Independent refugee youth in waiting

Social navigations while in transit in Indonesia

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CHAPTER SIX

Being Good to Acquaintances, Opening the Heart to Friends

Navigating Relationships with Indonesian Locals

In this chapter, I will illustrate various forms of representational strategies and other moves that young people engage in, such as learning Bahasa Indonesian and other local languages, as part of their social navigations to develop harmonious relationships with Indonesian locals, in order to secure a safe and conflict-free time while in transit. This chapter will demonstrate how youth mitigate their physical appearance, religious identity, attitudes, and language skills to maintain harmonious relationships with Indonesian locals according to the form of social connection they wish to have. While in transit, young people engage in varied and multi-layered social connections: they meet random people on the street, they become acquainted with their local neighbors, they communicate with immigration officers, and they also make friends with locals they trust. In this chapter, I argue that harmonious relationships between locals and independent refugee youth are a two-way process; they are not only the result of local people's willingness to welcome refugees, but are also the outcome of young people's determination to have such good relationships. Moreover, I emphasize that young people's social navigations reflect their understanding of Indonesian social norms and culture.

One fine day in early June 2016, I had a brunch appointment with Faiz at a mall in southern Jakarta. I had met Faiz when I had visited a CWS shelter back in 2015 and we had been keeping in contact through social media since. After he turned 18 years old, he moved with some other Hazara boys into a rented room in Jakarta. Faiz came to the brunch with a Hazara friend, also an independent boy, who had just arrived in Jakarta. I observed how his fashion choice had changed dramatically from his style the year

before. He had dyed his hair bright blonde and was wearing an Adidas headband, a short-sleeved shirt, skinny fitting jeans, and pointy black leather shoes. When I asked about his new fashion style, he said:

> I really like K-Pop, so I try to dress up in Korean style. You see, I go by "Kim Jae Soo" on Facebook now. When I chat [online] with Indonesian friends, I told them I am Korean. I went to several K-Pop festivals… last time was in Mangga Dua and Lotte Avenue. You know… K-Pop is huge here. I easily got friends if I introduced myself as Korean. […] My Bahasa Indonesia is improving… I exchange information about festivals with them… (casual conversation, June 2, 2016).

During my fieldwork, I frequently heard similar stories, where independent youth tell Indonesian locals that they are international exchange students, tourists, or expats. This representational strategy is one of the youths' maneuvers to navigate Indonesian locals' perceptions of the refugee community in Indonesia.

In the following section, I will explore independent young people's active thinking and actions in building and improving relationships with local Indonesian people while waiting in transit. I will briefly sketch the current discussion on the relationship between refugees and locals, followed by a section on young people's perceptions of locals' attitudes towards them. Afterwards, I will elaborate on young people's navigations of the Muslim majority in Indonesia, on their engagements in impression management, and when they learn Bahasa Indonesia.

INTERACTIONS BETWEEN REFUGEES AND LOCALS

Local and national newspapers in Indonesia have represented refugees transiting in Indonesia differently over time. In 2006–2008, refugees were largely addressed as "illegal immigrants" and online they were referred to as "alleged war victims." Given that increasing numbers of refugees are being intercepted and detained in Indonesia, as well as those who are attempting to

escape detention, the media is increasingly referring to refugees as "detention escapees." From 2013 onwards, refugees started to be depicted as "Shia missionaries" or "ISIS-related groups." After Australia closed its borders and all refugees had to wait longer in Indonesia, refugees in the national media began to be described as "gigolos," "trouble makers," "prostitutes," "womanizers," "daughter thieves," and "home-wreckers." The derogatory tone in the news is likely to influence the perceptions of Indonesian locals towards refugees whom they have never met. Refugees transiting in Indonesia, including independent youth, are aware of their pejorative representation in the media, so they approach locals cautiously to avoid conflict or rejection.

Previous scholars have described cordial relationships between refugees and local people in Indonesia as an "exception rather than the rule" (Missbach 2015, 105) or "incidental but also intentional" (Adiputera and Prabandari 2018, 11). Given that during my research refugees were located in various sites, including in IDCs in urban settings, the forms of interactions between locals and refugees in each area depended on the opportunities and challenges for refugees to encounter locals. Despite the portrayal of refugees in the media, independent youth do develop various forms of personal relationships with locals. For example, self-settled youth and those who stay in shelters and refugee accommodations near local neighborhoods may develop cooperations with their landlords (see Figure 1) and even form friendships with their neighbors. Those who are in IDCs sometimes develop bonds with sympathetic detention officers. Some independent youth are lucky to meet locals whom they trust dearly and find themselves an Indonesian best friend. Youths also make the acquaintance of shopkeepers and people they meet in the mosque, and they encounter locals in public spaces such as buses, trains, or on the street.

Before entering the discussion of social navigations when dealing with Indonesian citizens in general, the following section will discuss youths' perceptions of local people, particularly neighbors and Indonesian officials. Such perceptions are crucial for understanding the logic of youths' social navigations when building relationships with locals, which will be explained later in this chapter.

Figure 1. Independent young men, an older refugee, their landlady, and myself, sharing Indonesian and Hazaragi food for lunch. Some independent refugee youth develop close relationships with their Indonesian hosts (photo credit: Henri Ismail 2016).

WHATEVER BAD EXPERIENCE, IT WILL NOT KILL US

In my early encounters with independent refugee youth, they often politely expressed their positive impressions and even their gratitude toward Indonesian locals for "allowing them to transit in Indonesia." In general, they commented that they liked Indonesian people because they are nice, and sometimes expressed their hope to return to Indonesia after they had been resettled in a third country to "return the favor" (Hamida, interview, February 3, 2016). Independent youth often told stories of locals who were very welcoming, warm, helpful, and hospitable to them. Nevertheless, there is always another side to the story. As their trust in me as an Indonesian researcher developed, they also told me stories about their challenges when interacting with locals. Almost all of the independent youths I encountered had had unpleasant experiences with locals – and if not personally themselves, then they had heard stories from others they knew.

According to the young people I spoke with, one of the

unpleasant experiences they encountered was related to locals marking up prices for refugees. Mumtaz, an independent youth who was staying in Bogor, said that since his departure from Jakarta, he had experienced misconduct from taxi drivers. He recalled that he had asked a driver to take him from Soekarno Hatta airport to the UNHCR office in central Jakarta and was charged Rp 400,000 (25 euros); he heard from a friend that a taxi driver had asked him for Rp 2,000,000 (125 euros) for a trip from the airport to Cisarua (interview, February 10, 2016). Later, his local friend had told him that the normal price from Soekarno Hatta airport to the UNHCR office (a 30 km trip) should have been around Rp 130,000 (8 euros) and to Cisarua (a 100 km trip) around Rp 400,000 (25 euros).[1] Even if the driver had calculated the return fare to Jakarta, Rp 2,000,000 was still a very expensive taxi fare.

According to self-settled youth staying in Cisarua, another serious predicament they faced were arbitrary fines by traffic cops. According to young people, the cops in West Java are aware of the existence of refugees in the area and try to benefit from them. Payam, an independent refugee in his early 20s, said:

> The cops in Ciawi [13.5 km from Cisarua] are the worst. If in the intersection they recognize that you are a refugee, they will immediately ask you to give them your document and try to give you a ticket, otherwise you pay a lot of money. I have been stopped twice. They asked me to pay Rp 400,000 [25 euros]. I did not have money so they took my agate ring. On the other occasion, they extorted me and said if I did not pay, they would confiscate my motorbike and send me to jail. They should not do that since I have a refugee card. But they still do it, they want to take advantage of us (interview, April 25, 2016).

Young people's encounters with traffic police usually happen when they are driving a motorcycle without a license or a helmet. According to the affidavit attached to DGI Regulation No. IMI-0352.GR.02.07 of 2016, which refugees have to sign, they

[1] The taxi rate in Jakarta per trip consists of a base fee of Rp 7,000 plus Rp 4,000 per kilometer. If the driver is asked to wait for the costumer, an additional fee of Rp 42,000 per hour applies (Taxi Calculator 2021).

are obliged to follow Indonesian laws, including not driving without a license. Thus, it is legitimate for the police to ask for their documents or to apply fines. What is not legitimate, young people argue, is when the police arbitrarily apply fines and charge differently from one case to another. Young people assume that in this case the money always goes into the police officer's own pocket. They believe that the fines are being given because the police officers are ethnically profiling Hazara refugees.

In Cisarua, dozens of young people told me that they had experienced or witnessed verbal and physical threats from Indonesian locals. According to Sameed, an independent youth who arrived in 2010, the social conditions in Cisarua were better back then.

> In 2011, when I stayed in Cisarua, people were very nice and willing to greet Afghan people. Now, they look down at us negatively. They ask if we are from Afghanistan or Pakistan, which shows that they are more aware of the existence of refugees… they used to think we are Saudi Arabian tourists. They often say bad words [now], sometimes asking for money. A lot of my friends got stopped when walking on the street by local men and asked to give away their cell phone. Back then, local people never disturbed girls. Now many women in our community experience verbal abuse or catcalling. Luckily, they [the girls] did not know what it meant, otherwise they would have cried for days (interview, February 10, 2016).

Given that many refugees are uncomfortable with locals' perceptions and attitudes towards them in Cisarua, more and more refugees, including independent youth, are moving away. Some people move to Cipayung, around 8 km down the hill from Cisarua, and others go further to Bogor or Jakarta. I met dozens of independent youths who were staying in Jakarta, who had previously lived in Cisarua. According to them, "bad people are everywhere. But in Cisarua now, 100% are bad and in Jakarta maybe only 50% are bad" (Sameed, interview, February 10, 2016). Local people, as the "hosts," often exhibit hospitality towards refugees, as the "guests," but this hospitality often has clear temporal boundaries, rules, and

conditions, and is administered or withheld according to the hosts' discretion (Missbach 2017, 53). While local people in Cisarua may have initially developed hospitality towards international migrants (including refugees) in their area, after a period of time their welcoming attitude appeared to have run out.

The locals' hospitality in Cisarua wore off gradually and probably reached its lowest point in 2012, where village officials, district officials, civil society organizations, and local youth organizations signed a petition to expel refugees from their area (interviews with head of Tugu Utara village; head of Cisarua town; secretary of Citeko village; and secretary of Kopo village, April 4, 2016). Some sources said that the expulsion act was part of a dynamic in local politics to negotiate budget allocation from the UNHCR and IOM (interview with Haji Zeni, a religious leader in the area, April 12, 2016). As the result of this demand, the IOM and UNHCR decided to close their services in Cisarua and move the shelters to Jakarta. Considering the petition, many refugees decided that it was "safer" for them to move to Jakarta with its massive population.[2] Big cities are preferred by urban refugees as they provide a better chance for them to disperse among the local community, giving them a wider space for mobility and thus making them an "invisible" population (Pavanello, Elhawary, and Pantuliano 2010, 7). Young people confirmed that although the living costs in Jakarta are higher, they preferred to stay there as it allowed them to have more freedom to walk around the city and experience new things without being recognized as refugees.

Despite their reflections on the bad experiences they had encountered in Indonesia, young people claimed that it was still bearable compared to the conditions back home or the exclusion they had experienced in previous transit countries. Sultani, an independent youth from Afghanistan, had been beaten by drunken Indonesian locals on the street. It was an awful experience, but he concluded the story by saying "everywhere you will find someone that may disturb you, it is no problem… The difference in Indonesia is that it is safe and everyone can study" (interview, April 1, 2016). Although his account may seem contradictory, I understood that "safe" for him meant a condition that was not war-like. He did not

[2] The population of Jakarta is around 10.64 million (World Population Review, 2019).

experience structural terror from extremist combatants or from the government in Indonesia, so he considered it a better environment compared to the conditions in Afghanistan.

On a similar note, Sadeqa, a young Afghan woman who had been born in "transit" and had spent her entire life in Pakistan and Iran before coming to Indonesia, told me that "bad accidents" experienced by refugees in Indonesia were nothing compared to what most people had experienced in their country of origin or in other transit countries. She told me firmly:

> I have been a refugee my whole life. I have experienced fear of death in Pakistan and have faced severe discrimination in Iran. I could not go to school and people literally spit on us because they are tired of the many Afghans staying in their country. The government deports undocumented people and we simply cannot live in Afghanistan with the bloody terror every day. Maybe some people are bad here in Indonesia, but whatever the bad experience is, it will not kill us. So, it is better here in Indonesia (interview, April 1, 2016).

Although it is generally expected that neither Indonesian locals nor the government will do something to endanger refugees' lives, sadly there was a case of a 19-year-old Somalian independent boy who was reported as having been killed by Indonesian locals. He was found dead in Jakarta, with stab wounds to his head (Al Faqir, 2016). One night, he was drinking with Indonesian friends, whom he used to hang out and joke around with. The rumor goes that they all got drunk and he made a nasty comment about one of the boys. The Indonesian boy got angry and stabbed him to death. It was a very sad moment for the refugee community, since the boy had already been accepted to be resettled in the US. The stabbing happened just a couple of weeks before his departure. After this accident, I heard that some youths who lived around the accident area were afraid to go out at night. Nevertheless, they still thought that Indonesia was a safe country in general. They interpreted the murder as "an accident" triggered by a personal problem and thus it was not seen as representing a "structural threat" to refugees.

Given that a lot of young people have spent quite a significant

amount of time in other transit countries, they often judge the level of difficulties they encounter in Indonesia not only by comparing these difficulties to the challenges they experienced in their home countries, but also to the problems they faced in other transit countries. This section has highlighted youths' perception that despite all the hurdles, transiting in Indonesia is still better than transiting in other countries.

ENGAGING IN IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT

Independent young people believe that big cities open up more possibilities for them to engage in impression management and representational strategies in order to avoid bad treatment that might follow them as refugees. Given that the IOM has community housing in 13 cities across Indonesia, many refugees have the opportunity to "merge" themselves with locals in urban settings. However, not all cities offer equal conditions to perform representational strategies; as many locals have become more aware of the existence of refugees, they may have also internalized the negative images of them from the media. To navigate this situation, youths are cautious to pick the right identity with which to present themselves with the different locals they meet.

Being aware of the rather negative image of refugee communities, young people try to conceal their true identity from locals whom they do not intend to have a further relationship with. Fahri, an independent youth who was staying in Medan, told me:

> Not all locals know what a refugee is and that there are refugees in Indonesia. If someone asks "Where do you come from?" I will see if he already knows about refugees. If he seems to know something, I might tell them. But sometimes they know nothing. So, I just tell them that I am an exchange student from Iran, or that I am just a tourist visiting friends or family here in the city. But now, you know, it is more difficult to hide my status in Medan. Many people have heard about refugees staying here (interview, November 29, 2016).

When we met, Fahri looked very sharp with his colored hair, plaid shirt, and matching sneakers. I could imagine that it would not be too hard for him to convince people that he was an exchange student. Nevertheless, given that people in Medan are getting more familiar with Hazara features, it is becoming more challenging for young people to "modify" their identity.

To escape the negative image of refugees, some independent youths go even further and play with their racial identity. Not only Faiz – the young K-Pop fan I introduced in the beginning of this chapter, who represented himself as Korean – but other independent youth in Jakarta commonly told strangers they met in the street that they were from other Asian countries or that they were "*indo*" or "*blasteran*," Indonesian slang for multiracial persons of mixed Indonesian descent, usually with a "whiter" skin tone than Indonesian people. Young people have learned from Indonesian pop culture and media that multiracial people with wither skin and high nasal bones are often praised and adored. They try to embody this multiracial identity, particularly when they know some words in Bahasa Indonesia. This helps them to build closer relations with Indonesian locals. Arman, who travelled a lot between Jakarta and Cisarua, said:

> When people asked me on public transportation about my identity and I am sure he does not know I am a refugee, sometimes I would say that my mother is Indonesian and my father is from Turkey, so my Bahasa Indonesia has a different dialect (interview, April 21, 2016).

Young people from African countries also play with their racial identity. An Ethiopian youth who was living in Jakarta told me that sometimes when he went to the farmers market and used broken Bahasa Indonesia, the seller would assume that he is West Papuan – an ethnic group with dark-colored skin – so he would get a cheaper price. According to a CWS social worker, many African youths jokingly introduce themselves as Papuan as part of their strategy to relate to locals (interview, July 15, 2016). Despite the fact that Papuans are often discriminated against by other ethnic groups in Indonesia, the Ethiopian youths apparently still found that locals in Jakarta treated them "better" as Papuans rather

than as African migrants; at least there were some advantages, such as not having to pay a marked-up price for their groceries.

The representational strategy of youths to present themselves as Indonesian of mixed decent or as Papuan is not merely a "hiding tactic" to avoid conflict, but also reflects a thoughtful observation of the characteristics of local society, of the locals' perceptions toward other ethnic groups, as well as of their views of race and social positions within Indonesian society. Presenting themselves as "students" in a neighborhood that is not yet aware of the existence of refugees in Indonesia also reflects their understanding of the perceptions of locals who generally view international students as high achievers and probably belonging to a higher social position in society.

This section has demonstrated how independent youth navigate encounters with Indonesian locals they meet on the street and other people they do not intend to relate to in more depth. In the following section, I will elaborate on how they navigate their communication with locals whom they encounter every day.

NAVIGATING THE MUSLIM MAJORITY IN INDONESIA

Navigating religious identity is perceived as a very crucial aspect for living peacefully in Indonesia. As a majority-Muslim country, independent youths in Indonesia need to take the Islamic values practiced by locals in their neighborhood into consideration. One of Indonesians' negative perceptions of refugees in the country is related to the "religious clash" between Sunni and Shia (Adiputera and Prabandari 2018, 10-11; Prabandari and Adiputera 2019, 140). In this section, I will discuss how the independent youth mitigate their refugee identity, such as by obscuring their Shia identity, engaging in narrative strategies such as claiming to be Christian, and compromising to practice Sunni prayers. I mostly highlight the stories of Hazara youth given that they – with their Shia identity – are assumed to face more challenges in terms of social integration in Indonesia. Nonetheless, I will include stories from other independent youths when relevant.

Mitigating a Shia Identity

Hazara independent youth are particularly aware of the Shia–Sunni tensions in Indonesian society and know that Indonesian Shias face discrimination and violence in the country. Thus, they engage in some attempts to keep their religious identity low on the radar in order to avoid too much resistance. Most Hazara independent youth agree that they do not need to show their full religious identity in public because it will endanger all Hazaras in Indonesia. Ali Abbas, an independent youth from Bamiyan, Afghanistan, said:

> We are refugees here, so we must keep a low profile. I know that most of the Hazara people here are not very religious, but they always make Muharram[3] such a big deal. If they want to pray, why not pray at home? I am sure they do not pray five times a day anyway… Why bother showing off their religious identity? (interview, February 2, 2016).

According to Ali Abbas, a couple of years prior, dozens of women had come to the house of *Karbalai* (a Shia religious leader) in Cisarua during the month of Muharram. For ten days, until the Day of Ashura, they had prayed together, melodiously reciting the Quran. They had also hit their bodies to mourn the murder of Hussein ibn Ali, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, and the assassinations of his family and followers. After hearing the loud mourning and prayers for several consecutive days, some local people had come to the *Karbalai*'s house to protest the noise and had asked everyone to go home. Ali Abbas said that since that accident, many Hazaras, including youth, had decided to pray silently at home (see Figure 2). Such incidents did not only happen in Cisarua. According to Zakir, a security officer in a CWS shelter for unaccompanied minors in Jakarta, local people had come to the shelter during Muharram mourning asking the independent youth to stop their rituals. Zakir said that it is their belief, so it is

[3] Muharram is the first month in the Islamic calendar, which marks the anniversary of the battle at Karbala, the defining moment of the split of Islam into two major sects: Sunni and Shi'í (or Shiite or Shia) (see Brown 2003). The tenth day of Muharram, also known as Ashura, is a very important day for Shia Muslims to commemorate the martyrdom of Husayn, the grandson of the Prophet Mohammad (see Alibhai 2019).

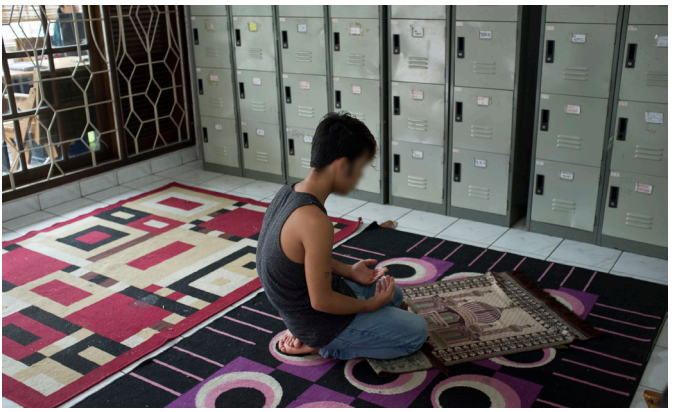

Figure 2. An underage independent Hazara boy chooses to pray in the shelter rather than in a local mosque (photo credit: Henri Ismail 2016).

understandable that they want to practice it (interview, November 3, 2016). However, after the complaints, the youths had prayed silently, murmuring their Quran recitals and doing all of the rituals inside the shelter.

Due to the different practices in Shia and Sunni prayer, most Hazara youths hesitate to join Indonesians to pray at local mosques for fear of discrimination (Brown 2017, 43). Refugees are generally not comfortable attending prayers in local mosques, as they are often asked many questions (Sampson et al. 2016, 1147). To navigate the locals' suspicions of them being Muslims but never showing up to the local mosque, many develop narrative strategies to keep a low profile. Sameed, an independent Hazara boy from Pakistan, told me that if local neighbors in Cisarua asked him and his friends why they did not join the prayers at the mosque, they answered that they had something to do, that they had to study, or that they were not Muslim (interview, February 10, 2016). However, nowadays Hazara young men in Cisarua prefer to avoid locals altogether, particularly during the time of Friday prayers.

Compromising with Sunni Religious Practice

Not all independent youths navigate their religious identity by concealing or developing narrative strategies. Some are willing to participate in the Sunni prayers for the purpose of building

relationships with local Indonesians. Dayyan, an independent young man from Pakistan, was willing to participate in prayers at the local mosque. He said:

> Local people here [in Cisarua] have been grumbling about why we claim that we are Muslims but never pray in the mosque. So, I just come every Friday to mosque and pray together with them. I follow the Sunni way of praying with their hand gestures and everything. No problem. It is basically the same. What is important is what I believe inside my heart… (interview, July 8, 2016).

Dayyan is seen by other youths as brave, because not many are willing to pray with Sunni followers. If he were to be discovered as Shia, he could be expelled from the mosque or maybe preached at to make him follow Sunni beliefs. In a public sermon, Buya Yahya, an Indonesian Sunni cleric, said that if a common Shia (not the leader) prays in our (Sunni) mosque, he should not be expelled. But he should also not be given a place as *khatib* (a person who delivers the sermon) or as *imam* (a person who leads the communal prayer) (Al-Bahjah TV 2018). According to young people, however, a devoted Shia will find it very difficult to practice something that does not belong to their beliefs, so most prefer to pray at home or go to a Shia mosque in Jakarta, rather than join a local Sunni mosque. Bima Arya Sugiarto, the Mayor of Bogor, controversially banned Shia believers from commemorating Asyura in 2015 (Saudale and Marsiela 2015). Aside from that, West Java is known as one of the most intolerant provinces in Indonesia. Given this situation, Hazara youth carefully choose their moves when navigating their interactions with locals in order not to offend them.

Borrowing a Christian Identity

Finding a good reason for not joining a local mosque is one maneuver, but there are more complicated daily encounters where independent young people's religious identity needs to be modified in order for them to feel safe. Rahman, a 21-year-old Hazara youth from Afghanistan, had a tattoo on his left arm. This tattoo often raised questions from shopkeepers around his boarding house in Cisarua. When a shopkeeper had asked if he was Muslim, Rahman

had said yes, as he had thought this was the correct answer, assuming that the shopkeeper himself was also a Muslim. But he became puzzled when the shopkeeper had pressed him on why he had a tattoo, given that it is forbidden by Islam. Rahman was unwilling to give any explanation, so he just smiled. After that encounter, however, Rahman told me that he always tells people that he is a Christian if they ask about his tattoo. According to him and other youth, saying that one is a Christian is often easier to avoid further discussions about religion and one's choice to do certain things.

To further emphasize their adopted "Christian" identity, Hazara youths sometimes use Christian or Western names to get away from local people's prejudices about Shia people. Ali, a Hazara independent youth who had been born and raised in Iran, told me that he had changed his name to a Christian name in order to deal better with local people in the Kalibata apartment, where he rented a small room with three other independent youths from Iran. He said:

> I got a lot of trouble because of my name. One day, I came to the laundry service downstairs near the lobby and the man working there asked my name. I said "Ali." Then he asked if I am a Shia. I answered "Yes, I am Shia, is there any problem?" And he said "No problem." But then I lost a couple pairs of my clothes. There are many problems for us who are named after Ali or Muhammad, because people will immediately relate that we are Shia. I wonder why Indonesian people think that Shia people are bad or cruel people. So, now many [Hazara] people will say their name is Angelo, Jason, Ricardo, or Gabrielle to be safe. And if we are asked about our religion, we will say that we are Christian (interview, April 16, 2016).

Claiming to be a Christian is an intriguing maneuver, since it shows that the independent youth comprehend how locals exhibit more tolerance towards other religions, and usually exercise more "control" over their fellow Muslims. Local people will not interfere if a Christian has a tattoo, but feel responsible to reprimand a young Muslim if he has one. Furthermore, local people seem to be more

resentful towards other kinds of Muslims compared to people of other religions. The Indonesian government officially permits six religions, namely Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. Although discrimination towards non-Muslim citizens occurs on a daily basis, those who suffer from the greatest persecution are groups of Muslims other than Sunni, such as the Ahmadiyya (see Burhani 2014; Nastiti 2014) and Shias (see Ida and Saud 2020; Mahbub 2018; Amnesty International 2014). Although youth know that local people will not physically force them to go to the mosque, they also know that their Shia identity may affect how the locals perceive them. Therefore, it is better to engage in some representational strategies and navigate locals' expectations.

Hazara youths' navigations when maneuvering religious identity – by mitigating their Shia identity, by adjusting to Sunni prayer practices, or by adopting Christian names – are very interesting, in particular because most of the youths also had to deal with the issue of religion in their home countries. Dozens of Hazara independent youth that I encountered expressed skepticism towards religion. According to them, the persecution, terror, and never-ending wars in their countries occur due to religious radicalism, and it makes them want to disassociate themselves from any religious beliefs. Additionally, many have figured out that citizens in English-speaking countries do not embrace religion as much. Thus, many start to embody the image of modern global citizens by no longer practicing their religion, while some even claim to be atheist. Alireza, a 21-year-old Hazara man, was staying in IOM accommodation in Jakarta. I met him in Cisarua when he was visiting a friend who was also one of my informants. At that time, Alireza was in the preparation phase to be resettled in the US. During our long discussion, the topic turned to religion. Alireza said: "Most Hazara boys here are not religious, you know. I myself am an atheist. Look what religion has done to my country. I will go to America. I do not need [to have a] religion there" (interview, March 10, 2016). I also found that the opposite reaction was possible: in facing the "surveillance" of Sunni locals, dozens of youths found themselves holding onto their Shia identity even tighter. Among the many youngsters I spoke to about religion, however, most of them maintained their skepticism towards

Figure 3. A Somali independent young man regularly visits the local Mosque for Friday prayers (photo credit: Henri Ismail 2016).

religion and maybe even decided to modify their religious identity just to be safe.

From my field research in Jakarta, I observed that Sunni Muslim independent youth experienced fewer challenges when interacting with local people, in particular when it came to praying in local mosques (see Figure 3). A handful of Somali boys, for example, told me that before they had been accommodated in the CWS shelter, they had slept and prayed in mosques nearby the residence of the Somali refugee community. They often received food from locals and occasionally people approached and ask them about their identity or to engage in small talk. Some of them had even made

friends with locals in the mosque, who later helped them to learn Bahasa Indonesia. Trish Cameron, a refugee lawyer who assisted SUAKA, told me of a particular case where immigration officers were conducting a raid on one of the African refugee communities (it was not clear if it was a Sudanese, Somali, or Ethiopian refugee community) to arrest those who did not have documents or whose refugee applications had been rejected. The raid was thwarted, however, as local people interfered and defended the refugees, saying that the immigration officials should not seize them because they were good Muslim people. The neighbors confirmed that they knew these people since they regularly met them at the mosque and the immigration officers had left empty handed (Trish Cameron, interview, August 3, 2016).

When young people did not need to repress their identity, including their religious identity, they said that they felt more comfortable and confident in investing in personal relations with local people. Interactions in the local mosque was one option to build trust with local people, and they could continue the relationship on a daily basis as neighbors. In the next session, I will elaborate on youths' maneuvers when interacting with locals with whom they relate even more intensively.

"IF WE ARE GOOD TO THEM, THEY WILL ALSO BE GOOD"

As part of their knowledge of how to relate with Indonesian people, young people comprehend that investing in personal relations and being good to them is a very effective strategy to maintain good relations with locals, particularly those with whom they want to exchange things and favors or whom they meet on a daily basis. While acknowledging some bad experiences with locals, the youths often accentuated to me that Indonesian people are "basically nice," so "if they are good to locals, the locals will also treat them well." Initially, this statement sounded very cliché to me, but later I understood that it was based on experience. The youths' navigations of personal relations with Indonesian locals reflected their understanding that social relations in Indonesia are maintained by personal trust, reciprocity, and personal contacts, and often go beyond formal relationships. Moreover, when

interacting with bureaucrats, the youths found out that it is more effective to invest in personal relationships than to make demands or use the language of human rights.

When I came to Pekanbaru, I visited the IDC, three "interception hotels" that were intended to be extensions of the overcrowded IDC, and four IOM community housing units. In one of the interception hotels, which I visited on November 29, 2016, I met an independent young man called Mashawir. He identified himself as an ethnic Pashtun from Pakistan and spoke English and Bahasa Indonesia fluently. He had already received refugee status and was officially accommodated in one of the IOM's community housing units with other independent youth. However, due to his language skills and his kind and easygoing attitude, he had been asked to help the owner of one of the interception hotels to run the place. When I came to the interception hotel, the owner, an old man in his early 60s, sent me to talk to Mashawir after learning that I had come to conduct research.

Mashawir said that he helped the old man with all sort of things, such as driving his cars, picking up groceries from suppliers, painting walls, and listening to complaints, as well as answering questions from the refugee families living in the 25 rooms. His fellow refugees told me that he was flexible, honest, and respectful, thus the owner trusted him very much. Aside from getting a little bit of money and free daily meals, Mashawir also got a single room. Although officially he had accommodation in an IOM community house, he stayed in his room in the interception hotel more often. Although the conditions and facilities of the IOM community house were better, Mashawir said that he felt more comfortable staying in the interception hotel because he had a lot of things to do there. In the IOM community house, he had nothing to do but sit in his room the whole day and "the boredom almost killed him." According to Mashawir, the owner was very nice to him. Many people in Pekanbaru also knew that he was a refugee, but they treated him kindly. In his opinion, it was because he had been good to the local people and because he spoke Bahasa Indonesia, something that was very appreciated. In Mashawir's case, his flexibility and willingness to adapt to his new situation by taking a soft approach to the local people did not make him "submissive." He knew how to utilize his capability to create more room for

himself to maneuver when navigating the boredom of waiting in transit.

The navigation of "being good" is also performed to build relationships with officials, particularly IDC officers. On June 29, 2016, I visited Kalideres IDC in Jakarta, approximately 20 km from where I myself lived. I did not have any prior contact with any of the independent youths inside the IDC, so when the officer learnt that I wished to do an interview, he picked one independent man for me. This is how I met Arfan. We talked alone in the IDC's meeting room, where he told me about his journey, his motivations, his decision to surrender himself to the immigration office a couple of months earlier, and his experiences staying inside the detention center. He explained that he hoped to be released soon and get a place in a community house, since he had already received refugee status. However, it could be a bit difficult for him, since the head of the security department was not impressed by the fact that he had gotten refugee status outside of the detention center before reporting himself. He had thus told Arfan to wait for his turn.

> The head of the security department here is a decisive man, but actually he is a warmhearted person. If you are nice to him and show him that you are a good person, he will help you out. We are not supposed to do *macam-macam* [the literal translation means "assorted behavior"; in this context, it means "messing around"]. If you make noises, shaking the iron gate to ask the guards to take you out, you might get punched. But, if you show sympathetic behavior and are polite to the officers, they will treat you well. If they notice you are good, maybe they will allow you to stay 10 minutes longer outside (Arfan, interview, June 29, 2016).

Arfan explained how he tried to survive in the IDC, especially because he had to stay inside his jail-like room and only saw daylight for a couple of hours per day. In this depressing situation, he tried to be cooperative and polite with the officers. Due to his politeness and attempts to be good, he was often asked to act as a translator for fellow detainees who could not speak English. Through this task, he felt closer to the officers compared to other

refugees and therefore had more space to negotiate something if he needed to. He told me that he planned to discuss the possibility of being transferred to IOM community housing with the head of the security department, as he felt he had gotten closer to him.

To deal with street-level bureaucrats, people in "disadvantaged positions" can engage in assorted strategies, such as "expressions of empathy with officers' problems, humble acceptance of their own responsibility for their situation, […] and sometimes passivity and acquiescence" (Lipsky 1980, 59). Arfan's approach of being nice can be analyzed as a form of such representation management, which also relates to tactics of performativity. Vis-à-vis powerful actors such as detention officers, this tactic can be mistakenly interpreted as an act of submission. Clever investments in personal relations are, however, actually an effective tactic to remain flexible and have more room to maneuver.

In Indonesian society, personal relations are indeed a very important aspect that enables one to function in everyday life, sometimes bypassing official structural relationships (Pemberton in Barker and van Klinken 2009). Some youth understand this and decide to maintain good relations with locals, especially immigration officers, and to cultivate a positive image of themselves, instead of raising demands to access their rights. One immigration officer told me that he did not appreciate the refugees who make demands using the language of human rights.

> These people are asking things, they say it is their right to get this or that… and when we punish them for their provocative behavior, they said that we violate their human rights. Do not talk about human rights if you are breaching Indonesia's law. They enter the country illegally. We gave them a place to stay and provide their basic needs. Do not start using the human rights language. They will not get anything… (Boedi Prayitno, interview, June 28, 2016).

In the New Order era, Indonesian citizens were taught to prioritize duties (*kewajiban*) over rights (*hak*). One has to fulfill one's obligations in order to receive rights. This thinking is deeply rooted in Indonesia to this day. In general, people intrinsically assume that one does not deserve a right if one does not behave

well or do good. Socio-culturally speaking, rights are not perceived as something to which everyone is universally entitled, but rather something that has to be achieved. After the reformation era in the 2000s, the language of human rights has spread widely and has been internalized in diverse legal instruments. Nevertheless, to demand something using this language is often still perceived as too aggressive and dialectically patronizing.

The independent refugee youth have also learned that it is more effective to engage in soft negotiation by investing in personal relationships, rather than using the formal or structural language of human rights. By doing so, independent youth demonstrate that they are not only passive victims but active spectators, who not only observe but also analyze their situation, and resist, negotiate, and execute their actions (FiddianQasmiyeh and Qasmiyeh 2010, 295 in Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2016, 460; see also Boal 1992).

LEARNING BAHASA INDONESIA: A MOTIVATION TO FIND FRIENDSHIP

In the previous section, I have discussed how the independent youth navigate the relationship with locals they regularly meet. In this section, I will elaborate on how independent youth learn Bahasa Indonesia and even other local languages in order to establish deeper relationships with locals and occasionally even build friendships with them.

Language skills have been discussed elsewhere as a significant aspect in determining the kind of relationships that refugees may develop with people in the host society (Harvey 2019, 15; Brown 2017). Indeed, the lack of language skills is sometimes even seen as a key barrier for refugee survival in Indonesia (Ali et al. 2016, 35). In Batulayang, I regularly visited Dayyan, the independent young man I introduced earlier. He was staying with another independent young man in a small house rented from a local religious leader in the area. His house was located a little bit far from the main road. Dayyan told me that he did not like to stay in other places where it is too crowded with refugees, because you can get too close with the refugee community and do not have good interactions with locals. Dayyan not only spoke Bahasa

Indonesia, but also Sundanese, the local language of West Java. Due to his language fluency, he knew almost everyone in the village. When he offered to walk me through the village to show me where the refugee families were staying and also to visit a local cemetery where a fellow refugee had been buried the year before, he greeted everyone we passed in the street in Sundanese. It really felt that I was the guest and he was the villager who was showing me around his neighborhood.

Dayyan had spent more than four years in Indonesia when we met. At the beginning of his transit time, he had stayed in Jakarta, but soon he had moved to Cisarua after learning that the living costs were cheaper there. He said that he had decided to learn the language as a necessary survival skill. He had never encountered any problems with locals, and when someone asked him why he had done this or that, he was able to explain it and everything was ok. If a new refugee family was trying to rent a house and the owner did not speak English or any other language, Dayyan became the translator. He started to be recognized by the local refugee community as well, and many had asked him to go to hospitals or other offices with them to act as an interpreter, in return for a little bit of money. However, he said that he did not want to be an interpreter too often, because it is very tiring to deal with people's problems every day. He made a comment about other refugees:

> They do not want to learn Bahasa Indonesia. Instead, they learn English every day because they hope to be resettled in an English-speaking country. But we are in Indonesia now. People here are happy if you speak their language. You can communicate and build connections with them. They will help you if you are close and nice to them (interview, July 8, 2016).

Dayyan was of course not the only youth who had invested in learning the local language to build a good relationship with locals. Many young people I met in Cisarua, Medan, Pekanbaru, and particularly in Jakarta had learned some words of Bahasa Indonesia in order to communicate and to make friends with Indonesians (see Figure 4). Some independent young boys practiced their

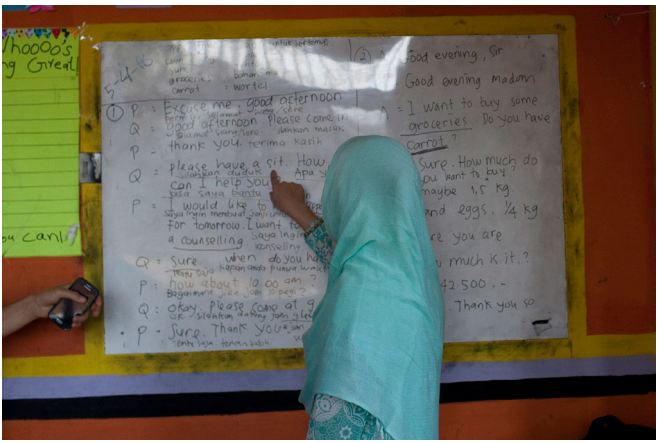

Figure 4. A Hazara young woman in Cisarua learns Bahasa Indonesia (photo credit: Henri Ismail 2016).

language skills by joining chat rooms or other social media groups so that they could "talk" online with Indonesians. From the online encounters, they might also find some friends who have similar hobbies, like Faiz, the K-Pop fan I introduced earlier. Sometimes they meet up offline and develop closer relationships. It is apparent that by speaking the same language, independent youth will communicate and express themselves more easily to locals. Given that young people can generally learn new languages faster than the older generation, it is understandable that they can "wiggle" themselves more easily into Indonesian society.

Friendship between Independent Refugee Women and Indonesian Women

For independent girls, I found that one strong motivation to learn Bahasa Indonesia is to be able to find an Indonesian friend with whom they can discuss their problems confidentially, without the anxiety of being judged – a feeling they would have when talking to someone from their own refugee community. I will elaborate on how some independent young women decide to be socially distant from their refugee community and prefer to build a social life with local people in the next chapter (chapter 7). Here I would like to illustrate a case of how an independent girl learned the local

language in order to be able to make contact with Indonesian girls.

Shahida, a 15-year-old girl who had escaped from an arranged marriage organized by her father in Brewery, Pakistan, had come to Indonesia alone. She was receiving financial assistance from CWS and was staying in a boarding room in Jakarta with a female guardian from the Hazara community, who had been assigned by CWS. Shahida told me that she had been learning Bahasa Indonesia and occasionally practiced with Indonesian girls in the neighborhood:

> I hope my Indonesian language improves soon, because I really want to have Indonesian best friends… The girls… they are always so friendly and nice […] I am so lonely… I do not want to tell my story to Afghans, because if I tell it to an Afghan girl, in a week the whole community will know my problem. I really want an Indonesian girlfriend. She will not tell my problem to anybody (interview, October 3, 2016).

Shahida's story emphasizes her need for true friendship and her desire to find someone whom she could trust, who would accept her at her most vulnerable without judging her. It is interesting to see that on some occasions, finding someone who is socio-culturally completely different from oneself might be seen as liberating. Young people, especially girls, approach building relationships with Indonesians with curiosity. Most importantly, they assume that they will be less judged when they meet persons outside of their socio-cultural value system.

Furthermore, young people also feel more comfortable making friends with persons who are not only from a different cultural background, but who also live in a different neighborhood. Hazeema, a 24-year-old independent woman who was living in Cisarua, illustrated this to me. One morning, I came to her rented house and met Farah, an Indonesian girl in her early 20s. Farah was having breakfast with Hazeema and Hazeema's underaged cousin. I joined them and we talked in Bahasa Indonesia together. When Farah left after breakfast, Hazeema told me the story of how they had met:

> Farah is my first Indonesian girlfriend here… We met in the

> KRL [commuter line train] from Jakarta to Bogor. She is very nice. She lives near Bogor and teaches in junior high school there. She often visits me and I have been invited to her parents' house. I get to know Sundanese culture better from her. She is my first Bahasa Indonesia teacher. She is my friend (interview, April 27, 2016).

It is often the case that independent youth build connections with locals when they learn Bahasa Indonesia from them. They will then use their language skills to broaden their connections with other locals as well. More importantly, Hazeema explained that she felt uncomfortable developing relations with her local neighbors, because they had already labeled her a "refugee." She wanted to have a real friendship with someone who saw her as an equal, so she preferred to develop relationships with locals who lived outside of her neighborhood.

The awareness of the perceptions of locals, including neighbors, particularly in Cisarua, makes young people and the broader refugee community hesitant to build close relationships with them. But this does not mean that they do not make friends with Indonesian locals. Young people in particular are very interested in building social connections with local Indonesians, whom they believe will accept them as they are, and particularly when they want to escape surveillance from the refugee community or if they want to escape their label as a "refugee" altogether. With these motivations, young people are eager to enhance their skills in the local language. They comprehend that being able to speak Bahasa Indonesia will add to their success in investing in personal relationships with local people.

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has illustrated how independent refugee youth perform different maneuvers when interacting with different categories of local people, depending on their perceptions and expectations of them. They perform first impression management by not revealing their identity as a refugee when they met laypersons on the street. Given that the majority of Indonesians are Sunni Muslims, young

people also mitigate their religious identity in order to form secure and conflict-free interactions with neighbors with whom they do not interact intensively. Particularly in the context of Hazara youth, this chapter has illustrated how they keep their Shia identity below the radar and sometimes even take on Christian names to avoid social discrimination.

Independent refugee youth have a different approach when they interact with local people whom they expect to cooperate with. I have elaborated how they choose to "be good" despite the negative images about them, as they believe that the locals will respond to such good behavior with a welcoming gesture. When interacting with these locals, young people are more accommodating and avoid exhibiting a dominant tone or attitude. In dealing with local bureaucracy, the young people also know that they must invest in personal relations rather than follow strict formalities if they want to have the possibility to negotiate within the system. These approaches can be considered effective strategies to help them survive in transit in Indonesia.

This chapter also has touched on young people's maneuvers to build up more meaningful relationships, in particular friendships with locals. I have elaborated on how enhancing their language skills by learning to speak Bahasa Indonesia is motivated often by the desire to form friendships with locals. This chapter has also underlined how some youths are cautious when choosing which locals to befriend, in order to assure an equal and supportive friendship that is not influenced by the stigma of being a refugee. Young people also find that forming a friendship with someone who is socio-culturally different from themselves can be liberating.

Independent youths' social navigations aimed at weaving harmonious relationships with locals are built on thoughtful observations and a sufficient comprehension of Indonesian social values, relationships between ethnic groups, Islamic norms, as well as their rights, and what works best when dealing with bureaucrats. Overall, youth comprehend the "spectrum of otherness" in the imaginaries of Indonesian locals, which places different attributes and expectations for different ethnic groups in different social settings. Therefore, young people perform assorted maneuvers of self-representation and strategic narratives in order to be able to create more of a sense of "sameness" with locals in various social

interactions.

Supported by the ethnographic data presented in this chapter, I argue that it is imperative that young people's role in developing friendly and peaceful relationships with locals must be acknowledged and included in future discussions about social integration between the refugee population and Indonesian society. The youth in my study demonstrate that they themselves play an important role as active agents in making their transit in Indonesia as harmonious as possible.