

研究論文

從「華人中的華人」到「改信伊斯蘭教的『唐人』」：

印尼西加里曼丹山口洋客家穆斯林之探究

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本文以印尼西加里曼丹省山口洋市改信伊斯蘭教的客家人為研究對象，分析其改變宗教信仰的原因、過程與經驗。為認識與理解研究對象所處社會脈絡與樣貌，本文首先從西加里曼丹的歷史談起，同時描繪出山口洋華人聚落特性，以及從「元宵節遊行」以及市中心因設立龍的雕像而引發的爭議兩個事件勾勒該市的族群關係。此外，由於本文以成為穆斯林的客家人為主體，因此，實有探討華人與伊斯蘭的連結與關係之必要。最後，本文將從改宗者的自我認同、他人（其他非穆斯林華人、印尼原住民）認定、文化實踐來探討客家穆斯林之改宗經驗與過程，尤其是改宗者在改宗前後的認同變化提供另一個有別於西加里曼丹「華人中的華人」的概念。如此概念的轉變不僅說明了印尼華人或客家人內涵的變化，更是可作為客家實為具有內部差異性的異質群體之例證。更甚者，從客家人走向伊斯蘭的決定與歷程可觀察到，「華人拜神佛、當地人信伊斯蘭教」的對立因而打破，以及華人對於當地社會與族群環境的適應性。

關鍵字：印尼客家、改宗、伊斯蘭、族群認同

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Research Article

**From “Chinese Among the Chinese” to “Tong Ngin Who
Convert to Islam”: A Study of Hakka Muslims in
Singkawang, West Kalimantan, Indonesia***

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In this study, the reasons Hakka people embraced Islam in Singkawang, West Kalimantan, Indonesia, and the experiences and of their conversion, were analyzed. To understand the social context of Singkawang, the history of West Kalimantan and the Chinese settlements in Singkawang is briefly introduced. Two events—the Cap Go Meh parade and the establishment of a dragon statue in the city center—are addressed to elucidate the interethnic relationships in Singkawang. The connection between Chinese Muslims and Islam was explored in this study to delineate how the converts perceived Islam. Finally, converts’ conversion experiences and processes were studied, with a focus on their self-identities, categorization by others, and cultural practices. Changes in identity among the Hakka converts offer an alternative conceptualization of “Chinese,” rather than merely “Chinese among the Chinese.” These changes exemplify the internal differences within the Hakka population.

Keywords: Hakka people in Indonesia, conversion, Islam, ethnic identity

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A. Introduction

In Singkawang, West Kalimantan, Indonesia, overseas Hakka people constitute the majority of the population. The city is known as “the town of a thousand temples” because of the strong influence of Chinese culture. Hakka people are the largest group among the Chinese people in Singkawang, and the Hakka dialect is commonly spoken among all local Chinese residents (some of whom also speak Teochiu and Hainanese). In 2007, Hasan Karman, a Hakka person, was elected mayor, and became the first Chinese mayor of the city. During his tenure, Hasan Karman expanded the scale of the Cap Go Meh (lantern festival) parade, a Chinese cultural event that attracts a large number of tourists. Many local Hakka women marry Taiwanese men and emigrate to Taiwan. Singkawang and Yangmei City in Taoyuan County became sister cities in 2010. The demographics, languages, religions, and cultural activities of Singkawang mark the city as having a strong Hakka presence, and Hakka people in Singkawang are often identified as a homogeneous group, although this is far from the truth. The conversion to Islam of some Hakka people in Singkawang exemplifies the heterogeneity of Hakka culture. Local society has conventionally held that the Hakka believe in Taoist gods and the Buddha, whereas Indonesian natives believe in Islam. Why did some Hakka people convert, given this strong division of ethnic and religious boundaries? Is there a difference between Hakka people and other Chinese ethnic groups in their experiences of conversion to Islam? How do they perceive their own identities? What is their sense of identity? How do non-Chinese Muslims and *pribumi* (native Indonesians) Muslims view Hakka people who have converted to Islam? How do such an

identity affect the classification and conceptualization of Chinese people and culture in Indonesian society?

Hakka people began to emigrate to West Kalimantan in the late eighteenth century to work as miners, and made conscious efforts to maintain their Chinese cultural background, Hakka identity, and use of the Hakka dialect, in hostile surroundings. They organized work units, *kongsis*, to expand their footprint in a non-Chinese environment, while maintaining their cultural autonomy. This emphasis on cultural autonomy is responsible for the reputation of the Hakka people as “Chinese among the Chinese.” After more than 2 centuries in Singkawang, religious practices among the Hakka people, such as spirit-medium ceremonies, remain a window into traditional elements of Chinese folk culture. However, regarding their perceptions of ancestors and families, interviews with local Hakka residents have revealed that they do not have a concept of clans or families, unlike their counterparts in China and Taiwan. The history and localized development of early Hakka settlers are responsible for the coexistence of these two seemingly contradictory phenomena. In this study, the relationships between Hakka people and other ethnic groups were considered to elucidate the local positioning of the Hakka people, as well as the perceptions of other ethnic groups toward the Hakka. This study examined interethnic relationships in Singkawang by investigating the Cap Go Meh parade, and the controversy surrounding the establishment of a dragon statue in the city center. The historical background, social context, settlement characteristics, religious beliefs, and ethnic relationships in Singkawang were studied to draw a picture of Singkawang. Although Hakka people have been considered a homogenous group, Hakka people are in fact

heterogeneous. The study of Hakka people who converted to Islam, crossing an ethnic and religious boundary in the process, can provide a new perspective on Hakka people in Singkawang. However, are Hakka people and Islam in stark opposition, as is commonly believed? Hakka Muslims believe that Islam was introduced by Zheng He(鄭和) during his expeditionary voyages to Southeast Asia in the Ming Dynasty; they thus believe that Islam is closely related to Chinese people. This study analyzed the connections and relationships between Chinese Muslims and Islam, in the context of historical origins, to explore the conversion of Chinese people to Islam, and the reasons for this. Finally, this study reviewed the conversion experiences and processes of Hakka Muslims, to explore differences in the self-identity of converted Hakka people and others (non-Muslim Chinese and Indonesian natives). Changes in the sense of identity among Hakka Muslims, before and after conversion, provide insight into conceptual differences of “Chinese among the Chinese.” This highlights the social context of Chinese people in Indonesia, and, of course, the Hakka. Crucially, this shift illustrates that Hakka people are a heterogeneous group with internal differences.

The first section describes the history of the Hakka people in West Kalimantan, and explains why Hakka people are considered “Chinese among the Chinese.” The focus of this section is on the settlement characteristics and religious beliefs of Singkawang, and a description of the ethnic groups in the local community is provided; the Cap Go Meh parade and the controversy surrounding the establishment of the dragon statue are addressed. In the second section, the relationship between Chinese people and Islam is analyzed, and the current measures being implemented by the Indonesian government regarding the conversion of

Chinese people to Islam are discussed. These two aspects were used as a framework to establish an understanding of the positioning of the converts. Finally, drawing on participant observations and in-depth interviews conducted in the summers of 2011 and 2012 in Singkawang, this study examined the conversion experience and identity changes of Hakka Muslims to depict the multiple experiences and transformations of Hakka identity.

B. “Chinese Among the Chinese” and Hakka in Singkawang

1. Hakka and their history in West Kalimantan

The history of Hakka people in West Kalimantan was completely elaborated upon by Mary Somers Heidhues in her book *Golddiggers, Farmers, and Traders in the “Chinese Districts” of West Kalimantan, Indonesia* (2003). At the beginning of her study, Heidhues differentiated Chinese people in West Kalimantan from other Chinese people in Indonesia, because Hakka people are seen as a distinctive group that is rural and poor, and work as small traders, shop owners, and fishermen, whereas other Chinese people are seen as economically successful businessmen (Heidhues 2003:11).

Dayak, Malay, and Chinese people constitute the “three pillars” in the history of West Kalimantan (Heidhues 2003:21). Europeans were negligibly small in number, and never developed relationships with the local population, although they were present in the area. Among these groups, Chinese people have been “a significant minority” in West Kalimantan (Heidhues 2003:12). Notably, most Chinese people who

immigrated into West Kalimantan to work as gold miners were Hakka people. In comparison with Hokkien and Cantonese people, who came to this region from as early as the sixteenth century, Hakka people were relative latecomers who arrived in the late eighteenth century, but outnumbered these other groups and came to dominate the “Chinese Districts” (Carstens 2006:89; Heidhues 2003:13).

Hakka studies scholars have emphasized the distinctiveness of the Hakka people in this region (Heidhues 2003; Carstens 2006; Chan 2009). The fact that Hakka people safeguarded their culture and language, maintaining their connection with Chinese identity in unfriendly surroundings, has received much attention. Egalitarian *kongsis* work units organized by miners lasted for almost 100 years (1780s-1880s), and have been assumed to be key to understanding how the Hakka people retained a distinct sense of identity, which distinguished them from other groups of residents in this area. In 1880, the anthropologist Jan Jakob Maria de Groot was sent by the Dutch government to determine the reasons for which the Hakka were economically, socially, and politically successful, because this positive image contrasted with Dutch perceptions of the Hakka people in China, where they were regarded as uneducated; de Groot explained Hakka culture as the application of an intrinsically republican, traditional village society model (Yuan 2000:5-11; Chan 2009:108). However, this perspective was challenged by Yuan, who argued that this mutual support system embodied a general principle of Chinese social behavior, emphasized in the concept of “across the four seas all men are brothers” (四海之內皆兄弟).¹

¹ Drawing on the tale of 108 bandit heroes from the fourteenth century novel, the Water Margin (水滸傳) by Shi Naian (施耐庵), Yuan contends that the social structures of confederations (such as Heshun Zongting, 和順總廳, founded in 1776, and Lang fang Kongsis Zongting, 蘭芳

De Groot and Yuan offered explanations that are, to some extent, culturalist, because they rely on a narrative of the Hakka preservation of distinctiveness. In addition, their explanations accorded prominence to the internal organizational functions and formation of Hakka society. However, this is not the entire story. Heidhues raised the following question: “Were the Hakka less amenable to local influences because they were Hakkas?” (Heidhues 2003:265) In Heidhues’ view, the answer is “not necessarily”-“Spatial isolation and economic specialization are probably more important than the ‘Hakka culture’ itself in explaining the tendency of West Kalimantan’s Chinese to retain their ancestral culture” (Heidhues 2003:265). On this point, I am strongly in accord with Heidhues, and agree that the wider external social and local contexts in which Hakka people were situated were crucial. Several contextual factors contributed to the retention of culture among Hakka people in Singkawang (Heidhues 2003:40-41; 264–265).

Initially, the *kongsis* played a role in allowing the Hakka community to sustain its strong Chinese characteristics. These *kongsis* were religious, economic, and political institutions, which acted almost as independent states (Heidhues 2003:40; 264). Hakka people were mostly miners and small farmers, who lived in relatively isolated and homogenous settlements. In terms of ethnicity and class, the Hakka remained a conspicuous group (Heidhues 2003:40). The strong demarcation of economic and cultural activities between ethnic groups hindered the

公司總廳, founded in 1777 in Mandor), as formed by Hakka people, were aroused by this share system and the rallying call for comrades to join the fight for social justice (Yuan 2000: 277-278; Chan 2009:109). Chang and Chang also indicated that members of Fang Pak Alumni (芳伯校友會) intended to construct Lo Fong Pak as a hero by stressing the significance of the number “108” in delineating the historical founder of Lang Fang Kongsis (Luo Fangbo 羅芳伯; Chang & Chang 2009: 64).

determination of a basis for acculturation into local society (Heidhues 2003:41; 265). Moreover, economic specialization strengthened ethnic divisions. Government policies regarding the Chinese minority fluctuated from laissez-faire to intimidation and violence, and Hakka people became less influenced by them. Under the rule of the Netherlands, the cultural autonomy of Hakka people remained intact; after independence, the Indonesian state's assimilation policy had only limited success (Heidhues 2003:41). All these factors rendered the Hakka people in West Kalimantan a distinctive group.

2. Hakka in Singkawang

a) Mapping Singkawang

Singkawang is the second largest city in West Kalimantan, approximately 100 km north of the capital, Pontianak. Singkawang, which means “the city near the sea and estuary,” is located on a hill. The main ethnic groups are Chinese, Malay, and Dayak. The total population is 186,306 (2010). Ethnic Chinese people constitute approximately 62% of the population,² and outnumber other ethnic groups. According to Mr. Huang, who participated in a meeting between Mayor Hasan Karman and the Malaysia Chinese Clan Association (held on July 24, 2012, in Singkawang),³ the Mayor told the Association that because of internal

² The definition of the Chinese population varies. According to Wikipedia, Hakka people are the largest subgroup of Chinese people, and they constitute 42% of the entire population (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Singkawang>, accessed July 17, 2013). Another definition was provided by Mayor Karman, who, in a personal e-mail to Margaret Chan, the author of “Chinese New Year in West Kalimantan: Ritual Theatre and Political Circus” (2009), cited an estimate of 42%; however, this refers to the population of Chinese people. He believed that the figure was closer to 60% (Chan 2009:117 and footnote 70).

This figure approximates the source from Wikipedia, accessed in 2011 (<http://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E5%B1%B1%E5%8F%A3%E6%B4%8B%E5%B8%82>, accessed September 5, 2011).

³ When I interviewed Mr. Huang at his workplace (after-school classes for learning Mandarin), I

migration in Indonesia, the population in Singkawang had increased to approximately 250,000 people. Immigrants chose to live in Singkawang because of its relative safety and stability, and the relative friendliness of other ethnic groups in Singkawang toward ethnic Chinese. According to Mr. Huang, immigration has increased housing prices; however, the construction business has boomed in recent years (interview with Mr. Huang, July 26, 2012, in Singkawang). Construction businesses bought houses and land from members of other ethnic groups, such as Malay people, who received favorable prices for their real estate. With this money, many bought houses and land in the suburbs, where vegetables and fruits can be grown. By living on planting crops and farming, these people were able to make a decent living that was preferable to searching for the few jobs available in the city. This caused increasing numbers of Chinese people to live downtown, while other ethnic groups moved to the suburbs.

Among Chinese people, Hakka people not only dominate in number, but the Hakka language is used between Hakka people and members of other Han Chinese groups, including Teochiu, Hokkien, and Hainanese people. Fieldwork observations have revealed that the residences of Chinese and other ethnic groups are ethnically segregated⁴: ethnic Chinese people are concentrated downtown, whereas *pribumi* live in the outskirts. Spatial boundaries are also divided according to class. Ethnic

read a report on a visit of the Malaysia Chinese Clan Association to Singkawang in the local newspaper (field note, July 26, 2012).

⁴ This was confirmed by a Hakka person who teaches Chinese in Singkawang (interview with Mr. Huang, July 26, 2012, in Singkawang). Chang-yau Hoon also made similar observations in West Jakarta, which is dominated by ethnic Chinese residents, and where residential segregation is primarily based on class. Chinese people live near the main road, whereas *pribumi* live in smaller houses in alleys (Hoon 2008:157).

Chinese people make their living by running stores, but Hakka people have historically specialized in tailoring, planting, and operating fish and shrimp farms, and Teochiu people have historically run motorcycle stores (interview with Mr. Huang, July 26, 2012, in Singkawang). However, these traditional professions are changing: for instance, my interpreter runs an ice store, her mother runs a stationery store, and her brother runs a company that deals with palm oil. Another Chinese person with whom I talked in 2011, also runs an ice store. Dayak people are hired as clerks in these Hakka businesses, whereas other ethnic groups, for instance Malay people, live in the outskirts and work as farmers, wage laborers, or traffic directors who earn their living through tips.

According to ethnic Chinese people born and raised in Singkawang, the city is well-known as a place where ethnic Chinese people outnumber locals: “When you walk down the street, you will see a lot of Chinese concentrated downtown, who live there” (interview with Mr. Huang, July 26, 2012, in Singkawang). The name Singkawang originates from the Chinese language. In addition, the beliefs and practices of Chinese religion dominate, and Singkawang is also known as “the town of a thousand temples.” These temples venerate traditional Chinese folk gods, such as Thai Pak Kung (Tua Pek Kong; 大伯公), Guan Gong (關公), Guanyin (觀音), and Ci Kung (濟公). Moreover, the city has numerous private Jitong altars (乩童壇) and prayer halls (佛堂).⁵ Regarding religious beliefs and practices, three key points should be addressed.⁶ First, spirit mediums in Singkawang, who are called *lao ya* (meaning old

⁵ For example, the grandmother of a girl who assisted me in interpretation during my first visit to Singkawang runs a prayer hall from her home.

⁶ I offer special thanks to Prof. Wei-An Chang and Prof. Han-Pi Chang for sharing with me their observations in Singkawang.

grandfather, 老爺, or more appropriately translated honorifically as “eminent lord”) or *tatung* (originally from *tiao tung*, 跳童, meaning “to jump or dance as a spirit medium”; Chan, 2009:126) abound in Singkawang, as evidenced by the numerous Jitong altars placed in front of houses. In West Kalimantan, *lao ya* and *tatung* are called *tang-gi*⁷, or “divining child,” in Hokkien. In the Cap Go Meh, 700 *tatung* participate in a spirit-medium parade. Two male converts to Islam interviewed in this study were spirit mediums before their conversion to Islam; however, they emphasized that after becoming Muslims, they never again had such experiences (interviews with Fatur⁸, July 19, 2012, in Singkawang; and Anton, July 20, 2012, in Singkawang). Second, people in Singkawang often pray to the gods and seek divine advice. Third, the network of followers is transnational: for instance, numerous Hakka women in Singkawang have married Taiwanese men, and although they live in

⁷ According to Chang Hsun, a cultural and religious anthropologist in Taiwan, a *jitong* (乩童) is a person who has special sensitivity and serves as a spiritual medium to communicate with spirits. In Taiwan, *tongji* (童乩) in Taiwanese, or *jitong* (乩童) in Mandarin Chinese, is the most common form of spiritual medium. The character *tong* (童) means “child” and it emphasizes that the mind of the spiritual medium is innocent and is easily possessed by spirits. The character *ji* (乩) originally refers to *ding* (丁) -shaped divination tools, which later carried the extended meaning of “asking questions through divination.” A *jitong* is a kind of shaman, a word that derived from the Tungus language in Northwest Asia, which refers to a person who has the ability to quiver absentmindedly in a trance state. Shamanism includes two types practitioner: One is called a spirit-master, whose soul can leave the body to travel around the world and influence spiritual beings, such as animals or plants, to do his or her bidding. The other is called a spiritual medium, who can be possessed by gods and spirits as a vessel for communication. Shamans in Taiwan belong to the spiritual medium category; most are men, but female spiritual mediums exist in Southern Taiwan. (Council of Cultural Affairs 2011) Chang’s viewpoint provides a key to an overview of *jitong* in Singkawang. These spiritual mediums dominate in Singkawang. Therefore, it is necessary to ask if this constitutes the central belief in the region under study. Moreover, are these *jitong* only spiritual mediums, as are those in Taiwan? Furthermore, are there only male spiritual mediums in Singkawang or are there also female spiritual mediums? Are there any regional differences when compared with Taiwan? In my view, it is crucial to inquire into these questions to elucidate the religious belief of Hakka people in Singkawang.

⁸ Names of interviewees have been changed.

Taiwan, they continue to ask their families and relatives to pray in local temples, and ask questions of diviners.

b) Cap Go Meh

The Cap Go Meh is considered a celebration that manifests Chineseness, not only in Singkawang, but in all of West Kalimantan. The Cap Go Meh is literally translated as the 15th night, and refers to the 15th day of the Chinese Lunar New Year, also known as the Lantern Festival. On the official website of Indonesia Travel,⁹ the Cap Go Meh is featured as a tourist attraction, in an article entitled “Extraordinary Cap Go Meh Festivities in Singkawang.” The festival has gained national attention, and in a sense, represents a part of Indonesia. The highlights of the Cap Go Meh are firecrackers, rituals to cast away demons and bad luck for the coming year (Chan 2009:106), and particularly the parade of *tatung* spirit mediums down the main streets, which involves self-mortification with knives and nails, and attracts many tourists.¹⁰ However, notably, the Cap Go Meh also has political connotations. In “Chinese New Year in West Kalimantan: Ritual Theatre and Political Circus” (2009), Margaret Chan elaborately described the contemporary Cap Go Meh parade from two interconnected approaches, as a form of ritual theatre, drawing on performance analysis, and as a sociopolitical event with substantial interethnic implications.

⁹ <http://www.indonesia.travel/en/event/detail/622/extraordinary-cap-go-meh-festivities-in-singkawang>, accessed June 23, 2013.

¹⁰ The *tatung* parade commences from Kridasana stadium at Gusti Sulung Lelanang Street, then moves to Diponegoro Street, Niaga Street, and Setia Budi Street, and finishes in front of the altar near the dragon statue at Niaga Street. Hotels in the city are fully booked more than a month before the parade (<http://www.indonesia.travel/en/event/detail/622/extraordinary-cap-go-meh-festivities-in-singkawang>, accessed June 23, 2013).

The Cap Go Meh parade has been portrayed as a large-scale celebration in Singkawang since 2008, and can be traced back to 1960s and 1970s. Yuan (2000:35-36) and Heidhues (2003:93) recorded the operation of spirit-mediums in 18th century Chinese communities in Borneo; however, no textual records of Cap Go Meh parades in West Kalimantan exist, prior to a fictionalized account by a European missionary published in the 1970s (Chan 2009:111). Chan reviewed an interviewee photo collection, and determined that spirit-medium parades had been held in the 1960s. Nevertheless, such processions in the present day are somewhat novel in Indonesia. During Suharto's New Order from 1967, public celebrations of Chinese New Year, called *Imlek* in Indonesia, were forbidden (Suryandinata 2007:266). Chinese New Year in Indonesia was only permitted in 2000, when President Abdurrahman Wahid approved one public celebration, and later in 2002, when President Megawati Sukarnoputri announced *Imlek* as a national holiday (Chan 2009:106-107).

In West Kalimantan, the Cap Go Meh was originally held in Pontianak and Singkawang; however, the excessive display of the Chineseness of this festival made Malay people uneasy; they worried that they would be marginalized by the intimate relationship between the Chinese and the Dayak people; therefore, the Cap Go Meh was discontinued in Pontianak in 2008.¹¹ Historically, Chinese and Dayak people have collaborated numerous times. Clashes that have occurred between Dayak and Chinese people have resulted from intentional instigation by external parties, who intended to use the Dayak people to control the Chinese. In 2007, the pairing of a Dayak governor and an

¹¹ See Chan (2009:133-137) for a detailed discussion on interethnic tensions in Pontianak.

ethnic Chinese vice governor in West Kalimantan gave the closeness of the Dayak and Chinese people a new political significance. In contrast to Pontianak, where the Cap Go Meh parade has not been held since 2008, Singkawang has become a tourist destination for this festival. Cap Go Meh parades in Singkawang are portrayed as lively celebrations that are perfect for tourists, and which compare favorably with other street parades featuring *barongsai* (Chinese lion dance) and *liong* (also *naga*, dragon dance) held by the Chinese communities of other major cities, such as Jakarta, Semarang, Surabaya, Bandung, Bogar, and Yogyakarta (Chan 2009:107).

Chan analyzed the Cap Go Meh in Singkawang by parsing the ritual performances of spirit-medium processions and the sociocultural dynamics that they embodied. In Chan's account, the Cap Go Meh not only has a ritual meaning, but is also a display of Chinese allegiance to Indonesia (Chan 2009:126-133). As a ritual enactment of the history of Chinese people in West Kalimantan, an army of spirit soldiers participate in the Cap Go Meh. As Chan observed, the Chinese *tatung* dress up as generals and infantrymen in memory of those who fought and gave their lives during the establishment of immigrant settlements in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Chan 2009:126). The Chinese people of Kalimantan now worship these ancestral spirits for the protection of their communities.¹² Dayak and Malay spirit mediums were also included among the *tatung*, proving the growing allegiance of the Indonesian-Chinese people to indigenous deities and saints. Drawing on

¹² In Chan's interview with the mayor of Singkawang, Hasan Karman, in 2008, Mayor Karman said that the Cap Go Meh parade is a ritual cleansing of Singkawang, and that it arose from an eighteenth-century practice in Chinese mining communities during times of plague, when exorcists, dressed as warriors, would go about waving weapons to scare away the demons responsible for the calamity (Chan 2009:139).

the work of Cheu Hock Tong, Chan argued that such practices can be seen as an intercession in interethnic relations, and contribute to a greater sense of “communitas” in the country’s multiethnic society.

c) The dragon statue controversy

The performance of the Cap Go Meh spirit-medium parade manifests Chineseness, and is more accepted in Singkawang than in Pontianak. However, this does not mean that other practices loaded with Chineseness are accepted without incident in Singkawang; the dispute over a dragon statue is a telling example. As noted, Singkawang is a multiethnic city with three distinctive ethnic groups-Chinese, Dayak, and Malay. In such an ethnically and culturally diverse city, problems in ethnic relations warrant attention.¹³

¹³ This part is mainly drawn on reports “Crouching Dragon Hidden Fire,” (Muhlis Suhaeri and Angga Haksoro , 2010) (VHR Media, [http://www.vhrmedia.com/Crouching-Dragon-Hidden-Fire-\(Finished\)-focus4529.html](http://www.vhrmedia.com/Crouching-Dragon-Hidden-Fire-(Finished)-focus4529.html), accessed July 28, 2012).



Photo 1. The dragon statue

In the downtown commercial district of Singkawang, a 6-m-tall dragon statue (Photo 1, photo by the author) stands at the crossroads of Jalan Niaga and Kepol Mahmud. The statue was sponsored and built by the entrepreneurs Beni Setiawan and Iwan Gunawan. The plan to build the dragon statue was not implemented until 2003. Although then-Mayor Awang Ischak halted the project on the grounds that it could trigger conflict between people of differing opinions, Ischak's successor, Mayor Hasan Karman, permitted Setiawan and Gunawan to build the dragon statue. For Setiawan and Gunawan, the statue not only makes the city more eye-catching, but is also a form of performance art. Setiawan

intends to build more statues and monuments representing the Dayak, Malay, and other ethnic groups in the future.

After the dragon statue was built, it caused a dispute between those who saw it as a beneficial tourist attraction and those who regarded it as a symbol loaded with Chineseness. Moreover, an accident occurred when a motorcyclist collided with the statue and died instantly, which drew attention to the fact that the statue, located in the middle of an intersection, endangers motorists. Overall, the unveiling of the statue did not go smoothly, and there were numerous differences of opinion:

- (1) For the sponsors, artist, and Mayor Hasan Karman, the statue is art. This viewpoint was criticized in particular by Wijaya Kurniawan, from the Tionghoa¹⁴ Traditional Council (MABT), who said that the mayor had “lost his sensitivity to his people.” Karman had not lived in Singkawang since graduating from junior high school, and had not returned to the city for 30 years; this was believed to be the reason that he did not understand how his people felt about the statue.
- (2) Members of the Khonghucu and Tao congregations believe the dragon to be sacred and holy; therefore, they did not believe that such a figure should be “lowly” placed, for instance, at an intersection. Members of the Khonghucu and Tao congregations typically situate dragon figures in places of worship, such as in temples.
- (3) Chinese Muslims did not object to the dragon, but rather, to its

¹⁴ Pronunciation of “中華.” Shortly after Suharto’s fall, the term “Tionghoa” was reintroduced to the mass media as a substitute for the once-offensive but official term “Cina.” This term is welcomed by some of the older generations. For them, “Tionghoa” is indisputably the respectful and apposite term. (Hoon 2008:163).

location. The leader of Indonesia's Islam Tionghoa United (Dewan Pimpinan Daerah, Pembina Iman Tauhid Islam; PITI), Haji Aman (Chia Jung Khong), argued that people would disturb traffic when taking pictures, causing accidents. Haji Aman went further by saying that a park would have been a better place for the dragon, because there are many empty parks in Singkawang.

- (4) The Islam Defender Front (Front Pembela Islam; FPI) considered the dragon statue profane and an evil provocation, particularly because of its public placement. Members of the FPI protested, and even attempted to tear down the statue.¹⁵
- (5) The Dayak people stood on the Chinese side. According to Aloysius Kilim, chief of the Dayak Traditional Council (Dewan Adat Dayak; DAD) and a member of the Singkawang Local Legislative Council, "there were people that tried to make the controversy about ethnicity."

In addition to these opinions, which were collected from a report dated June 10, 2012, certain people with whom I talked offered other versions of this dispute.

- (1) One female Hakka Muslim mentioned that she had heard about this quarrel. To her knowledge, it was not Singkawang Muslims

¹⁵ See also "Java: Muslim violence against statues of other religions," <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Java:-Muslim-violence-against-statues-of-other-religions-23064.html#> Asia News. it (2011/11/02), accessed June 9, 2013. According to this report, "The Islamic Defender Front (FPI) launched an appeal on its website on September 29, 2011, with an order to destroy all "un-Islamic" statues in the country, above all those in public places. FPI members were asked to take a stance against the creation of statues that Islam does not approve. The request to reject un-Islamic statues was extended to other Indonesian Muslim groups." They destroyed puppet statues in Purwakarta (West Java), a large dragon in Singkawang, West Borneo Province, and a statue of the Buddha in Tanjung Balai, North Sumatra. In 2011, they destroyed three statues of Our Lady in Bekasi, West Java.

who protested the dragon statue, but FPI, an Islamic fundamentalist group from Jakarta (interview with Erika, July 20, 2012, in Singkawang).

- (2) A Hakka man, Mr. Huang, who runs a Chinese afterschool program, described what happened, but did not express his own opinion regarding the dragon. However, based on his description, I became aware of the close relationship between Dayak and Chinese people: Dayak people stood by the Chinese and did not contest the establishment of the dragon statue (interview with Mr. Huang, July 26, 2012, in Singkawang).
- (3) The vice president of PITI, Mr. Lin, first saw this problem from a financial perspective. In his view, building the dragon statue did not cost Muslims money; therefore, they should not be against it. During our discussion, he emphasized the financial perspective once again by citing the establishment of a mosque in Singkawang as an example. Chinese people donated a large sum of money to build the mosque; Lin evidenced this as proof that Chinese people can cooperate with Muslims (interview with Mr. Lin, July 26, 2012, in Singkawang).
- (4) Haji Asfan, a leader of Muslims (of Malay descent, married to a Chinese) in Singkawang, opined that the dragon statue should not be placed at an intersection because it is a sacred symbol that cannot be placed on the ground, and should be in a temple (interview with Haji Asfan, July 26, 2012, in Singkawang).

Aside from the perception of the dragon statue as art, the opinions from the report and those collected from interviews in this study overlapped to a certain extent: the dragon was deemed a sacred and holy

symbol, and thus, many believed that it should be located in a place of worship rather than at an intersection.

While in Singkawang, I observed a statue (Photo 2)¹⁶ at another intersection, and was told by my interpreter that it represents the Dayak people; however, no dispute over it has been reported. Is this because it is not as sensitive as the dragon? This discrepancy in social perception and responses requires further exploration through future fieldwork regarding interethnic relations in Singkawang.



Photo 2. Dayak statue

¹⁶ Picture sourced from “Crouching Dragon Hidden Fire,” dated June 10, 2010, by Muhlis Suhaeri and Angga Haksoro, translated by Rosmi Julitasari (VHR Media, [http://www.vhrmedia.com/Crouching-Dragon-Hidden-Fire-\(Finished\)-focus4529.html](http://www.vhrmedia.com/Crouching-Dragon-Hidden-Fire-(Finished)-focus4529.html), accessed July 28, 2012).

3. Interethnic relationships

Examining the interethnic relationships between Dayak, Malay, and Chinese people enables the position of the Hakka people in Singkawang to be elucidated. The history of early settlement in West Kalimantan explains how the Hakka people maintained their distinctiveness as an ethnic group; this uniqueness was not self-defined, but rather, resulted from interactions between the Hakka people and other groups. As Stuart Hall stated, identity is inextricably articulated in difference, which is conveyed in the “doubleness of discourse; this necessity of the Other to the self, the inscription of identity in the look of the other” (Hall 2000:48). At the same time, identity is constructed through a process in which the Self and the Other confront and reach out to each other in various contexts over time. In this sense, the Cap Go Meh parade and the controversy over the dragon statue, to be further explored in the later subsections, depict how Hakka people relate to Malay and Dayak people.

These events manifested interethnic relations differently. The Cap Go Meh parade illustrated how Chinese people, who are predominantly Hakka, connected themselves with Dayak and Malay people by including their saints and deities in the parade. This procession contributed to a greater sense of “*communitas*” in Singkawang. By contrast, the controversy over the dragon statue indicated that the recognition of “Chineseness” in Singkawang was problematic; not only did fundamentalist Muslims contest its establishment, but ethnic Chinese members of the Khonghucu and Tao congregations, among others, opposed the statue because they viewed the dragon as a holy and sacred symbol. However, despite the ethnic overtones of the dispute, as the chief of DAD suggested, the Dayak people stood with the ethnic Chinese.

Clearly demarcating interethnic relations in Singkawang is impossible. Following Hall, the positioning of the Hakka people occurred through a process in which Hakka people interacted differently with Malay and Dayak people; this relationship can be considered both a connection and a conflict. However, as Hoon concluded in *Chinese Identity in Post-Suharto Indonesia: Culture, Politics and Media* (2008), “anti-Chinese attitudes are still alive and well in Indonesia... Even though new space has been created by the policy of multiculturalism for the free expression of Chineseness, it does not necessarily guarantee ultimate acceptance of this minority by the non-Chinese majority” (Hoon 2008:182). Hoon’s viewpoint accurately portrays the positioning of ethnic Chinese people, including Hakka people, in Singkawang: although Chineseness in the form of the multicultural expression of the Cap Go Meh parade is allowed, the religious holiness and sacredness symbolized by the dragon statue is denied.

C. Chinese Muslims and Islam

During my first visit to Singkawang, Mr. Lin, the vice president of PITI, underlined the connection between Islam and Chinese people (interview with Mr. Lin, August 3, 2011, in Singkawang): “Who says that Islam does not belong to the Chinese?” This perspective reverses the prevailing notion that Chinese people are frequently at odds with Muslims because of their ways of life, culture, and eating habits. Those interviewed in Singkawang in this study believed that Islam was spread not by Arabs, but rather by Admiral Zheng He (also known as Sam Po) on his expedition to the South Seas in the fifteenth century (Huang, 2005:273). They therefore ascertained that Islam has a connection with Chinese

people (interview with Mr. Lin and Mr. Liu, August 3, 2011, in Singkawang). In the history of Indonesia, Chinese people played a critical role in introducing Indonesian societies to a network of Muslim people, ideas, and knowledge (Taylor 2005:148). The *Malay Annals* (*Sejarah Melayu*) of Semarang and Cheribon attributed the Islamization of Java principally to Chinese Muslims (de Casparis & Mabbett 1999: 331). Although the *Malay Annals*, according to de Casparis and Mabbett, cannot be acknowledged as evidence, the possibility of Chinese influence regarding the spread and growth of Islam in Indonesia cannot necessarily be ignored. However, notably, as Jean Gelman Taylor stated: “Linking the Chinese to Islam’s origins in the Malay-Indonesian world is a sensitive subject in Indonesia. Yet there is a persistent association between the Chinese and Islam, especially in traditions narrating Islam’s early beginnings in Java” (Taylor 2005:148). Two men with whom I interviewed stated that Islam was brought to Indonesia by Admiral Zheng He, although Islam in Java was actually reinforced by one of Zheng He’s principle assistants, Ma Huan (馬歡). Nevertheless, most major studies on the conversion and diffusion of Islam in early Indonesia have agreed that Islam had already taken root in Indonesia before the end of the thirteenth century through merchants of Arabic, Persian, and South Asian heritage, who brought Islam to Aceh in 1112, then Malacca, and afterwards to Java in the fourteenth century (Mak 2002:225). The earliest Muslim kingdom arose at Pasai, near present-day Lohkseumawe on the north coast of Aceh (de Casparis & Mabbett 1999:330).

Much evidence regarding the rise of Islam in Indonesia has not been verified, or implies a complicated mapping of Islam’s foundations. As Ricklefs stated, “The spread of Islam is one of the most significant, yet

obscure, processes of Indonesian history” (Ricklefs 1993:3). Furthermore, researchers have debated over when, why, and how conversions among Indonesians began, but have not come to a definite, conclusive consensus because of a dearth of useful records of Islamization (Ricklefs 1993:3). I do not therefore intend to address the question of where Indonesia’s Islam originated from; Taylor (2005) did not address this question either. Of concern to me is the connection between Chinese people and Islam, which is also testified to in Ricklefs’ observations. In general, two processes might have occurred: Indigenous Indonesians came into contact with Islam, and converted, or foreign Asians (e.g., Arabic, Indian, or Chinese people), who were already Muslims, settled permanently in an Indonesian area, intermarried, adopted local lifestyles, and eventually became Javanese or Malay. These two processes often occurred simultaneously (Ricklefs 1993:3; Lombard & Salmon 1993).

As certain scholars have indicated, Chinese culture influenced Islam in Indonesia, and this influence is particularly exemplified in old mosques. Notably, this influence derived from Peranakan Muslims, who were seen as a product of Islam in Indonesia (Taylor 2005:150). The term Peranakan originally meant “a person of mixed ancestry, where one ancestor was indigenous to the archipelago—identified as a Muslim of Chinese and Javanese ancestry” (Taylor 2005:150). The influence of Chinese culture can be delineated in the construction of old mosques, for instance, in their decor and furnishings (Lombard & Salmon 1993: 121–124), and their tiered roofs and carving finials (Taylor 2005:148). The literary contribution of Chinese Muslims is evident in their works and poems (Lombard & Salmon 1993:124-128).

Chinese Muslims played a role in the early expansion of Islam in

Indonesia. Although this role is historically evident, it has been neglected in the contemporary discourse of nation-building in Indonesia, and was particularly neglected during the Suharto era, when Chinese were seen as “alien” and “foreign,” and were thus socially excluded (Coppel 2005:1). For ethnic Chinese, involvement in religious organizations appeared to be the only path to engaging in social participation, social exposure, and self-fulfillment (Ong 2008:114). Among others, Buddhist and Confucian groups served as a “cultural haven for ethnic Chinese eager to guard their cultural identity” (Ong 2008:114). Moreover, it is well known that during more than 30 years of the Suharto regime, public discourse in Indonesia was dominated by Communist-phobia and China-phobia. All Indonesians were mandated to specify their affiliation to a state-sanctioned religious group (Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Balinese Hinduism, Buddhism, or Confucianism); it was thus crucial for Chinese people to belong to a religion to avoid being accused of harboring Communist sympathies, or even being Communists, who were assumed to be atheists (Ong 2008:97). Ethnic Chinese people were encouraged by the Indonesian government, more than other ethnic groups, to become Muslims on the grounds that assimilating and integrating into mainstream Indonesian society would bring acceptance and recognition (Tsao 2010:270). Studies on converts to Islam in Southeast Asia (e.g., Indonesia and Malaysia), have widely shown that intermarriage induces ethnic Chinese people to convert; discrimination and the unequal political and social positions held by ethnic Chinese people have been observed as the most essential reasons for conversion (The 1993; Jacobsen 2005; Tsao 2010; Huang 2005). Particularly in the 1980s, anti-Chinese sentiment and incidents in Java induced numerous Chinese people to convert (Keunm 1984,cited in The, 1993:76; Tsao 2010:269). Conversion helped the Chinese to be

recognized as *pribumi*, allowing them to avoid social discrimination and ethnic conflicts (Suryadinata 2007:265). However, embracing the majority religion did not prevent Chinese from being attacked and killed during the May 1998 riots (Tan 2000).

D. *Tong ngin* Who Convert to Islam: Hakka Muslims' Experiences of Conversion and the Construction of Their Identity

In numerous studies on the conversion of Chinese people to Islam in Indonesia and other areas in Southeast Asia, such as Singapore and Malaysia (e.g., Jacobsen 2005; Hoon 2008; Mak 2002; Suryandinata 2007; Tan 2000; Taylor 2005; The 1993; Huang 2005; Chiu 2011), ethnic Chinese people have been researched as if they constitute a unified whole; subethnic groups, such as Hakka, Teochiu, and Hainanese groups, have not been differentiated. However, in this study, I interviewed Hakka people who identified themselves as Chinese, and were perceived as Chinese by non-Chinese people. Determining whether Hakka and Chinese converts differ is critical. The conversion experiences and construction of identity among Hakka Muslims were the focus of this study. During my fieldwork, I conducted interviews with 14 men and 14 women, 23 of whom were Hakka, and 5 of whom were Teochiu. Although this study specifically investigated Hakka people, the inclusion of several Teochiu interviewees allowed differences between Hakka and Teochiu people to be delineated. The interviews were conducted to examine why the interviewees converted to Islam, how they experienced the conversion process, and finally, how their self-identifications changed before and after embracing Islam.

1. Conceptualizing conversion

In *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (1902), William James, an American philosopher and psychologist, defined conversion as a rebirth, an enlightenment, a religious experience, and an assurance. Conversion is a process in which a previously divided self, feeling inferior and unhappy, gradually or suddenly experiences unity, and feels superior and happy, through stable and consistent adherence to a religious reality (2001:235). No definite consensus has been determined among Western academics regarding the meaning and implication of religious conversion. In most situations, religious conversions enhance religious devotion. However, the majority of academic studies have defined conversion as a change from one religious belief to another, or from a non-religious background to strong religious dedication (Ullman 1989:5, cited in Lin 2003:549). Although academic concepts and definitions differ, all scholars have indicated that religious conversion does not always involve a different religion. Rather, it is a religious experience that involves dramatic internal change (Lin 2003:550). The concept of conversion has theological implications, and is typically related to Christian traditions in the context of Western history and culture. However, religious conversion is a general concept regarding a change in religious beliefs, and is not limited to Christianity. It is also worth noting that religious conversion has different implications in varying religious and social contexts; thus, religious conversion in different societies can imply different cultural meanings. For example, in a Western context, religious conversion can involve a person deciding to begin attending a traditional Christian church, or a different Christian church (which is arguably not an actual change in religious beliefs). Religious conversion

can also refer to the emotional experience of a person rediscovering Christ as their savior, and feeling reborn (Lin 2003:548). Certain Taiwanese scholars have sought to clarify the religious conversion experience in the Taiwanese context. Chou's *Investigation and Reconstruction of the Concept of Religious Conversion: Reflections on Religious Sociology in Taiwan*¹⁷ (「改宗」概念的考察與重建：一個台灣宗教社會學的反省；2006) is one example. As Bryant and Lamb indicated, conversion is understood differently in various religious and social contexts: Christianity calls conversion “metanoia,” Islam calls it “submission,” and Buddhism calls it “seeking refuge” (Bryant & Lamb 1999:6). In certain Islamic countries, such as Egypt, the law forbids religious conversion; in other societies, people undergo conversions for material benefits, such as food¹⁸ (Lamb & Bryant 1999:7). In sum, conversion is neither constant nor universal across religions (Lamb & Bryant 1999:6-7). In the context of Islam, Haifaa Jawad (2006) argued that there is no such word as “conversion” in the Arabic language, and that becoming a Muslim is about “submitting” to God through revelations (Jawad 2006:154). Thus, to understand conversion to Islam requires an understanding of the word “Islam” itself (Jawad 2006:154-155); in other words, pure worship and submission to the sacredness expressed in the life of the prophets. Therefore, the acceptance of Islam means “to take on the ancient, Abrahamic, way of worship, albeit given the specific detailed requirements reflected in the outward practice of the seal of the prophets, Muhammad” (Dutton 1999:153). From the Islamic viewpoint, conversion is “a remembrance and an affirmation of the primordial testimony to the Lordship of God” (Jawad 2006: 155).

¹⁷ Translated by me.

¹⁸ For instance, rice-bowl conversion (Tapp 2006: 289).

In addition to confirmation of the concept of conversion in the Islamic context, certain scholars have sought to identify archetypes among converts to Islam (Poston, 1992). Some have argued that converts to Islam have previously experienced difficulties and crises in life (Köse 1996, cited in van Nieuwkerk 2006:3). Some scholars have divided conversions into two groups: relational conversions and rational conversions. Relational conversions can be further classified into purposeful (typically referring to marriages between European men and Islamic women, and not necessarily involving religious transformations) and nonpurposeful (conversion as a result of Islamic connections through marriage, family, immigration, and travel) conversions. Rational conversions are not related to interpersonal contacts; rather, they result from an intellectual search (van Nieuwkerk 2006:3; Allievi 2006). Religious conversion is increasingly analyzed as a continual, ongoing process (van Nieuwkerk 2006:4). Rambo (1993) combined different disciplines and developed a dynamic, process-oriented conversion theory. Rambo and Farhadian (1999) believed that conversions can comprise all forms of religious change, and involve a seven-stage process: context (the overall environment in which the change takes place), crisis (a rupture in the taken-for-granted world), quest (in which a person actively seeks new methods of confronting their predicament), encounter (in which a searching person encounters an advocate of a new alternative), interaction (in which the advocates and potential converts intensively “negotiate” changes in thoughts, feelings, and actions), commitment (in which a person decides to devote their life to a new spiritual orientation), and consequences (the cumulative effects of various experiences, actions, and beliefs, which either facilitate or hinder conversion; Rambo & Farhadian 1999:23–24). In other words, from a Muslim perspective, conversions do

not occur at a single point in time like a marriage; rather, it is a lifelong process.

2. The embrace of Islam among Hakka people in Singkawang

It is generally believed that the majority of Chinese people convert to Islam to marry Muslims.¹⁹ Undoubtedly, in countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia, where Muslims constitute the majority, conversion is either required by state laws, Islamic laws, or political considerations (Jones et al. 2009). After my in-depth interviews with Chinese Muslims in Banda Aceh and Singkawang, the idea that intermarriage is the sole factor that motivates Chinese people to convert to Islam was revealed as an oversimplification of the life process of converts, as well as an oversimplification of the relationship between life experience and conversion to Islam. Chinese Muslims interviewed in this study had had many interactions with Muslims before their conversion. It was necessary to examine why some Chinese people converted to Islam by examining their life progressions. A study by The (1993) in Malaysia demonstrated that, in addition to intermarriage, other factors influenced Chinese people to convert, such as “to become friends with Malays after having been influenced by the qualities and teachings of Islam,” “attraction by the Muslim brotherhood and democracy in Islam,” “to obtain a job and a living,” “to become Malaysian citizens,” “to be accepted as a Malay according to the official definition of a Malay, and to enjoy the rights

¹⁹ In the 2011 Workshop for Indonesian Hakkas in which I participated and during my visit to Jakarta, I had the opportunity to speak with local Hakka people (mostly members of the Indonesian Hakka Association and the Indonesian Meizhou Association). According to informal interviews with five non-Islamic Hakka people concerning the conversion of Chinese people to Islam, intermarriages are believed to be the main reason for this religious conversion. Only one interviewee mentioned that some conversions are a result of the assistance and consolation offered by Islam at times of misfortune.

reserved by the government for the Malays” (The 1993:86). Certain fieldwork findings in this study yielded similar results to The. A desire for the assistance of Muslims in times of difficulty, an attraction to Muslims, and improved economic status, as indicated by certain female interviewees, were all determined to be reasons for conversion.

Although these reasons provide an understanding of why conversions occur, they only provide a glimpse, and cannot reveal whether perspectives on conversion vary because of differences in religious or ethnic backgrounds. The perceptions of non-Muslim Chinese people (Hakka and Teochiu) and non-Chinese Muslims (Malay) regarding Hakka converts to Islam were thus investigated.

a) Non-Muslim Chinese People

My first visit to Indonesia included participation in a workshop held by the Indonesian Hakka Association, the Indonesia Meizhou Association, and the Center for Southeast Asian Studies of National Chi Nan University, organized by National Kaohsiung Normal University on July 31, 2011 in Jakarta. I then went to Singkawang to conduct a prestudy. During this period, I initiated informal talks with six interviewees-four Hakka people, one Teochiu person, and one Hokkien person-in Jakarta and Singkawang, and queried them regarding their perception of Chinese converts. In general, the interviewees respected the converts’ choice to convert, and believed that everyone has the freedom to choose their religion. They also emphasized that interpersonal relationships depend on personality and character, rather than differences of religion. However, two interviewees stated that they could not stand the chanting broadcast by the mosques, because they found it disturbing. Moreover, they believed that Islam was an “autocratic” religion; in other words, Islam is a

religion that has many rules, including praying five times a day and Ramadan. One convert indicated that, before his conversion, he considered Islam to be such a religion.

Intermarriage with a Muslim was the reason most mentioned by non-Muslim Chinese people for a Hakka person to convert to Islam. Notably, only one Hokkien woman indicated that some people embraced Islam because Muslims receive spiritual and financial support from Muslims when they experience difficulties in life. Non-Muslim Chinese people also considered instrumentalism as a reason to convert: in the view of non-Muslim Chinese people, conversion to Islam results in the converts receiving improved treatment, such as increased respect for their positions in the public sector, as well as an increase in Indonesian friends and a decrease in Chinese friends. However, converts did not view their conversion as instrumental, but rather, accentuated the fact that conversion allowed them to “gain respect from *pribumi* Muslims.”

b) *Pribumi* Muslims

During fieldwork in Singkawang, I was told that Chinese Muslims are welcomed by *pribumi* Muslims, and that people esteem male Hakka Muslims in public sectors and places. I had a similar experience when my interpreter and I visited a mosque. On entering the mosque, a *pribumi* Muslim asked my interpreter why I was visiting and welcomed me to look around the mosque (field note, July 20, 2012). In the view of *pribumi* Muslims, Chinese convert for economic reasons (interview with Haji Asfan Arief, July 26, 2012, in Singkawang; informal talks with two male Muslims of Malay descent, July 28, 2012 in Singkawang); these economic reasons were verified by certain female converts interviewed in this study, who came from the rural areas in search of a higher quality of

life (interview with Fatimah, July 17, 2012; Gadimar, July 18, 2012; Vina, July 19, 2012, in Singkawang). Non-Chinese Muslims also mentioned that ethnic Chinese with drinking problems convert to Islam for reasons of self-improvement.

c) Hakka Muslims

The occupations and educational backgrounds of the Hakka converts were determined to elucidate their social context.²⁰ Certain converts improved their life circumstances after conversion—a few ran travel agencies and stores in downtown Singkawang; however, most of converts were wage workers or housewives, were poor, and lived in the Islamic villages of Roban and Sungai Rasau in Singkawang. Most of the converts had not received higher education. A few male interviewees had graduated from senior high school; one was a college student but did not finish his studies, and another had an associate degree (Diploma D3). Among the female interviewees, eight did not attend school, and five went to primary school, but three did not finish. Only one young girl reached junior secondary school, but did not finish.

The reasons for embracing Islam among the converts interviewed in this study were analyzed as endogenous and exogenous. Endogenous motivations for conversion were health problems, unfortunate incidents, the help and comfort provided by Islam and Muslims, dreams, revelations, destiny, persuasion from friends, and favorable impressions of Islam. Exogenous motivations for conversion were mainly adoption and intermarriage.

(1) Endogenous conversions were classified based on which of the

²⁰ See Appendix for more details.

following scenarios they were influenced by:

(a) Support and comfort from Islam and its believers after experiencing health problems or other unfortunate events. Awi, currently 79 years old, was born in 1934 and converted in 2010. Awi was sent to the hospital after an injury to his right leg. Despite the seriousness of his injury, he was neglected by doctors, and lay in a hospital bed for 3 days, during which time he dreamed that God treated him, and told him that he would recover in 2 or 3 days. His wound healed after the application of ointment to the axe wound. However, it was not until 2 or 3 years later that he met an imam and became a Muslim. When Awi could not continue working as a fisherman after his injury, and experienced financial hardship, he received donations from Muslims. His poverty was evidenced by the fact that the walls of his house are completely bare; the only new item in his house is the Koran, which he and his wife obtained after their conversion. Awi and his wife received donations every 3 months, in the amount of Rp 2-3 million, and also received sporadic donations in amounts ranging from Rp 300,000 to Rp 1 million. In addition to money, Awi received gifts, such as rice and bicycles. Awi's wife, Wulan (born in 1937), was extremely grateful for the help they received from fellow Muslims (interview with Awi and Wulan, August 4, 2011, in Singkawang). Limse (born in 1939) became a Muslim in 2001. His wife passed away in 1983 and was buried in a Chinese graveyard. However, her body was dug up because he did not pay the fees, which saddened him greatly. Subsequently, his Muslim friends cared for him and helped to find a spot for his wife's body in an Islamic graveyard. He is currently 74 years old, and must still work for a living, but his economic situation is unstable because of his job situation, and he currently finds

shelter with the help of his Islamic friends (interview with Limse, July 17, 2012, in Singkawang). Asri (currently 59 years old, born in 1954) and her husband had an experience similar to Awi. Her husband lost his job after they were married, and an elderly friend of the family helped him to find work and provided assistance in many ways. He also showed the couple the Koran, influencing their conversion to Islam. The couple is not wealthy, and they currently live in a home provided for free by a Malay Muslim. The house is extremely small, and Asri and her husband have no possessions. Asri has a wonderful impression of Islam and Muslims because of the help she has received (interview with Asri, July 23, 2012, in Singkawang). Zaqi (26 years old, born in 1987) is a young man from Pontianak, who was prone to fainting because of a brain tumor. An old man read the Islamic teachings to him, from which he took deep physical comfort. Zaqi became a Muslim in 2011. The power of Islam spared him from surgery, and he was able to treat his condition with medication. He is dedicated to Islam because it calms his mind. However, because he is from a devout Christian family, his parents opposed his conversion to Islam. In particular, his mother believed that Jesus Christ had cured her son, not Allah (interview with Zaqi, July 20, 2012, in Singkawang).

(b) Dreams, revelations, and destiny

Denny (40 years old, born in 1973) did not convert to get married, but became a Muslim because of a dream he had in 1989. He did not know why, but in 1994 he started to have the ability to tell fortunes; he could read faces, and this seemed to be a gift inherited from his grandfather. He had the same dream again in 2000, when he was divorcing his wife. From the dream, he knew that it was his destiny to convert to Islam, but he resisted for another 3 years before converting on

September 23, 2003. He met his current wife in 2004, and they were married in 2005. Denny believed that a heavenly message was delivered to him in his dream (interview with Denny, August 3, 2011 and July 18, 2012, in Singkawang). Ari (48 years old, born in 1965) followed the path of his parents, who converted to Islam. However, Ari was not particularly religious. He drank, ate pork, and rarely visited mosques. He converted to Islam in 2005, when he received a message from the heavens (interview with Ari, August 3, 2011, and July 18, 2012, in Singkawang). Bagus (49 years old, born in 1964) had a similar experience, and became a Muslim in 1980 after he received a heavenly message (interview with Bagus, August 3, 2011, in Singkawang). Hasan (45 years old, born in 1968) worked in the forests of Kuching, Malaysia. One day he had a dream in which a man dressed in white told him to convert to Islam because it would improve his life. Hasan believed this man in white to be Muhammad. However, because there was no mosque where he worked, he waited until his return to Indonesia and visited a mosque near his home. At that mosque, he was reunited with a woman who used to be his classmate, and they soon married. To Hasan, this was destined to happen (interview with Hasan, July 17, 2012, in Singkawang). Anton (26 years old, born in 1987) fainted in the street at the age of 17. In his dream, a man dressed in white, but with a face that could not be clearly seen, held him up and told him that he would get well just by reading the Koran. However, Anton rejected the idea, because he did not like the regulations associated with Islam. However, upon his conversion to Islam, he found it a positive experience (interview with Anton, July 19, 2012, in Singkawang).

(c) Persuasion by friends

Fajar (34 years old, born in 1979), became a Muslim at the age of 16 (in 1996). He decided to convert because of the goodness he saw in his Muslim friends, and he liked the teachings of Islam (interview with Fajar, July 23, 2012, in Singkawang). At his home, I observed a picture of a pilgrim visiting Mecca on his wall, and Fajar told me that he intended to make the pilgrimage, which evidenced his devotion to Islam.

(d) Good impressions of Islam

Haji Aman, currently the Chairman of PITI, converted to Islam in 1987. He has been a Muslim for 25 years, and has performed the pilgrimage to Mecca, thus, he is called "Haji." His wife is a Madurese Muslim who speaks Hakka; however, Haji Aman converted before they were married, because he thought highly of Islam and believed it to be a righteous religion (interview with Haji Aman, August 3, 2011, in Singkawang).

(2) Motivations for exogenous conversions

(a) Adoption

Two Chinese women, Nanda and Elina, became Muslims because they were adopted by Muslims (interview with Nanda, July 18, 2012 and Elina, July 27, 2012, in Singkawang).

(b) Interethnic marriage

Among the 14 male interviewees, 10 converted to Islam of their own will, and four converted because of their marriages to Muslims. By contrast, all 14 female interviewees converted to marry Muslims. However, while Erika (41 years old, born in 1972) converted to marry, her relationship with Islamic teachings began before her marriage, and she felt that the religion was attractive (interview with Erika, July 20, 2012, in

Singkawang). Another female interviewee, Fatimah, also converted to marry a Muslim, although she stated that: “If I marry a local Chinese in my countryside hometown, I will be stuck in the countryside. I do not want this.” She left her village to work for relatives, and met her husband, a public servant (interview with Fatimah, July 17, 2012, in Singkawang). One woman, Sutinah, believed that she was destined to marry a Muslim (interview with Sutinah, July 25, 2012, in Singkawang). Other female interviewees did not offer particular perspectives regarding their conversion to Islam, and women who converted for exogenous reasons (i.e., to get married) were generally observed to be less devoted to Islam than people who converted for endogenous reasons. For example, most of the women did not follow a strict dress code or wear the hijab, even when they met me for interviews, and reserved wearing the hijab strictly for formal occasions. Moreover, most did not pray five times a day, and had no intention to make the pilgrimage to Mecca. Even after decades of Muslim life, they did not strongly adhere to Islam. Gadimar (63 years old, born in 1950) divorced her husband, who had an affair when their child was still young. A Muslim man can marry up to four wives, but the first wife must agree to this, and because Gadimar did not agree, they were divorced. Moreover, her husband was not a man that took care of his family and children. These circumstances contributed to her bitterness regarding Islam. Although her ID card says she is a Muslim, she no longer adheres to any Islamic teachings (interview with Gadimar, July 18, 2012, in Singkawang).

Converts naturally apply self-persuasion in their decision to convert, outlining the advantages of Islam and comparing these advantages with those of other religions. For example, the vice president of PITI, Mr. Lin,

believed that “the best thing about Islam is the challenges bestowed by God on us. Everybody has different challenges, and this is why we believe in him. I know whatever we do, it is because of God,” and that “The best thing about Islam is that it brings different feelings to each person. The Hakkas did not simply enter the world of Islam. We respect each other. All Muslims in the world are brothers and sisters” (interview with Mr. Lin, August 3, 2011, in Singkawang).

3. Road to conversion

Most converts faced difficulty when making their family accept their decision to marry Muslims. Families responded by saying “we are Chinese,” and that “we Chinese” do not marry “the *fan ngin*,” or barbarians. In Singkawang, the category of “Chinese” stands in opposition to “Malay,” “Javanese,” “Bada,” and “Buginese.” Among the 28 interviewees, 23 married Malay people, three married Javanese people, one married a Bada person, and one married a Buginese person. Chinese people perceive themselves to be “superior” to *fan ngin*²¹ both culturally and economically, and consequently, oppose interethnic marriage. One female Hakka Muslim stated that her father emphasized marrying another Chinese when she was a child, but after she married a Muslim, her father stopped having any relationship with her for over 10 years. A male Hakka Muslim’s family even said, “Why are you so stupid? There are so many Chinese! Why would you deliberately marry a Muslim? Moreover, you have to convert to their religion” (interview with Fatur, July 19, 2012; Fajar reported the same situation, July 23, 2012, in Singkawang). Notably, one female Hakka Muslim mentioned that her parents dealt with their

²¹ See Part 4 of this section for discussion.

children's marriage to Muslims differently. When she was a young woman and had made the decision to marry a Muslim, her parents did not say anything, because "girls are destined to marry. It's your fate to marry someone who is predetermined in your life." However, her parents opposed her brother marrying a Muslim (interview with Gadimar, July 18, 2012, in Singkawang). For those whose parents or other family members were against marrying Muslims, the boundary that demarcates races, ethnicities, religions, and classes cannot be crossed. In their view, once this line is transgressed, everything related to Chinese and Chineseness is lost.

Family members of the interviewees who opposed conversions stated that Chinese people are superior to other peoples, and that Chinese should marry Chinese to maintain the boundaries that separate ethnicities and cultures. For instance, Gadimar's family opposed her brother marrying a Muslim because it implied his desire to abandon his Chinese cultural background. Mr. Lin's mother opposed his conversion because it was "disrespectful to their forefathers" (interview with Mr. Lin, August 3, 2011, in Singkawang). He said to his mother, "If converting to Islam is disrespectful to our ancestors, is not the conversion to Christianity equally disrespectful? And it means forgetting about our ancestors? This should not be the case." Mr. Lin emphasized, "My religion says you must love your mother because your heaven is under her feet. Christianity does not say this" (interview with Mr. Lin, August 3, 2011, in Singkawang).

4. Negotiating identity between ethnicity and religion: *Tong ngin* who convert to Islam

Historically, socially, and politically, Hakka people in Southeast Asia have long been suppressed by local nationalism, and this has limited

the integrity of Chinese people as an ethnic group. Consequently, scholars such as Hsiao have argued that the Hakka in Southeast Asia have not formed self-awareness as an ethnic group, but have only perceptions of difference (Hsiao et al. 2007:569). Despite these structural constraints, the Hakka identity of the Hakka people in Southeast Asia did not completely vanish, but survived in a transformed manner. This is most noticeable in the organization of social clubs and associations (Hsiao et al. 2007:566). Hsiao and Lim suggested that Hakka groups claim to care about Hakka culture, but do little regarding promotion of Hakka culture and awareness, facilitating the near-disappearance of the Hakka language in these regions. Thus, Hakka people who do not speak the Hakka language operate Hakka clubs and associations. Despite the establishment of these organizations by Hakka people, the new generation has no desire to prioritize cultural revival and identity construction. Perhaps such concerns are not contemporary, or are restricted by the political environment of the country, and thus, members of the new generation are unwilling to emphasize their cultural identification as Hakka people (Hsiao & Lim 2007:22). Studies on Hakka organizations in Southeast Asia have defined Hakka institutions by the presence of the Hakka people as an ethnic group in society. If Hakka awareness is defined as Hakka identity, Hakka people can be said to lack self-identity as a collective group. Although Hakka associations remain venues for social gatherings and activities, Hakka identity and awareness are limited in Southeast Asia, and can only be either semiopenly displayed in community-based Hakka clubs, or remain in the private domain of family lives (Hsiao & Lim 2007:23). Hakka identity and Hakka personality in most Southeast Asian countries depend on the social contexts specific to local societies (Hsiao et al. 2007:566). Hoon made observations similar to those of Hsiao et al. regarding the sense of

identity among Indonesian-Chinese people, although his observations were not restricted to the Hakka. He believed that the Chineseness of Indonesian-Chinese people was influenced by locality or the effect of local experiences. Therefore, the regional diversity of Indonesia contributes to differences in the identity of Indonesian-Chinese people (Hoon 2008:57).

The discussion of Hakka identity in Southeast Asia must consider the heterogeneity that different local social contexts produce, as well as the segmentation of identity, diversity, and context under local influence. In the early days, identification with a dialect-centered social group constituted Hakka identity in Southeast Asia as Mak (1985) suggested, because members spoke similar dialects. Local languages or dialects are symbolic of a group's differentiation from others (Lim & Li 2006: 215-216). In the process of immigrating to Southeast Asia, overseas Chinese people have developed a generic sense of identity, resulting from widespread Chinese nationalism, the impact of political turmoil, and cultural changes in China in the 1910s regarding the language and education of overseas Chinese (Lim & Li 2006:219-227). According to my observations in Indonesia, "Chinese" and *tong ngin* (the Hakka term for Chinese, also "people of the Tang Dynasty") were the most common terms Hakka people used to describe themselves, and are terms collectively recognized by ethnic Chinese people. However, in relation to ethnic Chinese speakers of different dialects, they described themselves as Hakka. Depending on context, overseas Chinese of different subethnic groups interact by referring to the dialects they speak; thus, the segmentation of identity and the development of contextual ethnic characteristics is promoted, as suggested by scholars specializing in

Southeast Asian Chinese studies and Hakka culture in Taiwan and Southeast Asia (Hsiao et al. 2007; Lim & Li 2006).

Hakka converts to Islam in Singkawang still consider themselves *tong ngin*, which is the highest level of their self-ascription. They refer to Malay and Dayak people, who constitute the other two major ethnic groups in Singkawang and other parts of West Kalimantan, as *fan ngin* and *lo-â-kia* (嘮阿仔, uplanders), respectively. The Hakka identity is used when dealing with Chinese speakers of other dialects (e.g., Teochiu and Hainanese). Because Malay people are mostly distinguished by their identification with Islam, the ethnic identity of Chinese Muslims changes with their religious conversion or intermarriage with Malay people. Thus, Chinese Muslims refer to themselves as *fan ngin* after conversion. Both religions and interethnic marriages are essential factors in the construction of Hakka identity in Southeast Asia. Languages, festival celebrations, and dietary choices, are also vehicles by which the converted choose to express their ethnic and religious identities. The following section offers an analysis of the identity of converted Chinese, regarding (a) self-ascription and categorization, (b) *tong ngin*, *fan ngin*, and *tong ngin* who convert to Islam, and (c) cultural practices.

a) Self-ascription and categorization

Chinese people in Singkawang identify first and foremost as *tong ngin*, and secondly as Hakka or Teochiu. “Chinese” therefore served as an overarching self-identification for those interviewed in this study.

In contrast to their self-identification as *tong ngin*, Chinese people referred to Malay, Buginese, and Javanese people as *fan ngin* in Hakka, literally “barbarians or uncivilized people,” which has a derogatory

meaning. However, according to my observations, this term was regarded as a normal label for the racialized Other, and interviewees were either unaware of its negative connotations, or did not intend to deride the *pribumi*. I heard this term often during fieldwork conversations among Chinese, and a Chinese man of Teochiu heritage who married a Malay woman even called his wife *fan po* (barbarian woman; 番婆) when he talked to his friends in Hakka. Hoon (2008) reported similar findings in Jakarta.

Since the establishment of the early settlements of the eighteenth century, the Dayak and Chinese people have had an affinity; only Chinese men were allowed to emigrate, and therefore, they married local Dayak women. Chinese people referred to Dayak people as *lo-â-kia*. In talks with Hakka and Teochiu Chinese people, I discovered that they believed that Dayak people get along well with Chinese, and often agree during controversies; for example, in the dragon statue controversy, Dayak people supported the Chinese. In the early years of Chinese settlements in West Kalimantan, it was widely held that Chinese people married Dayak people in early immigration because only males migrated without any co-ethnic females' accompanying. From the perspective of Chinese people, Dayak people are almost the same as Chinese regarding personality (interview with Mr. Huang, July 28, 2012, in Singkawang). Furthermore, Dayak people have similar shamanic beliefs to Chinese people (Chan 2009:139-140).

Notably, *fan ngin* in Singkawang call Chinese *Cina basand*. *Cina* was the official term for Chinese during Suharto's New Order, and was not only derogatory, but also maintained the "Otherness" of Chinese, implying that they were foreign to Indonesia (Hoon 2008:162). "Basand"

means “ownership by force.” Putting these two words together connotes “Chinese occupiers.”²² From this labeling, the perception of ethnic Chinese people among *pribumi* can be perceived.

b) *Tong ngin*, *fan ngin*, and *tong ngin* who convert to Islam

Scholars have determined that Hakka identity in Southeast Asia changes according to local contexts; this valuable insight provides an essential perspective for understanding Hakka identity in Southeast Asia, and in particular, for understanding ethnic identity when ethnic and religious factors intertwine. Considering the Hakka and Teochiu Chinese people who converted to Islam as an example, three possible self-identifications exist: *tong ngin*, *fan ngin*, and *tong ngin* who convert to Islam. Moreover, self-identification and the identification of a particular group by others can differ.

Mak’s study, “Islamic Conversion and Ethnic Relations” (2002: 245–276), explored ethnic relations between Chinese Islam converts and Malay Muslims in Singapore. In investigating how Chinese converts negotiated their identity, Mak emphasized that they negotiate simultaneously for other identities with the two participating groups: their own community, and the recipient community (Mak 2002:251). If converts obtain support from their own community, they are motivated to maintain their ethnic identity. However, if conversion becomes a bitter experience when they reveal to their family that they intend to convert, they are hesitant or unwilling to play an integrative role between the two communities. In summary, Mak concluded that “in the Malayo-Islamic world, Chinese converts have been ambivalent about their ethnic identity

²² According to my interpreter, Ms. Gu, during fieldwork in 2012.

after conversion. They are ambivalent because the Malays have made Islam a crucial ethnic identifier, thus, they are caught between ethnicity and religion” (Mak 2002:251–252).

(1) *Tong ngin*

All converts identified themselves foremost as *tong ngin*; however, some thought they were *tong ngin* despite their conversion to Islam, and others believed that after conversion and intermarriage with Muslims, they had become *fan ngin*. Only one interviewee considered himself, and was considered by others, to be *tong ngin* (interview with Ibrahim, July 19, 2012, in Singkawang). The other three Hakka Muslims (Nanda, Hasan, and Gadimar) believed themselves to be *tong ngin*, but were not considered *tong ngin* by others. Nanda followed Islamic dietary customs and considered herself Chinese, but others considered her to be a Muslim, and not Chinese (interview with Nanda, July 18, 2012, in Singkawang). Gadimar still thinks she is Chinese; however, her daughter argued that she should give up her identity as Chinese because she is now a Muslim (interview with Gadimar, July 18, 2012, in Singkawang).

All the converts regarded themselves as *tong ngin*, and this was their highest level of identification. They claimed to be Hakka only when I made further inquiries regarding whether they were Hakka or Teochiu. However, when asked whether they knew where their ancestors came from, most converts had no idea. One male interviewee said Guangzhou (廣州), one female respondent said Guangdong Huilai (廣東惠來), one said Hepo (河婆), and one said Hokkien (福建).²³ One interviewee said China, one said Indonesia, one said Kalimantan, and three said

²³ I believe she was mistaken here; because she is *Teochiu-ngin* (潮州人), her ancestors should have come from the eastern part of Guangdong, rather than Fujian.

Singkawang. The remaining interviewees had no idea. Regarding when their ancestors or fathers came to Kalimantan or Singkawang, almost none could answer. Even though their fathers had told them, they could not recall the details. I was surprised by their lack of knowledge regarding their ancestors, based on my experience in Taiwan. According to my interpreter, Ms. Gu, families in Singkawang do not maintain genealogies (as in Taiwan), and this could be the reason. However, in my view, the Chinese policies under Suharto's administration constitute an external factor contributing to this phenomenon.

(2) *Fan ngin*

Six women (Winda, Diah, Poppy, Asri, Elise, and Sutinah) and three men (Anton, Rahmat, and Jacky) identified themselves as *tong ngin* before conversion and marriage, and *fan ngin* afterwards. In particular, the women said: "you are *fan ngin* because you marry them." However, although they have changed their ethnic affiliation, they continue to communicate with their original family in the Hakka language. They also speak with street vendors and market peddlers in Hakka to obtain cheaper prices. One female convert stated that she loved to be seen as Malay, because it made her feel safer than being a *tong ngin*. She was also categorized as *fan ngin* by her friends (interview with Poppy, July 20, 2012, in Singkawang), as was Rahmat. However, one female and one male convert continued to be considered *tong ngin*.

(3) *Tong ngin* who convert to Islam

Four interviewees perceived themselves to be *tong ngin* who had converted to Islam. Many interviewees aligned their ethnic identity with their religion; however, these four interviewees maintained an ethnic

identity as *tong ngin* while emphasizing their religion (interview with Ari, July 17, 2012; Zaqi, July 20, 2012; Erika, July 20, 2012; and Elina, July 27, 2012, in Singkawang). Erika's elder sister argued that she was a *fan ngin*, but Erika told her sister that there are many Chinese people in China who are also Muslims (interview with Erika, July 20, 2012, in Singkawang).

c) Converts' cultural practices

(1) Use of language

Converts mainly spoke the Indonesian language at home (Gadimar, Winda, Poppy, Erika), but switched to the Hakka language when communicating with their birth families. Two female converts (interview with Diah, Vina, Fatur, July 19, 2012, in Singkawang) and one male convert (interview with Fatur, July 19, 2012, in Singkawang) indicated that they used the Hakka language when shopping or in the grocery markets, to obtain cheaper prices. Only one male interviewee strictly asked his children to speak the Hakka language (interview with Bagus, August 3, 2011, in Singkawang). Although one male interviewee spoke with his children in Indonesian, he continued to teach them Hakka, as he still considered himself to be Chinese (Fatur).

(2) Festival celebrations

Generally speaking, converts did not celebrate Chinese holidays. However, most brought their spouses and children to visit friends and family members during Chinese New Year, the Dragon Boat Festival, and the Mid-Autumn Festival (Fatimah, Diah, Vina, Fatur, Ibrahim, Jacky, Fajar, and Sutinah). They do not eat Chinese meals, but do eat cakes during Chinese celebrations. Meanwhile, family members of the converts

visit the converts during Islamic holidays. In other words, the Muslims enjoy the Chinese holidays and the Chinese enjoy the Islamic holidays. Singkawang attracts a large number of tourists for the Cap Go Meh parade, and some converts attend the parade themselves (Ari, Rahmat, Poppy, and Erika) or bring their children with them. Two interviewed converts explained the Cap Go Meh story and other Chinese celebrations to their children. However, the majority of the interviewees did not, and even if they wanted to, they felt their children were not interested. Few converts went to see the Cap Go Meh parade because they felt it was a noisy activity (Nanda), in stark contrast with the quiet of the Islamic New Year. Bagus is a PITI member and a devout Muslim, but remains active in local Chinese affairs. During my fieldwork, the birthday of Thai Pak Kung was being celebrated in Pemangkat (邦嘎), a city neighboring Singkawang, and Bagus went to assist. His example illustrated the overlap between religious identity and ethnic identity: his original ethnic culture was not eliminated by his conversion to Islam.

(3) Diet

The prohibition of pork in Islam constitutes the most substantial change to converts. Some people did not eat much pork or were Buddhist or vegetarian; for these people, conversion did not considerably affect their diet (interview with Fatur, July 19, 2012, in Singkawang). One interviewed woman said she never ate pork (interview with Poppy, July 20, 2012, in Singkawang). However, some converts found it difficult to adjust to the Islamic diet. One female Hakka Muslim was forced to implement dietary changes after she married a Muslim (interview with Fatimah, July 17, 2012, in Singkawang). The converts in this study mostly ate *fan ngin* food (interview with Winda and

Diah, July 19, 2012; Poppy, July 20, 2012, in Singkawang), but also consumed Chinese food without pork (interview with Hasan, July 17, 2012, in Singkawang).

5. A closing remark

In this section, the concept of conversion is addressed, and the main parts of this study, including the motivations and experiences, and identity construction of the interviewees, are reviewed. In particular, whether there were differences in conversion between Hakka and Chinese converts and between Hakka and Teochiu converts was determined.

To offer a tentative conclusion,²⁴ differences between Hakka and Chinese converts cannot be rendered visible: Roban and Sungai Rasau, the villages where nearly all the interviewees lived, are Islamic. First, the interviewees are married to Muslims, and have lived with their Muslim neighbors for a long time. Most live world dominated by Islam. For instance, in their homes, I rarely saw anything that symbolized Chineseness, but rather Islam. In addition, they live in poor conditions, and class played a major role in their experience of conversion; some were supported financially by Muslims. Moreover, as seen from their cultural practices, and illustrated by their use of language, festival celebrations, and diet, it is clear that the majority of the interviewees lived a more Islamic way of life. Finally, as illustrated in their self-identifications, both Hakka and Teochiu interviewees identified themselves as ethnic Chinese *tong ngin*.

²⁴ This research on Hakka conversion to Islam in Indonesia is ongoing; I, therefore, mark this as a temporary conclusion.

E. Conclusion

This study investigated Hakka converts to Islam in Singkawang. Hakka converts to Islam challenge the strict dichotomy of ethnic groups and religions, and depart from the stereotype that Chinese believe in Buddhism or Confucianism, and Indonesia natives believe in Islam. The reasons for converting, experiences, and processes of the converts' conversion to Islam were delineated, and an understanding of identity construction among Hakka Muslims was established. Besides identifying as *tong ngin*, Hakka Muslims can also consider themselves *tong ngin* who have converted to Islam, or *fan ngin*, as a result of their religious and marriage choices.

The interviewees spoke the Hakka language; however, most knew little regarding where their ancestors came from. Domiciled in Indonesia, and surrounded by diverse ethnic groups, the main identity for these Hakka converts was *tong ngin*. This identity was their highest level of self-ascription, and was used when dealing with other ethnic groups. Only when they were required to differentiate themselves from other *tong ngin* did they refer to dialect-based labels, such as Hakka and Teochiu. This approach was consistent with the hierarchy of identity established by Hsiao et al. (2007) to describe identification among Hakka people in Southeast Asia. *Fan ngin* contrasts with *tong ngin*, and some of those researched in this study changed their self-identification because they had married to *fan ngin* and had converted to Islam, perceived as a religion of Indonesian natives. Some male and female converts referred to themselves as *fan ngin* after conversion. However, the self-identification of the interviewees did not always accord with how they were identified by others; some were still perceived as *tong ngin*, whereas others were

considered *fan ngin*. In addition, a number of the Hakka Muslims referred to themselves as *tong ngin* who had converted to Islam,” a label that incorporated both their religious beliefs and ethnic identity. It is worth noting that one interviewee came from a Christian family, where the parents emphasized Christian values and rarely discussed Chinese (Hakka) culture. The experience of this interviewee demonstrated that religious identity overrides ethnic identity in self-identification, and that self-identification is grounded in religious beliefs. Some converts did not completely abandon their original culture, and the experience of the interviewees indicated that (Chinese) culture and (the Islamic) religion were not necessarily opposed to each other. Certain practices bridged the gap between Islamic culture and Hakka culture: bringing Muslim spouses and children to festival activities organized by their birth families, celebrating Islamic holidays with the members of their birth families, and passing the Chinese cultural heritage to the next generation.

Singkawang is a majority-Hakka, majority-Chinese Indonesian city. The Gap Go Meh parade and the dragon statue in the city center testify to the ethnic diversity of the local community. Malay people in Singkawang are more involved in the Gap Go Meh parade than their peers in Pontianak are, and Dayak and Malay spirits are included in the Chinese *tatung* parade; thus, the ceremony integrates spiritual elements from different ethnic cultures. Although the dispute over the dragon statue appeared to constitute a Muslim objection to the establishment of a public Chinese symbol, the opponents were members of FPI, an extremist Muslim organization from Jakarta. Dayak people believed that the FPI deliberately framed the story as an ethnic concern. Malay Muslims, Chinese people, and Hakka Muslims thought the location was

inappropriate because it endangered motorists. Moreover, because of the sacred status of the dragon, they believed that the statue belonged in a temple, not at an intersection. This controversy elucidated dynamics among ethnic groups in Singkawang. The “Chineseness” of the dragon statue was not a concern for the majority of the interviewees; however, they were concerned about the location of the statue. Therefore, the debate over the dragon statue must be compared with that over the establishment of the Dayak statue at another intersection to accurately depict the interethnic relationships in Singkawang.

Finally, this study is an exploratory research project. The initial findings suggest that, compared with other Chinese groups, Hakka people retain a high level of cultural autonomy within their social and historical context, and hence, are referred to as “Chinese among the Chinese.” However, the conversion of some Hakka people to Islam exhibits internal heterogeneity among the Hakka population. The experiences of Hakka Muslims break the dichotomous opposition in which Chinese adhere to Buddhism, and *fan ngin* adhere to Islam. Although it remained unclear whether Hakka people experienced conversion differently to other ethnic Chinese people, the experience of the Hakka people in this study illustrated the adaptation to a local social and ethnic environment of a particular group of Hakka people. This illustration of Hakka diversity in Southeast Asia is a prompt to reevaluate the meaning and conceptualization of local Hakka identities. To further understand the social positioning of Hakka people in Singkawang, ethnic relationships warrant further investigation.

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Appendix

Name	Gender	Age/year of birth	Occupation	Education	Ethnic identity	Marital status	Spouse's ethnicity	Age/year of conversion	Religious belief before conversion
Limse	Male	74/1939	Driver before, currently looking for a job	SD ²⁸	Hakka	Widower	Hakka	62/2001	Buddhist
Hasan	Male	45/1968	Selling lottery tickets	SMA ²⁹	Teochiu	Married	Malay		
Ari	Male	48/1965	Wage worker	SMP ³⁰	Hakka	Married		Since childhood	
Rahmat	Male	42/1971	Agency for issuing documents	SMA	Hakka	Married	Malay	35/2006	Protestant
Fatur	Male	43/1970	Construction worker	SD	Hakka	Married	Buginese and Malayu	27/1997	Buddhist
Ibrahim	Male	53/1960	Printer	SMP	Hakka	Married	Java	28/1988	Protestant
Jacky	Male	29/1984	Fisherman	SD	Hakka	Married	Malay	23/2007	Buddhist
Anton	Male	26/1987	Auto worker	SMA, D3	Hakka	Single			Buddhist, Catholic
Zaqi	Male	26/1987	Singer	College (not completed)	Hakka	Single		24/2011	Protestant
Fajar	Male	34/1979	Running a grocery store	SD (not completed)	Hakka	Married	Bada	17/1996	Buddhist
Seto	Male		Running a noodle store		Hakka	Married	Madurese		
Denny	Male		Travel agent		Teochiu	Married			
Bagus	Male				Hakka	Married			
Awi	Male	79/1934	Wage worker		Hakka	Married	Hakka	76/2010	Christian
Fatimah	Female	56/1957	Housewife	Did not go to school	Hakka	Married			
Gadimar	Female	63/1950	Nanny	5 th grade of SD		Divorced			

²⁸ Sekolah dasar, primary school.

²⁹ Sekolah menengah atas, senior secondary school.

³⁰ Sekolah menengah pertama, junior secondary school.

Nanda	Female	65/1948	Wage worker	4 th grade of SD	Hakka	Divorced			
Winda	Female	62/1951	Maid	Did not go to school	Hakka	Widow	Java	24/1977	Buddhist
Diah	Female	69/1944		Did not go to school	Hakka	Married	Malay	Over 40 years	Buddhist
Vina	Female	53/1960	Wage worker	Did not go to school	Teochiu	Married	Buginese	28	Buddhist
Poppy	Female	49/1964	Running a grocery store	SD	Teochiu	Married	Mixed heritage of Malay and Chinese	24/1988	Buddhist
Intan	Female	59/1954	Housewife	Did not go to school	Teochiu	Married	Malay	16/1970	Buddhist
Erika	Female	41/1972	Housewife	SD	Hakka	Married	Java	19/1991	
Asri	Female	59/1954	Farmer	Did not go to school	Hakka	Widow	Hakka	Over 20 years	Buddhist
Elise	Female	26/1987	Selling ice	2 nd grade of SMB	Hakka	Married	Malay	21/2008	Protestant
Sutinah	Female	76/1938	Farming	Did not go to school	Hakka	Widow	Malay	Over 50 years	
Elina	Female	46/1967	Housewife	3 rd grade of SD	Hakka	Married	Malay	Since childhood	
Wulan	Female	77/1937	Housewife						