Indonesia complained about cassettes of recitation of the Koran. The recordings were perfect; the Koran was chanted as it should be. People listened to them enthusiastically. That, indeed, troubled the religious scholar. Instead of chanting the Koran themselves, the people of the island listened to the cassettes. Their faith weakened. It was, he said, the result of a Jewish plot. It was entirely a question of the origin of the recordings. Nothing in the recorded words themselves indicated their origin. Everything recognizable was as it should be. And yet there was something else, something unrecognizable about these perfect recordings. What this scholar found in the unrecognizable was a distant origin. He saw in it a communicative force with the power to put words in the ears of believers and make them want to hear these words over and over again. He labeled this the work of Jews.

The subtle mistranslations of Nurcholish Madjid likewise arrive from some distant place, according to his opponents. He cannot be convinced to recognize their perverse source, and it is the source, rather than the content of the translation or mistranslation, that is truly at issue here. Were Nurcholish himself to be the origin of mistranslation, his intentions would be readable and he would be correctable. He, however, says something that makes his opponents certain its origin is not with him at all; the real source of the message is far away. The consequences of hearing this message, like the consequences of listening to the tapes discussed above, are potentially catastrophic. The messages have a power which cannot be guessed at and which extends far beyond

³⁵ One could say that until the New Order Indonesia had less need of this word because it had a way of accounting for differences derived from the templates of Javanese mythology which, while not at all part of official state formulations, worked in practice. See Benedict R. O'G. Anderson, *Tolerance and the Mythology of the Javanese* (Ithaca: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, 1965).

the effect of what they seem to say. In that sense the true sources of the message remain as unrecognizable as the identities of those who fabricated the perfect Koranic chanting on the tapes. Nurcholish is said to be the bearer of singular effects which could, in fact, mean anything other than what they should mean.

Seen from one side Nurcholish is the bearer of obscure, distant, and catastrophic messages; from the other, he is a man who wants to save his country from the menace of violence and even disintegration by bringing something as yet unheard to his nation. For these people who trust him, his message is limited and precise. For his opponents, rather than for himself, he represents the possibility of a messiah, unwanted of course, because what he says contains the possibility of meaning anything at all; all possibilities, including those as yet unknown, are open.

This messianic possibility arises out of the disturbed horizons of the Indonesian nation. And yet the unknowability of Nurcholish to his opponents is not wholly reducible to that disturbance. It is not only that Nurcholish is oriented to falsehood; it is rather that the term "Jew" indicates a source of falsehood which is as potent in its consequences as it is difficult to locate. Though "Jew" and Zionist are conflated in this way of thinking, Israel, as I have said, is not considered to be the source of Nurcholish's errors. The named places—Chicago, Paris, Germany—are mere stopping points for Jews whose place of residence is unimportant. It does not matter if they are American, French, or German, for instance; what matters is that they are Jews.

One cannot derive the Jewish "elsewhere" from the complicated array of diverse *kiblat*—communist, Buddhist, etc. It is beyond all of these. It is unlike them in that those with such an orientation—Jews—are not on the Indonesian scene in an explicit way. One comes across them only by chance, it seems. One knows the *kiblats* of others besides Jews because they point to them, but the Jewish *kiblat* designates an "elsewhere" without an indicator. It remains for us to see what it has to do with other voices and other *kiblats* found today in Indonesia.

References Abroad

There were, of course, Dutch Jews in the Dutch East Indies as well as descendants of Jews from the Middle East. There remains today a synagogue in the port of Surabaya, but the Jewish community was never prominent in the Indies.³⁶ In any case,

³⁶ I am told by the historian Claude Guillot of the CNRS that in the 1980s there are no more than a handful of members left in this synagogue. It had been used mainly by Jewish traders from what is now Iraq. The old man in charge of the synagogue told Guillot that, asked by Indonesians his descent, he says "Iraqi" and, though they know that he is in charge of the synagogue, he is then perceived as an Arab. As soon as the Jew appears in Indonesia he disappears.

A Jewish traveler had this to say about the condition of Jews in 1925:

"I learned that there were several hundred Jews—perhaps as many as 2,000—scattered about from Batavia to Surabaya, but as many of them concealed their Jewish origins it was impossible to form an approximate estimate of their numbers. Dutch Jews had been living in the country for a very long period and had played an important part in its commercial development. . . . There were many Jews occupying Government positions, the most prominent being the Resident of Surabaya. . . . But there was no Jewish life in the communal sense, mixed marriages were frequent, and the only form of association consisted of a few struggling Zionist societies." Israel Cohen, *The Journal of a Jewish Traveller* (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head Limited, 1925), pp. 211-212. I am indebted to John Pemberton for bringing this source to my

today's references to Jews do not refer to actual populations. The Jew is neither an unwanted figure who already exists in Indonesia nor is he the excluded one, which would imply that he could at some point become an element of the local population. The Jew as object of anti-Semitism remains abroad, and it is assumed he always will, his references being Zionism, orientalism, and Koranic pronouncements. It is only his effects that are feared.

Westerners often compare the Indonesian Chinese population to Jews because they are a minority that came from abroad and because many of them are traders. One might think that they would be taken as crypto-Jews in the thinking of anti-Semites. This is not the case. There is seldom an explicit identification between Chinese and Jews,³⁷ but I want to present an example which shows how, nonetheless, the Jew showed up in the pages of *Media Dakwah* when churches were burned as a result of conflict between Muslims and Indonesian Chinese.

There is a long history of contention between those termed "Chinese" (I put the term in quotes to signal that they are merely of Chinese descent—often, indeed, of mixed ancestry—and are culturally and by citizenship Indonesians) and other Indonesians. Under Sukarno Chinese education and the use of Chinese characters for store names were banned. Indonesian Chinese have been encouraged to replace their Chinese names with other names, usually Javanese or Arabic, and many have done so. They are, in the eyes of mainland Chinese, indistinguishable from other Indonesians. But they are accused of having favored the Dutch during the revolution and of being less than reliable in their fidelity to the nation, as evidenced by the popular fear, widespread before the change of regime in 1998, that they would expatriate their capital during the economic crisis. On the one hand, they are acknowledged as Indonesian citizens, Indonesian by culture and language; on the other hand, they are distinguished as separate by small identifying marks, such as the initials WNI (Warga Negara Indonesia) which stand for "Indonesian citizen," and by other terms indicating the distinction imposed on them by their fellow Indonesians.

All of this might favor an identification of "Chinese" with Jews. When it happens, however, it is done only vaguely but, nonetheless, at a significant, specific point in the discourse. Let me illustrate through the treatment of certain Indonesian Chinese in the columns of *Media Dakwah*. In March, 1997, the magazine had an issue devoted mostly to anti-"Chinese" riots in which churches were burned in certain Javanese cities and their surroundings. In Rengasdengklok, the Pentecostal Church was burned; in the area as a whole, four churches were burned, as was a bank, while many shops were looted. Outside the city a *vihara* was also burned. This last event attracted international

attention.

Another observer, Eze Nathan, generally confirms Cohen's report but adds that after the coming of Jews from India in the late nineteenth century there was "a semblance of communal life in a few cities." Writing in 1986, he says that from the time of the Japanese occupation there has been "scarcely a single Jewish family left in Indonesia." *The History of Jews in Singapore: 1830-1945* (Singapore: HERBILU Editorial and Marketing Services, 1986), pp. 175-176.

³⁷ On the identification of the two by Southeast Asians, see Daniel Chirot, "Conflicting Identities and the Dangers of Communalism," in *Essential Outsiders: Chinese and Jews in the Modern Transformation of Southeast Asia and Central Europe*, ed. Daniel Chirot and Anthony Reid (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), p. 5.

attention, as an Australian photographer from Associated Press Television was present when the statue of Buddha was hung by the neck from an arch at the entrance to the burning temple. His recording of the event was shown on CNN.³⁸ Despite this, the attention of *Media Dakwah* focused on the churches and not on the *vihara*. There were similar events in other nearby cities which it also reported. *Media Dakwah* was upset because Muslims were blamed for the fires and the riots. They did not deny that Muslims set these churches and shops afire, but they felt that these Muslims were justified in doing so. The problem began during the fasting month, when an Indonesian Chinese called Cik Gue (*Media Dakwah* writes it "Cigue"; for convenience I will follow their practice) complained because she was woken up by the beating of the drums in the mosque, calling believers for the optional prayer often made during the nights of the fasting month. Here is an account of the incident by a local Muslim teacher:

At 2:55 am people here usually strike the drum announcing the time to prepare breakfast (early because it must be before dawn) for five minutes until 3:00 am. This has gone on for years. But for some reason, Cigue had a toothache and right away swore at the kids in the mosque, using dirty words—dog, pig, stupid. Then she called the police, and the police straightway took down the names of the boys in the mosque. After the police came she [Cigue] overacted [in English], feeling she had protection. So she cursed some more. Finally, the masses were angry, she was beaten up, and the police could no longer break up the masses. As time went on more and more people came.³⁹

If Cigue, rather than the rioters, is to blame for the riot, it is not merely because Cigue lost her temper and her husband threatened to call the police. It is also because she acted with the confidence of one who was "protected" when she made her complaint; she is able to act with impunity toward Muslims because she feels that the governmental authorities are on her side, favoring "Chinese." Muslims are a majority, but they are blamed for the faults of others. Here is the statement of another local religious teacher on the same riots:

We are very disturbed that the Islamic community is blamed for the incident; always blamed, forced into a corner. Why not blame the people who triggered it [*menjadi pemicu*]? The ones who triggered the flare up [*sic*] were not Muslims. Why should it only be Muslims who are pursued? . . . Because if indeed the

³⁸ Andreas Harsono, ed., *Huru-hara Rengasdengklok* (Uproar in Rengasdengklok) (n.p. [Jakarta]: Institut Studi Arus Informasi, 1997), p. 18. The same report notes that a reporter from Agence France Presse photographed an Indonesian soldier looking gleefully at the suspended statue.

³⁹ An interview with Ustad Holid A., an *ulama* and head of a school in the area. Komar, Joko, Taufik, Nuh, "Mereka Membentuk Geng Tersendiri: Warga keturunan Cina selama ini bersifat eksklusif. Hal ini memicu kerusuhan dengan kebencian yang kental" ("They formed their own Gang: Those of Chinese descent act without regard. This triggers unrest and deep hatred"), *Media Dakwah*, March 1997, pp. 54-55. A team of social scientists investigating the incident say that Cigue is really "Cik Gue," "Cik" being Chinese for "older sister." They say also that the woman had Indonesianized her name, taking, in fact, an Arabic name, Nurhayati. Andreas Harsono, ed., *Huru-hara Rengasdengklok*, p. 6.

Islamic community is to blame for the flare up, it's only for the smoke. The fire is them (non-Islam—editor). I said the same to the police chief.⁴⁰

These speakers do not claim that the churches had a connection with Cigue. In any event, it is unlikely that Cigue belonged to more than one of them, if to any at all. It is rather that Cigue's bad temper is taken as characteristic of "Chinese." Typically, these speakers claim, such Chinese do not respect the customs of their neighbors. The subtitle of one of the articles concerned states: "Those of Chinese descent act without regard. This triggers unrest and deep hatred." This is, indeed, the charge some Javanese often level against their "Chinese" neighbors, that they keep themselves apart from others in the community and do not respect Javanese ways.

"They, 'Chinese,' cause the trouble while we, Muslims, take the blame." When a writer makes this claim, he registers his complaint against the actions of the police who subdued the Muslim rioters, and perhaps also against the national papers and their coverage of the riots.⁴¹ "Chinese" are accused also of cheating in the market place; substituting eighteen for twenty-four-karat gold, not giving full measure when they sell vegetables, and so on. All such complaints stem from a general conviction that the Muslim majority in Indonesia, while so often showing tolerance toward others, is not only taken advantage of by those they tolerate, but is also ignored and abused by its own government.

The result is the accumulation of grievances which Muslims say they have every reason to think should be corrected by the government. They do not invoke equal protection of the laws, but the feeling that the government is by rights theirs since they are the vast majority. They complain that their protests to the government are never rightly heard; instead, such protests only attract suspicion. They perceive themselves as the victims. But the burned out churches indicate to others that they are intolerant and at fault. If they act against the Indonesian Chinese and not against the government, it is because they identify themselves with the nation; though the government is not in their control, they think of it as symbolically their own. It is the "Chinese" who prevent it from being more than symbolically theirs.

Another religious teacher complained that when the regent in his community issued a permit to build a new church, the Christians, meaning "Chinese," built one almost twice the size, even adding a second story.

Everyone knows that this is contempt [*melecehkan*] for the regulations. We even had a meeting with the Council. Write this down, we aren't anti-church, anti-Christian.⁴²

This teacher of some of the rioters presents himself as a defender of the regulations, of the national government. A prominent "Chinese" from the area denied the charge. The

⁴⁰ Komar, Joko, Zuki, Nuh, "H. Sobarna Noor, Sekretaris MUI Rengasdengklok: Bom Waktu di Rengasdengklok. Rumah berubah menjadi gereja itulah bom waktu yang meladak di kota bersejarah itu" ("H. Sobarna Noor, Secretary MUI [Council of Islamic Scholars] Time Bomb in Rengasdengklok: Houses turning into churches are a time bomb exploding in this historic city"), *Media Dakwah*, March 1997, pp. 53-54.

⁴¹ See in particular *Kompas* for January 27, 1997.

⁴² More precisely he said that the permit had not yet been officially issued but that there was provisional authority to construct the church. Andreas Harsono, ed., *Huru-hara Rengasdengklok*, p. 81.

implication of the teacher is that Indonesian Chinese enjoy better relations with officials because “Chinese” have bribed the officials. The teacher is not against the law, he is for it. But when the local officials do not enforce it, they, Muslims, must enforce it themselves, even if they do so paradoxically with illegitimate violence. “Chinese” are contemptuous of the country and are not fully Indonesian. It is not a question of legal citizenship but of moral status. “They,” “Chinese,” should become Indonesian in the full sense by participating in the community while respecting the rights of the majority. “We,” Muslims, are ready to defend the law even to the point where we must take on the opprobrium of the government and of public opinion and of the police, the agents of the law.⁴³ We act out of desperation. It is not simply that only violence is left; it is also that in the absence of law enforcement, to act outside the law is to institute it. When “Chinese” understand that they cannot bribe officials and cannot act outside the community, the law will work again.

The events at Rengasdengklok and other nearby places are, in the view of *Media Dakwah*, not merely the results of accumulated past grievances; they are also an indication of trouble in the future. They indicate the presence of a “time bomb” (*bom waktu*). A riot is the call of people who have become convinced that they are powerless and unheard. The religious teacher above, for instance, says that the trouble in Rengasdengklok began in 1978 and has been continuous. “But these are sharp pebbles, a time bomb they have planted.” He explains the machinery of the time bomb by saying it concerns questions of the economy, business politics of the “Chinese,” social questions, and also many questions that concern religion. All this adds up to the point where:

. . . there is jealousy and there are many questions that concern religion. Indeed, they have not put up any new churches. But houses that have been turned into churches [ellipses in original], these are numerous. Yeah, these are new churches, new churches. I told the regent straight out and the chief of police. It was the first time I was “arrested”; I wasn’t really arrested just questioned [*dinterogasi*] and asked for explanations. After there were indications of people in their twenties [i.e., possibly his students].

And then?

Ya . . . [ellipsis in original]. I said there are no new churches. But there are many houses that have turned into churches. The time bomb issue; the people [*masyarakat*] urged the council of religious scholars to protest the church built by Oklih. Oklih is the Director of Pantura Bank.

What is at issue?

The regent’s permit is for a church of 400 square meters, but they built 730 square meters, and they made it two stories. The regent and his assistant do not allow churches to be built larger than the church in the regency capital [Karawang]. But this is actually the biggest church in West Java. Everyone knows that they have contempt for the regulations. We even met with the Council. Write this down: we are not anti-church, anti-Christian.

You mean an attitude of tolerance?

⁴³ One notes that these Muslims claim to be the majority and, at the same time, find themselves condemned by most Indonesians, most of whom are themselves Muslims.

Really we live next to them in peace. But procedures have to be gone through. There should not be [a permit] for one limit and then a church built for more than that. There, that's the time bomb if the officials don't deal with it. We asked that the government tear down what's over the limit. But it's never been done. The regent himself doesn't understand. He just knows that Oklih built a church within the procedures. So that's the symptom that something is hidden in the background.

You mean things have accumulated?

He then goes on to speak of the beating of the drum in the middle of the night. People should understand that it is the fasting month, he says, and restrain their feelings.

Religious conflicts are the culmination of other problems. These budding conflicts are represented by a sign, which is the multiplication of churches. Like the act of building churches larger than permitted by law, these churches themselves have no legal standing. The result is that one cannot tell for sure whether they exist or not. The speaker says the Christians have built no new churches; then he says that homes have been turned into churches. For instance, asked how many churches there are in Rengasdengklok, the religious scholar answers:

A lot. Officially there are only four. But this does not include residences which have been made into churches. Up till now I don't know exactly the number because they do not have official permits. They aren't registered.⁴⁴

These churches symbolize a series of grievances. Their appearance has an inevitable and autonomous course of its own. What is one day a house the next day is a church. Churches simply appear, and no force can stop them. People do not know how many there are. The "time bomb" has exploded. At this point we have moved from discussing an individual "Chinese" who "triggered" the burnings with her complaints, to the workings of a force whose agents are nameless and whose places of appearance are uncertain.

Media Dakwah reproduces photographs of burned out churches with captions which indicate their significance:

A Church the Victim of Unrest: They are built on a magnificent scale often without legal permits.⁴⁵

Indonesian, which lacks both tenses and a plural form, permits one to say, "it was built . . ." and "they are being built . . ." in the same words. The effect is to make a unique case, the church in the picture, typical. It is not merely that the church is like others in its display of extravagant expenditure. It is also that, seeing it in a photograph, already, of course, a form of duplication, and reading the caption, one is linked to multiple examples. One leaves the historical and even the narrative, which is to say the connection between the drumming in the mosque and the reaction of Cigue and the accumulated grievances which magnified the significance of the incident. The account slips and expands, so that it threatens the automatic replication of more churches with,

⁴⁴ Komar, Joko, Zuki, Nuh, "H. Sobarna Noor, Sekretaris MUI Rengasdengklok: Bom Waktu di Rengasdengklok," *Media Dakwah*, March 1997, pp. 53-54.

⁴⁵ Caption to photograph, Team Media Dakwah, "Buntut Kerusuhan: Ramai-ramai Menyudutkan Islam," *Media Dakwah*, March 1997, pp. 42-47, esp. 42.

as a consequence, more arson to come. This is the "time bomb" not only as it was but as it is to come.

Churches as symbols of past grievances are one thing. Churches which continuously appear out of homes have a tinge of the uncanny. Burning them down does not solve the problem. It merely speaks of a moment of provocation. The implication is that the churches will continue to appear and that they will be found unbearable again some time in the future.

"Write this down, we aren't anti-church, anti-Christian," the religious teacher tells the reporter. He thus asserts that burning the Churches was an action directed against "Chinese," not against Christians. The congregations of these churches were likely to be mixed, yet the churches are thought of as the work only of "Chinese." It is "Chinese" who are thought to have bribed government officials, and it is "Chinese" who are thought to have paid for the churches. Churches that were not "magnificent," that is, did not display the amount of money invested in them, might be merely "Christian." The "gap" between "Chinese" and "us" which causes the "time bomb" is formed by money: "they" have it and "we" do not. But it is also formed by the refusal of "Chinese" to mix with their Javanese neighbors. "Chinese" in this sense signifies "wealth" and also exclusiveness.

Indeed, wealth, or at least "Chinese" wealth, is thought to lead to exclusiveness. Here is a report from the team of Indonesians who investigated the events at Rengasdengklok which I have already cited. The writers of *Media Dakwah* are unlikely to find it objectionable:

Kim Tjoan [the husband of Cigue], Cigue and their children are thought by the people of [the neighborhood] to be a family that does not mix much with their neighbors. Small incidents related by their neighbors show the objections and difficulties of the family in mixing socially. Mrs. Weskorni, the wife of a teacher, one of the figures of the neighborhood, knows Cigue to be a difficult person. "Earlier when the Chinese were poor, they did mix [*bergaul*], but now that they have their own store and house they are remote. In fact, they live right in our midst," she said. When Cigue talks with the neighbors, she only goes up to the fence of her house.

Once there was an incident, a sweet sop fruit ripening in Cigue's yard was picked by a neighbor's child who was also of Chinese descent. This event raised problems between the two families. Cigue could not contain her feelings, Oen Ceng Bouw whose house is right in front of Cigue's, said. Cigue charged Oen Ceng Bouw's child with being a thief.⁴⁶

The gap between "Chinese" and other Indonesians might be thought to provoke jealousy. But here the logic is not exact. If it is true that other Indonesians want what "Chinese" have, they do not want to have it in the same way. It is often the case, for instance, in anti-"Chinese" riots in Java, that stores are looted only to have the goods burned. Not to keep the goods for oneself is a way of showing that what "Chinese"

⁴⁶ Andreas Harsono, ed., *Huru-hara Rengasdengklok*, p. 11. I have changed their spelling of Cigue (Cik Gue) to match that of *Media Dakwah*.

value is not what one values oneself.⁴⁷ One remains uninfluenced by wealth. Cigue and her family, however, are charged with having wealth inflect their relations to their neighbors. When they were able to own their own shop and their own house, they set themselves apart. For a child to take a piece of fruit from a neighbor's tree would be considered part of the way that neighbors share belongings. Cigue comes to think differently. She no longer "mixes," which in the first place means "talk with" but here means also mixing property. She and her family live apart. They no longer talk to their neighbors and they no longer understand them.

Wealth leads to separation. But "in fact, they live right in our midst." It is a strange prejudice that wants those who are disliked to take a larger part in the community. Of course the anticipated result is that once such people mix, they will no longer be upset when they are awakened by a drum before dawn. The complaint is that without such "mixing," "Chinese" become strangers. These "Chinese" are not different by custom or descent. Nor do they begin as being different; Cigue was once "like us," but she became not merely different but unreachable once she became wealthy. Separation is intolerable, not merely because it causes difficulties between those still living side by side but because, even before there are problems, those who have become strangers take on a ghostly tinge.

The complaint is that such people are still present and yet are removed. Where does Cigue keep herself when she is not mixing with Muslims? She is rumored to be insane.⁴⁸ This report of insanity is actually a hyperbolic form of the statement that "Because 'Chinese' do not mix they do not understand 'us'," except here the statement is comprehended through a reversal: "we do not understand them." There is a connection between the spectral churches that keep appearing out of houses, which is to say, out of nowhere, and the spectral neighbors who, because of their idea of property, keep to themselves and thus choose to live "nowhere": wealth marks "Chinese" as not merely different but as having an incomprehensible provenance.

"Chinese" are often thought to be wealthy when they are not. They are the repositories of imaginary wealth not merely in the sense that they may not own anything more than their neighbors, but in the sense that their wealth is incomprehensible, coming as it does from other sources than those thought to be available to Javanese. A Javanese, for instance, who finds something unusual, perhaps a number printed upside down by accident on a train ticket, might well use that number to bet on the lottery. If he were to win and to become wealthy, it would be a mark of the way in which the supernatural favors him. It would give him a new and honorable position within Javanese society. His wealth, unlike "Chinese" wealth, would come from an uncanny force whose provenance, though not known, is at least usable and integrated into everyday life. "Chinese" wealth removes "Chinese" from the society of their neighbors and comes from a source not open to these neighbors.

The "elsewhere" of Cigue, alone with her possessions, is not the same "elsewhere" as the source of a winning lottery number. It is not available to her Javanese neighbors. She is, in that sense, more than merely "odd" [*aneh*], the term used for the misprinted

⁴⁷ See James Siegel, *Solo in the New Order: Language and Hierarchy in an Indonesian City* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp. 234ff.

⁴⁸ Andreas Harsono, ed., *Huru-hara Rengasdengklok*, pp. 11-12.

train ticket that indicates a possible uncanny source for the numbers. Though still so termed, she is beyond that category as it functions between Javanese, and thus she is unlocatable. Nonetheless, her neighbors remain acutely aware of her. From this perspective, the problem with the “gap” between presumably wealthy “Chinese” and their Muslim neighbors is not that it is unbridgable, but that it is not wide enough. What they, “Chinese,” have is apparent to us. We are bothered by it. Across this gap there seems to be continuous communication; but not of the usual sort. “We” are bothered by them, by the strange appearances of their churches and by their strange relation to property.

That “Chinese” wealth is thought to estrange may be merely an effect of the intrusion of the market. However, the market is not at all foreign to Muslim traders. There is also the charge that “‘Chinese’ are a minority in the nation while we are the majority, and yet they are wealthy and we are not.” The authors of a study of the riot in Rengasdengklok note that several “Chinese” there were in fact favored by the government. They point out the open secret that to do business, one needs to have various government permits and that “Chinese,” and not Muslims, got these, usually in return for the officials receiving shares in the companies owned by the Chinese applicants.⁴⁹ Furthermore, economic development during the New Order “favored Chinese more than others.”⁵⁰ To point to real economic differences, however, is not to explain how the rivalries between “Chinese” and Muslim traders become generalized or how they function in a national setting. Most important to us, it does not explain how an economic rivalry yields a view of “Chinese” as somehow uncanny.

The conflict between neighbors is also a conflict between co-nationals at a certain point in time. The gap referred to is nation-wide; it is the division between rich and poor Indonesians. Economically, sociologically, such a division marked the very inception of the nation. However it was always intended to be closed. Inherent in the idea of “the people” [*rakyat*] was that the educated class would lead them out of poverty and ignorance. The populist policies of Indonesia’s first president, Sukarno, fostered this idea. With the New Order of General Suharto, however, populism was set aside in favor of Development (*Pembangunan*). The expansion of the market in fact benefited most people; the level of poverty, for instance, was drastically reduced. It also marked the strong development of a well-to-do middle class, including both “Chinese” and non-“Chinese.” The “gap” is the wound to the unity of the national body as it is felt with this augmented division of classes. It is blamed on “Chinese,” the richest of whom were, in fact, favored by Suharto in order to encourage them to invest in Indonesia. As I have said, to blame “Chinese” for being wealthy while “we” are not is to conceal the well-to-do non-“Chinese” middle class.

In Rengasdengklok, the separation of the rioters from their government is in fact a separation dividing two groups of Muslim Indonesians. Yet those who support the rioters say the division is caused by “Chinese.” They do not hope to cure the nation of ethnic “Chinese” by initiating a campaign of “ethnic cleansing”; they hope to cure the nation of its own estranged, ghostly members by reintegrating them, making them obey the rules. This action would reunite the underclass with the national government.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 90.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 116.

Until the time when that reunification takes place, "Chinese" will be attacked for having caused a rift.

Recognizing "Chinese" means identifying a certain "strangeness," as we have noted. The youth who beat the drum and was cursed by Cigue said this about the couple:

It's not because they are Chinese that I don't like them. Nor is it because their religion is different from ours. It's because they act and they think strangely [*yang aneh*]. They never act like good neighbors. In front of Kim Tjoan's house there is another Chinese, Ceng Bouw. He is totally different, wants to be a good neighbor and likes to shoot the breeze [*ngobrol*] in the neighborhood-watch guardhouse in front of the meeting place for prayer.⁵¹

This youth uses the word *aneh*, meaning "strange," a word that also means "supernaturally strange," as I have noted. For him, "Chinese" who do not spend time in talk with their neighbors are uncanny. He recognizes them as neighbors, but he sees in them something else as well. This "something else" is not exactly difference, if that means positive difference. Rather, he senses that the man or the woman in front of him, who does not speak, is concerned with something he cannot grasp. He complains of their *watak*, their nature. Asked if he was taught by someone to dislike Kim Tjoan, he replies:

No need to be taught. The others here have the same feelings about Kim Tjoan because his *watak*, his nature, is like that. So that's why he gets it like that. In fact, if we could, we'd tear his house down to the ground so he would never come back.

The strangeness of Kim Tjoan is apparent. His qualities are visible to everyone. Because of this he invites violence. He is recognizable as "strange," "odd," different from what one would expect; not entirely recognizable. Hendra Kurnia denies that he dislikes Kim Tjoan because he is Chinese. If he were not "Chinese," however, one might ask if his *watak* would be so apparent. It is because the strangeness of Kim Tjoan is assumed to be shared by other "Chinese" that the riots spread. The uncanny finds its locus in the man's ethnic identity. This youth, Hendra Kurnia, sees in Kim Tjoan something he cannot recognize and knows how to call it: "Chinese"; more precisely: "'Chinese' who do not mingle with their neighbors."

"Chinese" such as Kim Tjoan are spoken of as though they are uncanny, but it is not clear that their eeriness is of the first order. In the charge "they do not mix," one sees the "gap" between classes made concrete. The "Chinese," perceived as uncommunicative, refuses to acknowledge his Muslim (and non-Muslim) neighbors. If Kim Tjoan were a good "Chinese," like his neighbor Ceng Bouw, he would chat or "shoot the breeze," meaning he would say nothing memorable. This, indeed, is the habit of Javanese between themselves and their neighbors.⁵²

In most Javanese cities, the well-to-do live on the main streets. Behind these streets narrow lanes run through crowded quarters where people of various classes live. In

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 29.

⁵² See Siegel, *Solo in the New Order*.

the late afternoon the people of these quarters, rising from their siestas, often stand outside and chat in a desultory way. It is an example of the "mixing" referred to. In 1981 when I lived in Surakarta in Central Java, I took a bicycle ride late one afternoon along some of these narrow paths. At a certain point, I got down from the bicycle to turn it around. As I did so, I heard a woman, only a few feet from me, say, "Ah, he's turning around." She might have been surprised that a middle-aged white man would be riding a bicycle at all, and even more surprised that I appeared in this remote lane in front of her house. In place of an expression of surprise, indeed, I believe, to prevent such, she said instead exactly what I was doing, as though naming my activity accounted for it and for me. Other times on my bicycle I had been pelted with stones and, on foot, I was frequently verbally assaulted. When, however, I addressed my assailants in Javanese, merely saying the Javanese equivalent of "hello" or reprimanding them gently in the proper speech forms, they were instantly polite and, while not apologizing for their behavior, seemed to put it out of mind. These are examples of how a stranger (I am tempted to say, "the" stranger) is incorporated into language, in such a way he loses any potential to incite surprise. By speaking, I located myself alongside the good "Chinese": the alterity I initially displayed was obfuscated.⁵³ The effect of mixing is to give Javanese a feeling of peacefulness [*tenterem*] and the sense that nothing disturbing will occur. Not to engage in this practice is, indeed, to make oneself into an object of suspicion, whether one is "Chinese" or not. Mixing, then, is a way of obscuring differences. Not mixing makes differences not apparent but suspected.

The reassurance provided by such nearly contentless speech is not permanently effective. Whoever is in the position of the stranger in a Javanese setting can become *aneh*, odd, the stranger, again, as the testimony concerning Kim Tjoan shows. When this happens to "Chinese" they are left as the focal point of a certain fascination. "Chinese" wealth is imaginary, as I have said, in the sense that whether or not "Chinese" have money, their relation to it is mysterious. They keep wealth to themselves; it is the material form of their *watak* perhaps. The "magnificence" of their churches is visible, yet it raises the question of the secret sources of their wealth; at best, when revealed, this source is corrupt, but even discovery of the source leaves unexplained the "Chinese" ability to take advantage of "our" government when "we" ourselves cannot do so. Wealth places "Chinese" in a different world. It keeps "us" from seeing ourselves in "them." "We" cannot simply ignore it. Indeed, it rivets attention. The gap, as I have said, is too easily crossed in the mode of the uncanny as the riches that make "Chinese" turn their backs to us come into imagined view.

The result is the terrifying impulse of Hendra Kurnia thinking of Kim Tjoan: "So that's why he gets it like that. In fact, if we could, we'd tear his house down to the ground so he would never come back." The uncanny is unbearable. In fact, Kim Tjoan's family was driven out of the neighborhood; Kim Tjoan was sentenced to three and half years for incitement of racial sentiments; his wife and daughter were forced to move to Jakarta, where at last report they lived in poverty.⁵⁴ Their house, instead of

⁵³ I have discussed these incidents and the role of speech with minimal content in Siegel, *Solo in the New Order*, pp. 55–58.

⁵⁴ Andreas Harsono, ed., *Huru-hara Rengasdengklok*, p. 31. Fifty-four rioters, most of them in their teens and twenties—mostly students, laborers, and the unemployed—got sentences of about three months.

being razed, was bought by a nearby Islamic school.⁵⁵ This approaches ethnic cleansing but does not equal it, for there were other "Chinese" left untouched. Several residents mentioned Ceng Bouw, a "Chinese" who was protected by a Muslim family during the riots, in order to illustrate the good relations between Muslims and "Chinese" in their neighborhood.⁵⁶

If there is not ethnic cleansing in the mode of the ex-Yugoslavia, it is because "Chinese" are seen ambivalently. They too are Indonesians. Many Muslims rioted against them, and many Muslims protected some of them. The desire to have "Chinese" be "normal" is as great as the desire to eliminate them. The Indonesian idea of the nation is, indeed, based on its ability to assimilate its peoples, to reconstitute those, including "Chinese," into Indonesians no matter what their birth or their mother tongue. Marriage alliances across ethnic groups, for instance, indicate the strength of the nation. Before the birth of the nation, the ancestors of today's Indonesians could not intermarry in this way. Precisely this rupture with the family of origin begat Indonesians out of those many people born into one of the hundreds of groups that inhabited that nation of islands. "Chinese," however, often are treated as though they are not entirely Indonesians, though intermarriages do frequently take place between them and other Indonesians.

The political entity created by the liberation of Indonesians from their own origins was the *rakyat*, the people. No one is born a member of the people nor is it a sociological category. A farmer, for instance, is not a member of the people because of his profession, his place of birth, or the language he speaks. He becomes a member of the people by a performative act. In the Sukarno era he was one of those the president addressed either in the great stadium of the capital or over the radio. When Sukarno, who styled himself "the extension of the tongue of the people," spoke in their name, those listening, even though hearing certain ideas for the first time, found that these ideas did indeed express what they thought. At that point they were members of "the people."

The empty talk of the late afternoon does not produce "the people." Indeed, its purpose is to blur social differentiation of any sort. The fact that the stranger could appear, making such empty talk necessary, however, indicates that new sorts of social definition can occur when Indonesians are faced with something odd. The *rakyat* is formed out of such a possibility. It needs the oddity of a someone who speaks and, as in the case of Sukarno, after the fact, it needs a number of people to recognize in his words, and in himself, what they had always intended and always been. During the revolution it was not necessarily Sukarno who formed the focal point of the *rakyat*; it was more often local leaders of small bands, each acting in the name of "Indonesia." Their followers became members of "the people," members of a new nation whose form of expression was inchoate but which anticipated new political and social forms. The revolution, from the point of view of this example, can reoccur. The *rakyat* can reemerge. The insistence on "mixing," which is the suppression of such a possibility, indicates the pressure for the reemergence of such a formation.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 10.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 11.

The populism of the Sukarno period ended with Suharto's New Order. The people were without a form of expression. At the same time, by the 1980s differences in wealth led to pronounced differences between classes. At this point, we have arrived at the "gap" so widely discussed in Indonesian society in the later years of the New Order. It expresses the fear of the middle class that "the people" will reemerge. These fears shaped the development of events and prevented the *massa* from becoming the *rakyat*. At the same time, the continuous suppression of the underclass and the idea of the gap left the underclass confronting "Chinese." The "odd" figure who did not mix, whose difference was feared and who fronted for the middle class as a whole, was at once a failed and a rejected leader who could announce another *rakyat* or "the" *rakyat*.⁵⁷

In the evolution of events from the drumming of Hendra Kurnia to the burning of churches by large numbers of youth, we see the failure of "the people" to form themselves. Bereft of true leaders, guided only by speakers who mention the "time bomb" after there has been an explosion, "the people" advance to destroy the property of those who are thought to impede the restoration of what they once had: a reflection of themselves in others who were the means of their identification with the nation.

Jews are never mentioned in *Media Dakwah's* several interviews or in reports from the scenes of church burning. However, in the same issue of *Media Dakwah* which tells of the anti-"Chinese" riots in Rengasdengklok and nearby Tasikmalaya, there is a report about a countryside religious school in the same area; this school is said to teach heterodox beliefs. Students from orthodox religious schools attacked this heterodox school and chased out the teacher. On the ceiling of the mosque there is a star, reproduced in a photograph and said to be a Star of David. Nothing at all indicates that this school has something to do with Jews. Literature found in the remains of the school simply indicated that its leader had expanded the confession of faith and had pronounced himself the Imam Mahdi, a heterodox version of the messiah.

The reporter concludes his piece saying

. . . The case of Buki [the name of the religious teacher] indicates that the *provokasi* of Islam and its community never ceases, both from Jews and Christians. (QS 3: 120). For years Buki was a thorn in the side of the Tasik Muslim community. For the moment the officials did not act quickly enough so that at a certain time the masses lost control and it all exploded.⁵⁸

It is the logic of the time bomb again. But this time, the provocation includes the heterodox pronouncement of the coming of the messiah. There is no reason to think that there is Jewish influence here. If anything, judging from the presence of a mosque, from the name of the foundation which supported the school (Yayasan Marganingrat), and from its doctrine as *Media Dakwah* reports it, it resembles the Javanese version of the Imam Mahdi. It is not said to be Jewish itself but to be a "link in the Network of the Jewish International" (*mata rantai* Jaringan Yahudi Internasional) and at least one part

⁵⁷ The mob that attacked "Chinese" in Rengasdengklok were not termed *rakyat* but *massa*, or "masses." The difference is in the first place the lack of a leader. The *rakyat* always needs someone to speak for it. But had someone emerged, there still would have been no *rakyat*. The emergent social formation would still have been the *massa* rather than the *rakyat* since the new entity lacked permanence and legitimacy.

⁵⁸ MD team, "Jejak Yahudidi Tasikmalaya, Aliran Buki Sahidin yang sesat" ("The devious movement of Bukhi Sahidin: Jewish Traces in Tasikmalaya"), *Media Dakwah*, March 1997, pp. 50-52.

of an “organ of conspiracy” [*organ konspiratif*] to crush Islam.” The title refers not to Jews but to their traces (“Jewish Traces in Tasikmalaya”). Once again, the reference to Jews is made by the reporters and is not said to be part of local interpretations.

The introductory piece to the articles of this issue speaks of “Christianization and various networks such as Jewishization and Chinese conspiracy [*konspirasi*]—with motives of trade which ceaselessly try to crush Islam in this country; it’s really obviously right in front of your nose.”⁵⁹ The Jew, in this piece, appears not as a figure that arouses the resentment of the lower class, but as part of an interpretation of society by middle-class modernist writers. He appears not in life or even in local accounts, but in the medium of *Media Dakwah*. He is only vaguely adduced in these reports. He does not appear as a Chinese or Christian or even a heterodox Muslim. Chinese, Christians, heterodox preachers are not substitutes for Jews, nor are they Jews in disguise. One cannot trace a direct connection between Jews and those who are part of the Indonesian landscape, no doubt because Jews remain unrecognizable. In the way that the face of the despised Jew disappears into that of the valued Arab, the Jew, when his influence reaches Indonesia, retreats from making a direct appearance. Even to call these “Chinese” and Javanese Jewish “agents” is too strong; they merely bear “traces” marking them as Jews.

“For years Buki was a thorn in the side of the Tasik Muslim community. For the moment the officials did not act quickly enough so that at a certain time the masses lost control and it all exploded.” The Jewish effect, in these incidents, is the feeling of intolerable menace which cannot be accounted for by the accumulation of past grievances. Buki himself never makes an appearance and, of course, whatever Jew was thought responsible for the Star of David, however indirectly, does not. And no one expects this Jew to appear. The Jew, we have said repeatedly, remains absent from the scene. In that sense, the Jew features even more strongly than reclusive “Chinese” as the nonreflecting mirror of the Indonesian Muslim underclass. The very distance of America, Europe, and wherever else Jews are thought to have lived helps to bring them onto the Indonesian scene. They come to mind at the point where one cannot account for the force of appearance when one’s opponent seems to say amazing things or when painted stars appear in mosques. The absence of the Jew means that he can never be directly addressed. His effects mean that he is nonetheless present and in communication with certain Indonesians. They are affected by Jews, but they cannot make themselves felt by those Jews through their own initiative. It is the situation that pertains between Kim Tjoan and his neighbors, but in an exaggerated form.

When Nurcholish Madjid was accused of having been influenced by orientalist it meant that what he said, whether he knew it or not, originated in the distortions of Jews from another place and time. His errors were not a matter of his intentions, thus his pronouncements were not correctable. What he said was not a matter of interpretation. It was rather a question of finding the distant factors that compelled his

⁵⁹ Aru, “Membongkar Jaringan Kristenisasi, Yahudi dan Cina Anti Islam” (“Demolishing the Network of Christianization, Jews and Anti-Islamic Chinese”), *Media Dakwah*, March 1997, p. 41.

speech. Resting outside interpretation, Nurcholish's message was not understandable. One can say that it was singular even if it was recognizable as the type of something that others, such as the Egyptian Thaha Husein, had said before. It was, in that sense, mere repetition of the same. Its singularity, pointing to an impossible source of (un)truth, was the possibility of any message whatsoever. Mistranslations might even foretell the messiah in the form of Buki.

The Jewish uncanny in Indonesia comes with the erosion of the national idea and the consequent feeling that "Indonesians" now have different sources of truth. The Jew appears—though that is not the correct verb . . . "reaches" would be more apt—not only from outside Indonesia, but from outside the history of Indonesia, helping to make him unapparent. He acts from out of nowhere. He is not a *revenant*, the French term which indicates a ghost as something that returns. To be such, he would, of course, have to be identifiable and to actually appear. As it is, each time there is a Jewish effect felt, it is mere repetition of something that comes from no knowable origin and bears no form. The uncanny effect of Jews is thus different from that of the "Chinese." "Chinese" are a recurrent, indeed constant feature of Indonesian society. Chinese give the uncanny a body. Jews inhabit nothing in Indonesia. The word "Jew" in Indonesian indicates a menace. No form has been found for it. Jews are not specters, but the threat of specters to come. "Chinese" give the Jewish threat of the coming of ghosts a body and thus a place in Indonesia.⁶⁰

Buki is as close as I can find to a Jewish specter in Indonesia, though he is not that. If we are permitted to imagine the effects of a confrontation between him and his Muslim neighbors, what can we suppose they would find? In the thinking of *Media Dakwah*, Buki, were he present to do so, would embody the singular messages of orientalists. Were he capable of being present, one would see without knowing exactly what one was facing, the effects of Koranic teachings twisted out of recognition long ago somewhere else. Facing him, even in his absence, certain Indonesians Muslims find themselves no longer at home in their own land, and this feeling of alienation is even more thorough than when they confront "Chinese."

Buki had his own teachings, uninfluenced by Jews. One can imagine that they were unique and that they contained a political program. Does his banishment then indicate the failure of the idea of the *rakyat*? That is, is it a failure of the possibility of becoming other that occurred when the nation was newborn, when a peasant listened to Sukarno speak and found himself to be one of the people, his origin inconsequential? If, after Buki spoke, some of the people of Tasikmalaya found in his message what they seemed to think, as others did when they heard Sukarno, one could say that this possibility of becoming other—of becoming Indonesian in fellowship with all other Indonesians—is still alive. Buki, the individual, is gone. "Chinese" remain. Alas, they remain to embody the failure of that possibility. As such, they, amongst other figures, are established as Indonesian national ghosts, supplementing the numerous local spirits that inhabit the regions of Java.

⁶⁰ Another effect of the feeling of undefined menace perhaps is the prominence of the word "trauma" in latter New Order discourse. The feeling, new to Indonesia, of an incurable wound, caused by a continuing menace which often has no certain origins, occurs alongside the new upsurge of anti-Semitism. Here too one might think of it as an attempt to place the effects of the Jew within Indonesian society. Cf. James T. Siegel, *A New Criminal Type in Jakarta* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), Chapter 4.

It is not altogether surprising to find anti-Semitism without Jews; after all, it is not caused by Jews.⁶¹ It is not surprising that Indonesian Muslims identify themselves with their coreligionists in the Middle East. It is striking, however, when so many Indonesians conflate Zionists and Jews and when this conflation inflects their self image or, rather, lack of one, and comes to mark the limit of national identity.

⁶¹ Martin van Bruinessen rightly points out that anti-Semitism is often found in places in Europe and America where Jews are rare. The difference with Indonesia, however, is that such places as rural North Dakota still belong to larger societies where Jews play a part and where the terms of their recognition are widely circulated. See Martin van Bruinessen, "Yahudi sebagai Simbol Dalam Wacana Pemikiran Islam Indonesia Masa Kini," p. 259. Other Asian cases of anti-Semitism, quite different in their configurations from Indonesia's, are Japan and China. See the relevant articles in Frank Dikötter, *The Construction of Racial Identities in China and Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997) as well as David Goodman and Masanori Miyazawa, *Jews in the Japanese Mind* (New York: The Free Press, 1995).