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Why Music and Shamanism for Orangutans are Similar

by

Hong-June Park

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Music

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Benjamin Brinner, Co-Chair

Professor Terrence Deacon, Co-Chair

Professor Jocelyne Guilbault

Professor Daniel Fisher

Summer 2020

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by

Hong-June Park

Abstract

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Professor Benjamin Brinner, Co-Chair

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How do you get people to empathize with a species when you have no ability to get inside their heads? Today, orangutan conservation has become something that Indonesians do out in the forests. In service of these efforts, musicians and shamans have joined Sound For Orangutan, an annual music event held in Jakarta since 2012 with additional festivals in other locations in subsequent years. Within this frame of reference, I will argue that both music and shamanism *exceed* semantics that merely describes differences in things. On stage: musicians incorporate different primate “calls” in a single song that points to a location in which the orangutan and non-orangutan coinhabit. Through different styles (e.g., children’s song, rock, noise), they show a common interest in experiencing nonhuman emotions by singing *like* the primates. Backstage: shamans convince deities to prevent the rain from falling on the occasion. Through different religious orientations (e.g., Islam, Buddhism, Kejawèn), they conduct a similar set of rituals in which they produce smoke that looks *like* cloud movements.

With likeness as my object of inquiry, I ask: Given the prevalence of non-linguistic logic, what is being communicated? What enables that communication, and thus the relations among people who take advantage of its analogies? In their senses of wonder and beauty by virtue of the recognition of likenesses, what develops the sequence that leads to the absence of attention to difference? For this project, I have collected a diverse array of information on: (1) Why musicians play music instead of verbalizing their emotions on stage; (2) How shamans convince deities with deeds rather than words; (3) A simulation technology that enables guitarists to reproduce the same sound across different venues and seasons; (4) A couple of musicians who no longer speak with each other but still sing with each other in sync at the same place at the same time for primates.

Using a field research design that detects when likeness becomes more apparent than differences, this study seeks to articulate the limitations of linguistic models of communication for musical and shamanic phenomena. This entails an examination of the more basic and direct role of iconic and indexical processes in communicating emotions, establishing empathy, and communicating despite lacking shared language, culture, religion, on behalf of nature or deities. By processing concrete empirical data through Peircean semiotic and emergentist views that are capable of capturing how thoughts show up in the world spontaneously, my goal is to understand why shamanism and music in these instances are similar.

To my parents, Jung-Hae Cho and Keun-Ho Park

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Introduction | Why Music and Shamanism for Orangutans are Similar

I came back from Indonesia with the realization that shamanism and music for orangutans are similar. I was there, initially, to look for differences in the way musicians incorporate primate “calls” into their music in order to communicate to the authorities that they should protect the jungles for the orangutan, which is one of the species endangered by deforestation. The musicians react to people who are destroying the ecosystem. So they play to an audience of young folks who gather in and outside of cities. While pursuing my interest in their musical interactions, I discovered that shamans are being incorporated to keep the rain from stopping the music. I got hooked — looking at the way the shamans communicate to the deities to try to get their attention and get them to do their bidding. In both cases, musicians and shamans are not trying to convince somebody with words. And the ultimate recipient of information is absent:

1) Musicians communicate the significance of orangutans to an audience that is likely to influence the politics at a later date,

2) The purpose of shamans is likewise to get beyond the physical stuff they do, like burning things, to persuade an absent deity.

I was prompted to write this dissertation by the difficulty of ignoring such regularity in an array of arenas in which none of these communications appears intrinsically meaningful. I will argue that reference under these circumstances (at least) is, as I explain below, things that *exceed* what they mean.

But first, does music have meaning? A common thing that happens when I go to a primate justice concert, is when I first walk in, and I’m late due to Jakarta’s notorious traffic, somebody’s already singing a song. Suddenly the guitar stops, everyone makes a primate “call” ... *Aaaaaa!* It sounds quite familiar, but not really. About half way through, however, the “calls” begin to feel intimate. As I sit around other people singing these tones together, I start to empathize with their feelings. Having other people melodizing “calls” spontaneously puts me in that frame of mind. I’m not thinking about it. I just can’t help it almost. Just recounting things or speaking about primates would not make this exchange as contagious.¹ If others around me are in that emotional state, that makes it likely that I’ll be in the same boat. That is the kind of communication I don’t have to work at. Meanwhile, a shaman backstage is imitating cloud by creating smoke that looks like it. YES, there’s got to be some meaning to this, but the interpreter must first see things and group them by similarity because “difference may not be the right starting point for understanding the broader problem of relating” (Kohn 2013:156).

The difficulty of holding such an image of likenesses is the provocation that I want to pursue in this project. Actually, this is *very* hard to think about because what I’m trying to

¹ As we shall see, I’ve attended a number of primate justice workshops and panel discussions and not felt this way.

capture in this study is larger than symbolic meaning. As the following chapters will show, there are many theories of meaning in the West. The main problem is that meaning itself is very nebulously defined or rarely defined at all. During my graduate studies in the U.S., I have attended many conferences and seminars to meet with my gifted peers. I learned that, whenever someone said “meaning” in a room full of people, almost everyone else would respond by mixing music’s referential properties and the importance of their existence. Given this, I spent years trying to understand whether I want to use “meaning” in a way that is compatible with its predominant use: *collapsing sign interpretation and sign production into a single artifact*.

Thinking about the importance of any music, for example, an “Indonesian” music, should concern norms, which is about categories, what belongs and what doesn’t, but also having value or not. Still, it vexes me to just “talk about talking about music” (Seeger 1977:180) by categorizing a music’s normative importance by virtue of differences. That way of categorization can separate out *what* is signified by treating everything as though it were language minus something. Built into the notion of “meaning” is the meaning of existence or of conversation, or both (Lewis 1970:19).² Meaning leads us astray from “music which does not use sounds as symbols” (Seeger 1977:180).

Despite the difficulty, I seek to explain in this dissertation why the words that are actually being used in the field cannot always give us primary source information about musical and other cultural phenomena (e.g., shamanism). There is not a lot of so-called “semantics” in the communications I study. Like musicians, the shamans are not interested in talking to somebody while they are on the job. Two of my chapters are devoted specifically to thinking about why the shaman is trying to convince a deity to do something for him by virtue of his deeds rather than by words. It’s not semantic, but, in the broader sense of meaning, it could have some meaningfulness insofar as people say that they think that that’s important (Feld 1987). Nonetheless, drawing exclusive attention to interlocutors’ sign interpretation (what people often call the “meaningful differences”) can lock the interlocutors into a box they can’t get out of, at the expense of *excluding* the actual referentiality (the non-semantic musical expression).

In this study, I am able to face this difficulty based on the underlying assumption that reference matters. I’m not trying to define what “the music” is. But I do want to show how both music and shamanism that are happening coterminously at a series of festivals *could* have reference, but beyond the way that words have glosses. I’m doing this in the humble hope that my Western colleagues will not always just speak about music’s importance.

² If an American person tells me the definition of the word “meaning” without a dictionary, I get a specific reference. It does not have much value since I already knew it and it’s redundant. So being told the dictionary definition of the word “meaning” is usually not very helpful if it is no longer of use to the interpreter. Once I get the word “meaning” in the two different ways I mentioned (first in terms of the definitional nature, second of the value that it provides), the advantage of this word would be that I can actually use it when I want to be ambiguous like most musicologists.

Reading across disciplines allowed me to find a group of emergentists who say meaning is not intrinsic to the words (see, e.g., Deacon 2012). The meaning could not be in the sign vehicle as a group of sounds had to have been chosen arbitrarily in English or, for example, my native language Korean, at some point in the past. The meaning of any words, like the ones I'm typing here now, is then something that is correlated within the physical world, where the importance is at best in the context of other words, to something that one wants to have accomplished in the world (see, e.g., Kohn 2013:27-8). The important discursive contexts of all music, including yours and mine, is limited by what Charles Seeger calls "a linguocentric predicament" (1977:180), i.e., the way words relate to the world and the way the state of the world relates to the interpreter. Sometimes it's helpful to escape the perspectivism via a joint emergentist and Peircean account, in which *no mind* is standing back and doing the work of interpretation, and psychology thus has to be understood merely as an emerging process of doing interpreting (semiosis). My proposed analysis, then, is clearly not first person, but a common semiotic language for making sense of all forms of communication (e.g., linguistic, pictorial, behavioral).³ To be precise, I am not taking a first-person perspective whether or not I speak with people, when I observe their actions and reactions. Further, I can observe, for instance, responses of crowds and concerts, without always resorting to speech to assess those responses through linking my observations to interviews with audience members.

This theory to which I will consistently return in the remainder of my dissertation might strike some readers as an apolitical patternism of sorts. It *seems* to downplay the privileged mode in ethnomusicology and social studies, in which one's purpose as an academic is to try to see through the eyes and hear through the ears of people and talk about it from their experience (Geertz 1973; Jackson 2013). The broad swath of my discipline's literature lets that person speak for themselves instead of ME translating it into the politics of representation (Feld 2012; Guilbault 2014). In fact, my chapters get a lot of quotes from interlocutors who look at their own lives in comparison to others and make things politically changeable. Every single chapter begins by quoting somebody.

My focus, however, differs from the postmodern ethnomusicological convention in that I consider my interlocutor's non-linguistic communications as *exceeding* what they were saying to me and to each other. So there is a clear contrast between my writing and their speech acts. While I acknowledge that importance can be a value term and it can mean a host of things, I am not interested in talking about the value more than the reference. Just interpreting, framing, contextualizing, and commenting on people's words gave me sleepless nights and caused me sorrow. Is it just me or is the world going haywire? Still, my interlocutors will be speaking about their reference and the social consequences of it. What I don't understand about the complex fractal patterns of their self-organization is a thick book. That said, I think it's crucial to pick out how that semantics is nonetheless arbitrary and neglecting things that could not be put

³ In contrast, linguistic analysis or musical analysis focuses on one modality.

into words. It is my duty as a scholar to distinguish a possibility of looking forward wistfully to a day we can help endow everyone with agency, from the realization that data loss may occur when compressing everything everyone feels into how “words only acquire meanings in terms of the greater context of other such words to which they systemically relate” (Kohn 2013:39). The bottom line is that I quote a lot of people at length but solely with the aim of using the quotes as instances of what my interlocutors are not very often, or not at all, doing to each other on behalf of nature or deities.

So... without marching in the direction of anthropological linguistics, the dissertation is structured as follows:

Chapter 1 sets the stage by outlining how certain primate “calls” are incorporated into music as part of political expression. What surprises me about the field of activities related to orangutan song is that, in Indonesia, there are very many vocal primates. Gibbons, for example, are extremely vocal primates. Orangutans are pretty nonvocal, but they do produce simple vocalizations. As a result, I find a tendency of musicians to have the gibbon “calls” incorporated into their songs about the orangutan... “*aaaauuu!*” or sample it alongside the real orangutan “call” though the two calls sound radically different. The chapter is focused on a singer-songwriter who uses the gibbon “call” even after hearing the real orangutan in the wild. I follow her in the jungles of Borneo where we meet both gibbons and orangutans that live in the same areas and are affected by the change in ecology in the same way. She notices that the gravity of the situation isn’t as obvious to people outside the forests as it is to us, while “*aaaauuu!*” might have been remembered incorrectly as a gibbon “call” by Indonesians in general. With that comes a sense that non-orangutan vocalization, compared to orangutan vocalization, might more readily be apprehended as representative of the orangutan and other apes, the whole forest, and Indonesia with its ecosystems. We conclude that having both primates represented in the same song points to the same thing politically.

In Chapters 2 and 3, I draw some parallels between the semiotics of shamanism and of music. In Chapter 2, I quote a series of claims made about why event organizers have shamans. What the organizers are saying almost always foregrounds the importance of the shaman’s presence at music festivals. When the organizers say they feel that shamanism is meaningful, they are, in a sense, communicating something about the shaman’s value in roughly the same sense that the music about the orangutans is meant to manifest something about their importance. I use their claims at length to instantiate how people’s minds have become, not just in the West but in Indonesia, so wonderfully flexible that they can derive, dream about, and reflect on meaning from almost anything. Their belief systems could then enable them to believe that the shaman makes things happen even if it does not make logical sense. I trace the story of a shaman who many believe can pull clouds away from a festival with his fingers.

In Chapter 3, I conduct in-depth case studies of the actual work that’s being done by one famous shaman and others who operate in similar ways. I pay close attention to how shamans are not interested in talking to deities, but rather are trying to convince the gods to do something

for the shamans themselves in response to the fact that they haven't eaten anything for days, and have abstained from sex, while producing smoke because it simulates cloud movements. They offer recitations, but in languages that they don't speak, such as Arabic, Mandarin, and Hindi. I document how the shamans are interceding on behalf of organizers and musicians for their value. In order to make the gods notice that, the shamans are non-linguistically using their abstentions as what they believe to be the most efficacious methods.

Thus, Chapters 1, 2, and 3 are my stabs at explaining *what is being communicated*. As musicians and shamans attempt to communicate with the target of the communications (deities) or for the cause on behalf of which communication is undertaken (nature), the process of their interactions is playing a role in restructuring their audiences' thinking about referents. These chapters examine how, as both subsets of individuals are trying to get somebody else to do something for them, they are expected to attract a large audience, getting them interested in orangutans. My chapters show how to use that audience and that excitement to resist the tendency for these large corporations that strip the forests and to do the work of protest or conservation. I leverage the fact that both are imitating things that resemble what they want to accomplish, such as smoke/cloud and primate "call"/melody — to highlight the pervasiveness of *the non-meaningful semiotic* communications that exceed that mere description of differences in things we call semantics.

Chapter 4 echoes the same logic but with electric guitar players. This is where I set out to explain *what enables the non-meaningful semiotic*. I focus on an amp modeling technology that allows guitarists to, first and foremost, ignore any subtle differences between sounds produced through the real amp and those produced through the simulator. The goal of these guitarists is to reduce the variability of tube amplifiers, which can sound different depending on the variability of tropical wind, rain, and temperature, not to mention voltage fluctuation. In semiotic terms, the examination of such work strengthens the insights of the previous chapters — on how attention to nuance and distinction plays an interesting, yet secondary, role in non-linguistic interactions.

Chapter 5 investigates how a couple of the musicians turned out to have actually given up a relationship of living together as a couple due to religious differences, while still *taking advantage of the non-semantic musical* to be together. At first glance, they don't talk to each other anymore after parents got in the way of their affinity, citing the Indonesian law that obliges all married couples to have the same religion. Meanwhile, they play music in the same band, sing at and over each other on the same stage at the same event for primate justice. Focusing on the common textuality among marriage, law, and indoctrination will allow the reader to see how they all have symbolic rules that corner individuals to do certain things, share certain thoughts, and typically in terms of different religions that diverge widely. By contrast, my findings suggest that playing music could have no particular meaning that's potentially conflicting. The risk for the parents, then, would be that music does a good job of bringing people's emotions in

sync with each other *beyond the words* of the powerful, the family, the elite, the administration, and the belief systems.

The extent of the impact these non-linguistic communication processes can have elsewhere remains an open question. My research can only take steps in the direction I think is helpful to elucidate the logic of *what may seem linguistic, but is strangely not so*.

Methodology

To clarify my empirical strategy, I shall summarize the procedures for obtaining evidence for the logic I mentioned above. I do so not simply to outline my methods of network expansion and resource mobilization, but also to construct a narrative that strikes a middle ground between patterns of commonality and differences observed across my field site. Important is how these arrangements gave rise to spontaneous findings as I detail in the following pages.

I conducted a field research project circulating among Java, Sumatra, and Borneo, Indonesia, from August 2016 through November 2017. Building on relationships established during my preliminary and follow-up visits to Java in 2014, 2015, 2018, and 2019, I employed a research strategy that combines an analysis of multi-site participant observation, collaborative songwriting and performance, qualitative and open-ended interviews, surveys, expert consultations, archiving, audio recording, visual documentation, attending and delivering lectures at a local university and community, and touring with musicians as an unofficial member of the road crew. Each method turned out to be a building component for the next, while all methods somehow overlapped and fed into my observational analysis. In particular, touring with interlocutors enabled a continuous feedback loop, in which to gather and recalibrate qualitative interpretation throughout the whole process, at times by being around each other and sensing something remarkable through what one of my interlocutors would call “many unspoken words” (F. Stevy, personal communication, April 15, 2017).

In order to identify the factors underpinning the embedding of animal sounds and shamanism in concerts, I first compiled a list of songs that either 1) have lyrics about the orangutan plight or primates in general but do not use orangutan sounds, 2) sample orangutans’ natural sounds of communication in songs, whose structure assimilates other Indonesian pop songs with brief recordings of orangutans added in, or 3) integrate primate sounds by arranging them as rhythmic or melodic elements.

Next, using these three categories to mine a database of songs made me notice that most of these songs have been performed at a particular series of annual primate justice advocacy concerts. My best chance of constructing a narrative that would do justice to these events and potentially broader phenomena, then, was to capitalize on their own network resources. I contacted the event organizers, and upon their suggestion, took part in a series of boot camps from which they sprang, in 2015 and 2017 in Central Java. This was essentially a combination of weeklong information sessions in which to estimate causal parameters that endanger wildlife

under expert supervision, and military-style team-building activities that are adaptive (wilderness camping), community-engaged (teaching local children), competitive (tug-of-war), creative (singing, event planning), and physically demanding (long-distance marching, roleplaying as cops/dissidents). After the completion and repetition of this training, I became an official member of the group. Although these periods gave me some cases of food poisoning, cuts and bruises, and sleepless nights, they granted me access to orangutan shelters in Borneo, where a musician and I revised an orangutan song (Chapter 1), and a seat in a series of event planning meetings that produce and disseminate said series of concerts (Chapter 5).

Despite the surface accessibility, it took some informants a few years to open up. As it turned out, all primate justice event organizers were Muslim women, whose male partners would typically prevent girlfriends and wives from ethnographic encounters with another male. Relatedly, the Managing Director of the Centre For Orangutan Protection told me that he could not believe how guys can be so lazy while it's women that do all the work (Ramadhani, personal communication, February 7, 2017). Sensing high levels of passive-aggressive hostility from some of these males, I gradually familiarized them with my notion of academic integrity that does not necessitate a personal relationship between researcher and subject. Soon after the ice dissolved, these women seemed free to share with me the archive of all event proposals, rundowns, budget and progress reports. These women also put me in touch with musicians (Chapters 1 through 5), and even rain shamans about whose existence I had not yet known (Chapters 2 and 3), with whom they produced these concerts (Chapter 5).

To deduce the impacts of these songs in facilitating emotional resonance across primates, I took part in important recording and mixing sessions in cities, in addition to song rearrangement processes in jungles. I proceeded to conduct observation at concert venues through the hundred-some performances of the songs I study from within and outside the abovementioned series of events. While there I devoted particular attention to the intertwining of musical interactions (Chapter 4) and managerial orientations (Chapter 5). Evidence to test my arguments on the efficacy of these phenomena therefore comes from an original dataset of multisensory experiences. Focusing on musical interactions offered unique opportunities to study why certain modes of musicalizing primate sounds accomplish certain things, and why people might prefer one mode over another or use them in combination.

While most of the work was being done in Indonesia, my objective was to work on an unconventional way of analyzing music that would be applicable more broadly to the production of music elsewhere. Although building outward from Indonesia would be a slightly different way of knowing music than just a nationally-delimited process, it has several advantages. First, musicians might benefit by learning from this case regarding how they might advocate about global warming, for example, with an assortment of contested issues in a variety of locations. Chapter 1 will show the stark contrast between the processes of musical sampling and literary quotation. Most existing theories of musical borrowing follow the footsteps of relativism insofar as they consider all things musical in social terms, and as a result, collapse everything into a

language model (see, e.g., Monson 1996). While Monson’s narrative and the like convincingly articulate music’s context by which to recognize what is being quoted, they largely neglect how instrumental music, not to mention any natural or mechanical sound incorporated in music, does not always represent propositions and claims, but rather simulates emotions and perspectives that may or may not distinctively be area-specific.

In addition, it should come as no surprise that most Indonesian people in this study never hear an orangutan in the wild. Only a very small minority of Indonesians lives in areas where orangutans live nowadays. One prime example is Arian Arifin (b. 1974), one of Indonesia’s leading musical figures and the main vocalist of the metal band called Seringai (2002-present). Here is somebody who not only headlined and featured in some major primate justice events (Sound For Orangutan, Yogyakarta, 2015 & Orangutan Day of Freedom, Jakarta, 2017), but also adopted an orangutan through a conservation program (the Borneo Orangutan Survival Foundation, Bogor, 2011). Nonetheless, Arian has never left the highly-charged urban lifestyle of South Jakarta in favor of an alternative way of jungle living. The bottom line is that, for an Indonesian individual to recognize a primate “call” is as rare an experience as it is for American Midwesterners. Before entering the field site, I assumed otherwise: ‘Alright. Indonesia is undoubtedly the primary place to find orangutans, and so it’s got to be *the* Indonesian musicians who borrow natural sounds to promote interest among *the* Indonesian audience in *their* primate ecology.’ However, I was too quick to presuppose that this combination would be targeted *specifically* to a population that is already exposed to orangutan, or at least their sounds. Most Indonesians would seem definitely not to know. Take, for example, a song titled “Orangutan” (1996). Produced by a man named Zico, it is the oldest known Indonesian song about orangutan, whose verse constantly repeats . . . “*Orangu-Tan, Tan!*” In this example, however, the producer samples several different animal “calls,” from a monkey and gibbon, not from an orangutan, while the music video actually shows a macaque as though these ape callers could all just be orangutans.

Therefore, this type of music may generate a degree of awareness that would be no less effective than if the music was shown to a population elsewhere. While Indonesians live *there* and they can conceivably make a difference in national policy, it is people in developed countries who purchase the majority of goods made of palm oil,⁴ whose excess of production over consumption is a major part of what drives the exponential destruction of the Southeast Asian rainforests. That would be another reason why the project’s conceptual and empirical strategies tend to shift away from cultural specificity. The resulting analysis offers an opportunity for area-focused scholars to see what these Indonesians can have in common. Further, this approach

⁴ IndexMundi (2020), for example, estimates that Indonesia may have the highest consumption of palm oil by country. However, while Indonesia is commonly known for producing over 80% of the world’s palm oil, its domestic consumption (14,875 MT/metric tons) falls short of those of 73 other countries combined (57,683 MT).

freed up my time to focus on broad issues without trying too hard to construct exclusive access to local celebrities who are relatively unknown in the West.

That said, two historically contingent outcomes from conducting ethnography in Indonesia deserve recognition. First, Indonesia prompted me to brainstorm ideas in a way I had never thought possible. My project happened to take place in the largest Muslim country in the world, where several mosques crowd onto a single block. Not unlike the rest of the Muslim population of the world, Indonesian Muslims are ideally supposed to pray to Allah five times a day. Additionally, their mosques have procured quality loudspeakers to amplify the call to their prayers to adjacent areas. On any given day, it begins around 4 a.m. with a volume that is ample enough to be heard within a wide radius of many hundreds of yards as I have heard it even within a windowless restroom inside one of Jakarta's magnificent mega malls.⁵ I would generally enjoy hearing these combinatorial atonalities overlapping, alternating, and, to quote one Indonesian source, "competing against one another" (anonymous, personal communication, October 16, 2017; see also Richter 2012:1) from several perceived source locations wherever I went. However, because I had just never been a morning person during my lifetime, I had to change my circadian rhythm after many failed attempts to sleep with earplugs. No longer could I have the luxury of forcing myself to sleep in one large chunk of time to cope with the general existential angst. The psychophysiological aspect of adapting my internal clock to biphasic segmented sleep turned out to be fruitful, serendipitously. Some of the best possible thoughts in this dissertation occurred to me as I was falling asleep twice a day during the phase of threshold consciousness.

Second, and relatedly, my interest in the interpretation of shamanism and belief systems results partly from my day-to-day interactions with, on the one hand, the very many taxi drivers who seemed comfortable asking what my belief is, typically during the ice-breaking stages of our initial encounters, and on the other, the primate justice volunteers who did not hesitate to expect me to lead their mealtime prayer, taking as axiomatic that belief in any supernatural being is universal. I learned that being an atheist is not an option, especially in Indonesia, but I also learned to come out of the closet upon my exit from the field, and speak openly about the semiotics of belief systems, objectively, even though my family members in Korea and abroad told me on a number of occasions that it's just not a safe thing to do. Thus, my chapters on shamanism (Chapters 2 and 3) and interfaith collaboration for primate justice (Chapter 5) are a response to the encouragement and inspiration of these Indonesians' felt senses of mental representation.⁶

In this section, a methodological introduction to my attempts to strike a middle ground between what I perceive to be contextual and universal traits of my informants was given. The focus of this section has been not only on outlining why, how, and where I collected evidence on

⁵ Some malls use their own loudspeakers to do this indoors.

⁶ By this, I mean the notion of "intentionality" (see, e.g., Brentano 1874).

my questions, but also on clarifying my multi-method research strategy as operating at the emerging nexus of chance and choice. In the next section, I will provide a summary of theories that I have found useful to the project's discourse.

Contributions to the Literature

By highlighting the broader comparative relevance of similarities that rise above regionally-confined units of inquiry, this study may help facilitate a focus on some correlations between non-linguistic forms of relating. Alan Lomax (1959), in particular, dared to take up how things in the world could be similar. I have little problem with his audacity, though I might not agree with the way he framed it. A thought occurred to Lomax that musical traditions that involve lots of quarter tones, for example, could be associated with highly polygynous societies, where one sees males that have many females and in which there is suppression of female sexuality, wherein females are mostly dominated by men, while men can have multiple wives. A deep driver of what they do, Lomax assumed, seemed to be a strong correlation between asset assessment (women could not own property) and dance (the upper body stays straight through northern climates, whereas people in tropical climates are likely to move their hips).

A number of correlations Lomax made throughout his works came without any clarification as to how the musical styles were necessarily causing one set of social mores or another. As a result of exploring just how things tend to go together, his final products offered a very strong version of seeing connections that were not so much causal but correlative, in which, to some extent, there *are* non-linguistic modalities that correlate with cultural styles. That scope has been lost mostly in North America since Alan Lomax, while some European scholars never abandoned it. There seems to be a hot area when Lomax was doing his work in the 1970s and 80s that brought him into disrepute. It saddens me because Lomax did provide some useful information despite grand generalizations.

What I am doing in this project may have a little bit of Lomax's comparative bent (see, e.g., Lomax 1968 for his parallelism between music and dance), but not only that, it tries to learn from his mistakes. I find inspiration in his potential to *not* make simple associations based upon, for example, statistical correlations. He showed me how extensive data collection may yield too many things to attack. Since the mid-1980s, when statistical analysis of social science phenomena was in its infancy and looked down upon, people in the arts have not been having things quantified and statistically analyzed.

So, my dissertation borrows from an advanced way of describing music's non-linguistic properties. A wealth of literature gains their insights by juxtaposing cases gathered from "cultures widely separated in space or time that share some reasonably objective features or technical properties" (Tenzer and Roeder 2011:4). For one, the theory of musical competence and interaction (Brinner 1995) was built outward from a field site, Indonesia, in such a way that would be applicable to, for example, a variety of non-semantic time-shaping properties of music,

like cadence formula, cues, and meter changes (see, e.g., Gerstin 1998, Bates 2008, Norton 2009, Sunardi 2011). Chapter 4 can add to the pragmatics by conceptualizing how a series of drops in guitar tuning system has increased the need to *stop* producing subtly different amp sounds across venues, and subsequently popularized a technology that assimilates simulated amp sounds to the real thing. With the aim of foregrounding the spontaneous properties of live music production, I theorize how random weather conditions (tropical rain, wind, and temperature) push guitarists into minimizing any disruption in their musical interactions via simplified rigs. I offer a constellation of variables that organizes the world so that there can be a musical interaction.

The logic by which I capture a range of similarities between music and shamanism builds on distinct, yet related fields of philosophy, emergentist anthropology, and neurology that objectifies: a) the non-linguistic signs that enable the direct communication of what the experience of a feeling is, and b) how this constitutes a broader semiotic field in which language is caught up. Studying musical communication, then, can be about going beyond reasoning with everything linguistically (Locke 1680; Seeger 1977). Of importance here is why that uniquely human articulation of difference we call semantics cannot transparently be harnessed to everything.

While the claim that non-linguistic signs play a universal role in mediating emotions is not novel,⁷ it enables several insights. Philosopher Susanne Langer argues that the general structure of music tends to present what she calls “non-discursive signs” (Langer 1942:75-83; 165-198), that is, an awareness of that which communicates emotion directly by, for example, dancing, without ever having to say this means that. Next, Langer’s thinking accords with Terrence Deacon’s neurological studies (1997), in particular his rich theoretical elaboration on animal vocalizations. Emotional expressivity, for Deacon, is innate in the vocalities of almost all species in a way that enables the use and interpretation of timbre, which in part arises from the variable strength of overtones (or partials). I adopt Deacon’s analytical strategy that extends beyond the immediate realm of linguistic relativity, and extends it far into the question of why any process of interpreting emotionality in sound is not just context-dependent. Rather, he reveals how that process can be simple and hierarchical in the sense that non-linguistic signs communicate more directly — or, without having to indirectly define anything in relation to other words — than linguistic ones (Deacon 1997: 113, 367, 526).

Deacon’s attention to the *directness* of non-linguistic signs in communicating emotions resonates with Eduardo Kohn (2012), who exemplifies how to build on the abovementioned body of work by conducting qualitative research based on extensive case knowledge. It is Kohn who provides an ethnographic opening for collecting evidence on the pervasiveness of non-

⁷ In his book, titled *Event: A Philosophical Journey through a Concept* (2014), Slavoj Žižek called this approach “the ontological or ontic.” He uses the term to denote a Western concern “with reality itself, in its emergence and deployment [that has been] kidnapped [mostly] by natural sciences” (ibid.:15; see also Hacking 2002).

linguistic signs. To trace what he terms “knowing without knowing” (Kohn 2013:86-89), he predominantly focuses on dozens of sign properties that humans are said to effortlessly share with the rest of the biotic sphere in the upper Ecuadorian Amazon. By looking at how the Quechua language of the Runa can spontaneously be nested within a more general process of interpretation, Kohn suggests how “in certain semiotic domains context doesn’t apply, and even in those domains such as human ones where it does, such contexts, as we can see by attending to that which lies beyond the human, are, [...] permeable” (ibid.:39). His field observation fortifies Deacon’s Peircean understanding that non-linguistic signs are actually communicating more *directly* than words, hierarchically.⁸

The claim that non-linguistic signs play a *direct* role in communicating emotions runs with but exceeds a recent problematization of the nature-culture dichotomy in social studies (see, e.g., Descola 2013 [2005]). While my chapters do quote some things about how my interlocutors apprehend the work that they are doing in the studios, concerts, and in the jungles, my focus is on how different primate “calls” *enable* access to a nonhuman other. As I made clear early on in the introduction, I am more interested in reifying the reference, than the importance of its existence. So I restrict my usage of the term “nature” to refer to why any sound can be configured among some musicians as “natural.” Rather than articulating how distinctively non-Western their notion of nature could be (see, e.g., de Castro 1998), I consider all of the nervous system as evolved for feeling (Deacon 2011:934-37, 979-80), so as to produce any certain sign — whether it be musical, pictorial, linguistic, or behavioral — at a certain value, certain reference, certain things that matter, when interlocutors want to get specific about their feeling. That is to say, a sign has got what one wants, desires, and is interested in, is attached to. Simply put, I describe how these things emerge to become structured into a particular topic, idea, or an event, in which a polarity between attraction and repulsion, and its empirical detail are riding on a stream of feeling.

Exploring the immediacy of non-linguistic signs in communication may help refine a musicological output in three ways. First, *listening* may be seen as following a stream of non-semantic information besides the process of deriving music’s important contexts or meaningful differences. Next, *composing* may be viewed as finding ways to communicate an experience of a feeling through that physical process of interpretation we call semiotics. Next, *musical communication* may be examined as an exchange of one’s experience, which could not be put into words.

⁸ Louis Hjelmslev considers the semiotic as “a hierarchy, any of whose components admits of a further analysis into classes defined by mutual relation, so that any of these classes admits of an analysis into derivatives defined by mutual mutation (1969:134). In this semiotic hierarchy, any non-linguistic sign can be communicated *directly* without having to “refer to [an] object *indirectly* by virtue of the ways in which they [words] relate systemically to other such symbols” (Kohn 2013:32; italics mine).

Notes on Translation

I apply pseudonyms to a number of individuals who need to remain anonymous. The pseudonyms I use were picked according to what they say they commonly see in their school textbooks. In case of musicians, I will not reveal the names of their bands, bandmates, song titles, and lyrics, while still indicating the non-semantic properties of their performance, like vocalization styles, tonal movements, and how they interact amongst themselves and with audiences. My interlocutors and I used Indonesian and English, and Korean, at the request of those who like to get to know my culture. All foreign quotations are translated into English unless it's a proper noun, buzzword, proper nouns, or code-switching in a sentence, with untranslated ones footnoted.

Notes on Transduction

My core thesis was scribbled a month after my exit from the field. And that was two years ago. I had not yet written any chapter, and I didn't think I had answers to anything. But the thought occurred to me in geometric patterns, so I had to rework my way through the images in words throughout all chapters. This means that any shortcomings left in the finished product are my own. In fact, I don't feel entitled to take any credit for this because, in the privacy of my mind, I'd spend the following years cherry-picking a lot of other thoughts that are irrelevant to what I'm about to transduce. Waves of anxiety warped my perception as I was coping with the urge to run away from the geometry, but here it comes...

1. Homogenizing Difference: How Different “Calls” Represent the Same Politics

“*Aaaaauu!*” ... a singer-songwriter is calling out, making what many once believed was an orangutan sound. “It’s *dimana-mana* [everywhere]. Now that ‘*aaaauu*’ is part of the melody, ‘*uuuuuuuu!*’ But I changed [it] to ‘*aaaauu*,’ didn’t I? Because the sound of the orangutan, it’s like, like in the movie, isn’t it? Something like that” (Oppie Andaresta, personal communication, March 17, 2017).⁹ The challenge of quoting orangutan “calls” in music would seem that, of all the primates we know of, orangutans are one of the least vocal. And, in the same environment, in Sumatra, Borneo, and Java, they have gibbons. Gibbons are extremely vocal and they constantly keep calling... “*uuuuuuuu!*” So that particular “call” is heard all over the rainforests and songs,¹⁰ but it actually belongs to the gibbon that live and compete against the orangutan for the same kinds of fruits in the same areas.

This chapter is about the singer-songwriter’s willingness to entertain the challenging and counterintuitive idea of homogenizing different primate “calls” in a song on behalf of the orangutan. I trace the trajectory of her best attempts to make the song accessible to anyone who’s interested in communing with nature. The song is aimed at foregrounding how the world economy is impacting the ecology of Borneo, and how its nonhuman primate habitat is being bulldozed to clear land for oil palm plantations. Conventional wisdom would expect someone like her to articulate the significance of the value of the vocal differences in these primates. I show that this may not be the case. My findings suggest that she keeps quoting the gibbon, even after hearing the orangutan in the wild. She supports her decision by actually making an intensive jungle trip with me! We learn that both gibbons and orangutans are affected by the change in ecology in the same way: orangutan habitats are gibbon habitats; so if somebody wipes out the orangutan habitat, they are wiping out the gibbon habitat and vice versa. Through a series of attempts at composing, arranging, recording, and performing the *same* song with the orangutan or gibbon “call,” we conclude that representing either one of them communicates the *same* thing politically.

I want to make clear that many things I talk about in this chapter can and will be framed in terms of the ecological question: What’s the context that partly determines what’s going to be in and outside of the song? STILL, I would like to see if there is any general principle that will account for this case. I mean, some of the same people, including my interlocutor, are involved in at least two things: political ecology and musical communication. On the one hand, there is an industrial process that’s damaging nature, and on the other, musical features that influence a

⁹ The musician is married to an American citizen and likes to mostly speak English with foreigners like me.

¹⁰ For example, a Balinese band called Navicula likewise quotes “*aaaauuuu*” in their song “Orangutan” (2013).

particular set of genres I'm looking at. While it's important to highlight how they overlap, I will take a step back and see what it is that brings them all together, to see if there is a general principle behind each of these that could be applied across borders (Brinner 1995; Deacon 1997; Tenzer 2006). My intuition is that putting animal "calls" into music, works differently than just simply quoting words about them (Langer 1948; Seeger 1977), or having the calls separated, or having picture of primates, or even having an actual primate on stage.

The chapter is structured as follows. The first section outlines the song production process, why it was composed, who produced it, with and for children. The next section delves into the song arrangement process with emphasis on what makes something a children's song. The next section reveals what it's like to record the song with children, who not only sing what they're told to sing, but also provide usable feedback that will aid adults to improve their imagination of what children want. Next up is a song revision process in the jungles of Borneo and a comparison of how the song was performed beforehand and afterwards. A theorization of that process concludes the chapter.

Composing Simplicity on Behalf of the Orangutan

A press release states in the last week of June 2017:

As a mother, musician, and a songwriter who also happened to be the Ministry of Forestry's environmental ambassador, I hereby present to you an alternative education, a fun way to nurture children in music. I believe that children, including my own child, Bejo, have the potential to make changes. Habits shape their mindsets each day. Mental evolution takes place from an early age. On the album, there are 6 songs about river, water, forest, and orangutan. All songs are sung by Oppie and the Children of the Earth vocal group. In the "Orang Utan" song, I invite children to empathize with that critically endangered species we call the orangutan. The profits from the song sales (CD and iTunes) will be donated to the Centre For Orangutan Protection (Oppie Andaresta, June 30, 2017; italics mine).¹¹

That week's new releases include a song produced on behalf of the orangutan. In this section, I will unpack what I have italicized above in more detail: who produced it (*a mother, musician, songwriter*) for whom and what (*children, habits, the orangutan, a wildlife NGO*).

¹¹ *Sebagai seorang ibu dan musisi sekaligus pencipta lagu yang juga kebetulan duta lingkungan KLH2911, maka saya membuat edukasi alternatif, edukasi dengan cara yang menyenangkan yaitu dalam bentuk buku dan CD untuk anak. Saya percaya bahwa anak-anak termasuk Bejo anak saya sangat berpotensi untuk membuat perubahan. Mindsetnya dibentuk oleh kebiasaan sehari. Evolusi mental dari usia dini. Di CD ada 6 lagu bertema sungai, air, hutan, dan orangutan. Semua lagu dinyanyikan oleh Oppie dan kelompok vocal Suara Anak Bumi. Pada lagu orangutan, saya mengajak anak-anak until berempati pada hewan langka yaitu orang utan. Hasil penjualan lagu orangutan (CD dan iTunes) disumbangkan ke yayasan orang utan Centre for Orangutan Protection (COP).*

Oppie Andaresta (b. 1971, Jakarta) launched a children's song project in 2012.¹² That happened after a visit to the Muara Pantuan village in East Kalimantan (Indonesian Borneo), where children live along the river banks. There she found many adults throwing garbage into the river, thinking that water flow would carry it out to sea and eventually into the ocean. The same could be said of Puncak, West Java, where children she met have developed a habit of littering without thinking about where that litter would end up in the absence of street sweeping and trash collection contractors (Oppie Andaresta, personal communication, March 17, 2017).¹³ Experiences like this compelled Oppie to start her environmental program through music with the aim of firmly establishing children as the primary audience.

The project's first album, titled *Lagu Untuk Bumi* [Songs for the Earth], was produced in 2012 to supplement her educational tour to several places in Indonesia. She went to remote places like Sulawesi and Flores with local artists, such as Resha Rashtrapatiji, and her own child, Kai Matari Bejo Kaler. The songs in the album are generally themed around environmental sustainability, and the impact and consequences of global warming not just on Indonesians but on all humans. Oppie would really like children

to develop the *habit* of caring for the environment at as early an age as possible. In simple and easy ways, like throwing trash in the bin and not wasting water, using electricity sparingly, not using car to go everywhere, by riding bicycles, through reduce and recycle. And little things like that, I think, should start as early as possible and start with yourself (ibid.; italics mine).¹⁴

Such "little things" infuse tracks, such as "*Gosok Gigi* [Brush Your Teeth]," "*Gowes-gowes* [cycling]," and "3R (Reduce Reuse Recycle)" (Oppie & Suara Anak Bumi 2012).

The second album Oppie just released, titled *Lagu Dari Tepian Sungai* [Songs from the River Bank], is about garbage, water, forests, rivers, and orangutans. Here she wants "to increase awareness of the fate of the orangutan, or [even just] their [native] presence in

¹² The upcoming sections will detail her stardom in the 1990s, where I examine how she makes music with adults in comparison with children.

¹³ *Lalu saat saya berkunjung ke Muara Pantuan Kalimantan, dimana anak-anak tinggal di tepian sungai mereka terbiasa membuang sampah ke sungai, karena percaya sampah akan dibawa ke laut. Di daerah hulu tepatnya di kawasan Puncak, Jawa Barat, anak-anak sudah terbiasa membuang sampah di tempat sampah, tapi masalahnya kemanakah nasib sampah setelah itu.*

¹⁴ *Tujuannya adalah agar anak-anak sedini mungkin dari usia dini sudah punya kepribadian atau punya behavior peduli lingkungan. Dengan cara-cara yang sangat sederhana, dengan cara yang mudah, misalnya buang sampah di tempat sampah terus tidak buang-buang air, menggunakan listrik secara hemat, kemudian kemana-mana tidak naik mobil, jadi misalnya naik sepeda, kemudian bisa melakukan reduce recycle. Dan hal-hal kecil seperti itu yang saya rasa harus dimulai dari sedini mungkin dan dimulai dari diri sendiri.*

Indonesia” (ibid.).¹⁵ She also wants children to have “empathy and sympathy for other living beings, especially in this case the orangutan who turned out to be like us, *like* humans” (ibid.; italics mine).¹⁶ The likeness she talks about can be heard through the lyrics...

They are also like the human
They need a house, need food, also need to be loved
They are also like us
They have a heart, feeling, and cry when things hurt
(Oppie Andaresta, “Orang Utan” 2017).¹⁷

At first glance, the song could just be *about* the significance of our likeness to the orangutan.¹⁸ BUT, beneath the arbitrary veneer of semantics, the song actually becomes *like* the orangutan, more directly without attaching words to non-linguistic senses, through the rhythmic change of tones that do not break up in the way the human voice does in speech (stops, affricates, and fricatives). As I will explain in greater detail later, Oppie introduces in the middle of the song what people often misinterpret as the orangutan sound...

“Aaaaauu!”

“I trust NGOs more than the government,” the song producer and guitarist Didit Saad adds, “Children can be better than us [adults]. Young children and future generations could care not just about humans but about animals.”¹⁹ Didit²⁰ is referring to a group of youth volunteers known as “Orangufriends” (a contraction of orangutan and friends) and the Centre For Orangutan Protection, their affiliation. In 2014, the NGO and its volunteers invited Oppie to perform the “Orang Utan” song at Sound For Orangutan, a series of concerts they have organized annually in Jakarta and elsewhere since 2012. This was when the song had not yet been recorded, and Oppie and her son Bejo had performed it just a few times at local charity gigs. Word got out among primate justice volunteers that Oppie had a song under way for the

¹⁵ *Maka kemudian untuk meningkatkan awareness terhadap nasib orangutan atau keberadaan orangutan di Indonesia; Although interesting, my primary interest is not to determine whether Oppie’s use of the English word awareness is evidence of her involvement in a broader stream environmental thinking shaped substantially by English-speaking individuals.*

¹⁶ *Saya ingin juga anak-anak sedari kecil juga mempunyai empati dan simpati kepada makhluk hidup yang lain. Terutama dalam hal ini orangutan yang juga ternyata mereka seperti kita, seperti manusia.*

¹⁷ *Dia juga seperti manusia, butuh rumah butuh makan juga butuh dicinta. Dia juga seperti kita, punya hati punya rasa dan menangis saat luka*

¹⁸ The Malay/Indonesian word “orangutan” actually means ‘person of the forest/jungle,’ thus sedimenting commonality with humans in the perhaps unconscious affective resonance of the word.

¹⁹ *Saya lebih percaya LSM daripada pemerintah, gitu. Sehingga anak-anak itu bisa jadi lebih baik daripada kita, mereka lebih baik, lebih care sama, bukan sama manusia aja, tapi sama animal; Again, Didit’s use of the English term “care” here may attract sociolinguists and the like.*

²⁰ Didit’s accomplishments in the 1990s, like the band Plastik, and his current project, Stars and Rabbit, will be detailed later in a section on his song arrangement process.

orangutan. Still to this day, she seems surprised how NGOs could be so quick that they “actually knew I have an orangutan song” (Oppie Andaresta, personal communication, March 17, 2017).²¹

Oppie also had a more personal reason to produce “Orang Utan”: motherhood. “Actually,” she told me, “I made that song for Bejo, for my child. When he was six, I wanted him to have empathy, have sympathy for endangered species disturbed by human activities. He was the first person to hear me sing the song. Then all of a sudden, he fell down and burst into tears... that’s when I thought, ‘This song is a success.’ He seemed touched, I mean, just like that, he has sympathy, empathy for the fate of orangutans. Then he told me, ‘The orangutans have the same hair color as mine. Almost like me [dark brown].’ He felt as though the orangutans were the same kind, and he felt sorry for them. He said our house has trees so the orangutans can move into our place” (ibid.).²² This turns out to be one of the common responses children have upon hearing the song. After Oppie and Suara Anak Bumi performed the song at a local elementary school, for example, I heard first-graders speaking up, “We have trees! Come to my house!” (*Sekolah Harapan Bangsa*, November 18, 2017).²³

Oppie and I started talking during the song’s pre-mixing phase. Back then she said, “Well, I’ve made the song long enough ago. It’s already been three years. So, because this is a song for kids, we usually have to use gimmicks or something that triggers them, *something interesting to stimulate kids to hear, right?* I use it as a gimmick, like ‘*aaauuu*’ or ‘*uuuuaaa*.’ It feels more like that. It’s an orangutan song. I want to have sound, and it’s got to be the sound of an orangutan. ‘*Aaaauuu!*’ In the [final] recording, there will also be an orangutan sound, another one, from sampling [a popular engineer named Indra Q would later procure and add the real orangutan “long call” to transitional bridges in the background at a low volume]. It’s not

²¹ To be clear, I am not making a naïve claim that *all* NGOs, especially the local ones, do good/clean jobs as the result of suffering for primate justice (see Ortner 2016 for what she terms “dark anthropology,” i.e., social anthropology’s simplistic bifurcation between the oppressor and oppressed). Over time, I’ve come to know that that can’t be true. I am just delivering what reliable sources told me about certain NGOs. Chapter 5 will expand on that to some extent.

²² *Sebetulnya saya bikin lagu tentang orangutan buat mas Bejo, buat anak saya waktu itu usianya 6 tahun. saya juga kepingin anak saya juga punya empati, punya simpati kepada hewan-hewan langka yang diganggu-ganggu karena ulah manusia, jadi saya bikin lagu itu kemudian orang pertama yang saya kasih dengar itu adalah anak saya sih Bejo. Terus tiba-tiba dia tiduran dan dia nangis, saya tanya, kenapa nangis, saya pikir wah lagu ini sukses ya kan, berarti dia terharu, berarti dia kena nih simpati, empati terhadap nasibnya orangutan gitu yakan, terus dia jawabnya kaya gini, ‘Aku kasihan mah soalnya orangutan itu rambutnya Hampir sama kayak aku.’ Dia merasa satu jenis dan merasa kasihan kepada orangutan dan dia kepingin orangutannya pindah ke rumah kami yang banyak pohon besarnya karena hutan-hutan di tebang, rumah orangutan hilang jadi anak saya pingin orangutannya pindah ke rumah saya.*

²³ Jakartan kids nowadays start to learn English at an early age. They can almost never speak Indonesian to their pals for days.

finished yet. [I'm trying to] *make it more simple* [sic]" (personal communication, March 17, 2017; italics indicate her switch to English).²⁴

A principle of simplicity applies transparently to her songs not just for kids but also for adults. The seventh and current President of Indonesia Joko Widodo was one of her beneficiaries. During his first run for president in 2014, Widodo had a campaign song titled "*Salam 2 Jari*" [Two Finger Salute]. This song is said to have played a pivotal role in his campaign, as it headlined a "concert that has successfully boosted the electability of Jokowi, organized by volunteer led by Abdee Negara, a member of Indonesia's famous rock band *Slank*, and a number of artists" (Widojoko 2019:264; italics mine). While Oppie is often portrayed as part of "a number of artists" involved, it's an open secret that that song was originally hers.²⁵ "The whole Indonesia would sing that song," a photographer recalls, "People think it belongs to Slank. But it's her [Oppie]. I've said to her, 'You should claim it!' But she didn't want to make a big deal out of it, because Slank are more famous, the engine of the movement at that time. That [the concert] was the last day of his campaign [at Bung Karno Stadium]. And it was a surprise. 120,000 people showed up. [The song is] simple. Nothing poetic. But that's enough (Diana Tarigan, personal communication, April 28, 2017).

"So the simplicity of music is about being humble," Oppie told me later on, "'*Salam 2 Jari*,' it's from ME! I made that concept. You know what? The concept of the song, '*Salam* [a term for "peace" derived from Arabic "سلام"]' is really Indonesian. '*Salam, salam*,' it's really humble. And I said, [in a meeting with Slank], we have to make a song that's really humble, and easy to remember, so everybody can sing it, even kids! So that we don't have to promote it on TV or radio [since the broadcast media at the time favored another candidate Prabowo Subianto]. Everybody will sing it everywhere, and it happened. At the end of the meeting, suddenly, I sang, '*Sa-lam, Du-a Ja-ri, jangan lu-pa pilih Joko-wi!* [Two Finger Salute, don't forget to vote Joko Widodo]." And everybody was like 'Wow, that's good! Sing again.' The song is really short, but you can create [and add more] lyrics [to the verses].²⁶ So it's up to everybody. But, [the

²⁴ *Nah, kalau lagu orangutan itu saya bikinnya sudah cukup lama itu, sudah 3 tahun yang lalu, jadi karena ini lagunya untuk anak-anak jadi biasanya kita harus menggunakan gimmick-gimmick atau trigger-trigger atau something interest to stimulate kids to hear, right? So saya gunakan, apa namanya gimmick-gimmick seperti aaauuu atau uuuaaa! Lebih terasa gitu, ini lagu orangutan, saya kepingin ada sound, sound of orangutan. Aaauuu! Ya dan di rekamannya nanti juga ada, ada suara orangutannya. Yang lain, mungkin dari sampling. Belum, belum selesai. [To] make it more simple [sic].*

²⁵ While Oppie is being openly credited for performing a variant of the song "*Salam 2 Jari*," titled "*Salam 3 Jari*," the first of its kind "*Salam 2 Jari*" is still widely thought to belong to the band Slank.

²⁶ For example, "in Indonesian, there is a *peribahasa* [proverb], "*Berakit-rakit ke hulu, berenang-renang ke tepian*" [which roughly translates as "No pain, no gain"]. It's like, literally, '*Bersakit-sakit dahulu bersenang-senang kemudian*' [To achieve happiness, one must suffer]. And I used it [in my verse with a variation] "*Kita harus menang total dukung revolusi mental*" [We must prevail to support mental revolution]."

chorus] “*Salam Dua Jari, jangan lupa pilih Jokowi*” remains [constant]. That’s the point. Everybody participated, and that was crazy” (Oppie Andaresta, personal communication, August 21, 2017).²⁷

With simplicity as the conceptual framework, the first step in Oppie’s process of music composition demands taking refuge in complete solitude. “I have been in the music world for 25 years,” she reminds me, “and I’m not just a singer. I’m also a singer-songwriter. I mean, for me now to make a song, I don’t need much time. I just need to concentrate and need my own space, privacy, which is VERY private. Then I will focus, I take the guitar, make songs, usually within 30 minutes to an hour the song is finished. Very quickly” (Oppie Andaresta, personal communication, March 17, 2017).²⁸ A flow of distraction-free state of consciousness becomes a catalyst to “look for notes. I’m looking for a melody first, and then I write the lyrics” (ibid).²⁹ That flow turns out as spontaneous as “when we make a song, it’s like a trance, half conscious, right? I cannot tell you how I got it, you know what I mean? It’s like [snapping finger]. Maybe we can call it magic. That’s your own experience. Actually, every person, when they are creating something, they focus, you know what I mean? And, something’s happening” (ibid).³⁰ In other words, she typically has a “*bayangan* [imagination]” when the trance happens... “I got the scene. I cannot write notes, crazy huh? So, first, I play guitar to [session players]. They listen to me, and they can catch like ‘*ding tek tak ding.*’ That’s the big frame. [And then] I tell the bass player, [for example] ‘It’s flat, not groovy. Play like *dung deng-deng deng*’ (ibid.).

The next step Oppie takes involves songwriting with children. Before she talks to Didit the producer, she discusses the song with her son, Bejo, and his pals Vio, Aisyah, and Radit in the *Suara Anak Bumi* [Children of the Earth Sound]. The kids told Didit, “Ms. Oppie likes to chat with us about the song before she sees you” (Didit Saad, personal communication, July 14, 2017).³¹ For example, the kids would help Oppie simplify the melody by cutting out some parts. Originally the song “*Sampah* [Garbage]” opened with a melody “Scattered garbage makes things dirty and smelly. Take it away, put it in the bin.” But the kids removed “put it in the bin,” saying “Take it away” is enough (Oppie Andaresta, personal communication, August 21,

²⁷ All the profit from song sales was donated to Joko Widodo at least until August 2017 (when this conversation took place). To date, the President has openly invited Oppie along with a few other musicians to his personal events, like his son’s wedding. In public, Oppie has been seen at the Bogor Istana Presidential Palace, sitting next to the President for breaking the Ramadan fast (*buka puasa*).

²⁸ *Saya di dunia musik sudah 25 tahun ya, dan saya tidak hanya penyanyi, saya juga singer-songwriter ya. I mean, for me now make a music, make a song, composing a song is not a... I don't need much time. Saya hanya perlu konsentrasi dan perlu ruang sendiri, privacy, yang sangat privat, kemudian saya akan fokus, saya ambil gitar, saya membuat lagu, biasanya dalam waktu 30 menit sampai satu jam lagu itu sudah selesai.*

²⁹ *Saya cari notasi, saya cari melodi kemudian saya tulis lirik*

³⁰ She told me this part in English.

³¹ *Si mbak Oppie suka cerita ke saya sebelum dia datang.*

2017).³² Oppie here works as a “mediator” between the adult and children to brainstorm ideas. Interestingly enough, adults like Didit often told me they learned from doing “something that they hadn’t tried yet” with kids through Oppie, for instance, about “how to play for kids, and illustrate nature through [certain] dynamics [although] [they] don’t directly engage with them. So I put it into my musical library” (Didit Saad, July 14, 2017).³³

Oppie does that “because adults are already busy with their own problems” (personal communication, August 21, 2017). According to the CEO of Borneo Orangutan Survival Foundation (BOSF), one reason could be that “sometimes when I explain stuff to parents who are my age or older than me, it’s difficult [because they often don’t listen]. So we [BOSF education team] send the message through their children” (Jamartin Sihite, personal communication, April 22, 2017).³⁴ Relatedly, children actually do have a say in whistleblowing the orangutan plight. Wildlife trafficking investigators often pay attention to children, because they can speak openly about whatever they witnessed — even if it’s done by their own family members. When the Managing Director of Centre For Orangutan Protection gave a guest lecture on primate injustice at a local elementary school in Samarinda, a child would raise his hand and speak up, “My grandpa has three orangutans kept [illegally] in his house! Later come follow me, unc” (Ramadhani, personal communication, May 15, 2017).³⁵ Oppie here says: “If you tell kids what to do, and actually sometimes their parents also feel ashamed [if they were not doing it already]. It goes like this: You educate kids to throw the garbage in the bin, and the parents will be ashamed if they don’t follow it. Sometimes I tell my kid, ‘Turn off the TV.’ But his dad is still watching it. [He goes,] ‘Dad, why don’t YOU turn it off?’ So I was thinking about that” (ibid.).

In the next section, I detail the song arrangement process. I consult with Didit the producer, seeking his advice on what makes “Orang Utan” (2017) a children’s song. Our conversation takes place in his recording studio in Tangerang in the presence of Aisyah, one of the child singers on the album.

³² [Oppie sings the refrain from the song “Sampah”] “Sampah-sampah, berserahkan, bikin kotor dan bau. Buang sampah, di tempatnya.” Before it was “Buang sampah di tempat sampah.” [The kids said,] “Mbak! Udah buang sampah, jangan di tempat sampah!”

³³ *Sebelumnya saya gak pernah itu. Seperti ya yang dynamic, how to play untuk kids, how to ilustrasi tentang alam. Tidak terlibat diskusi secara musikal dengan anak-anak. Saya ambil itu, saya jadiin masukin ke library musikal saya.*

³⁴ *Kadang-kadang menjelaskan ke orang tua yang seumurannya saya atau lebih tua dari saya itu susah jadi kita nitip pesannya itu lewat anaknya dia.*

³⁵ *‘Aku pernah lihat, om!’ ‘Di mana?’ ‘Kakakku.’ ‘Nanti Om ikut ke rumah ya.’*

Enlarging the Harmonic Range as Enlarging the Visual Field

While it is said that children are more likely to imagine a day in the life of an orangutan, to feel more comfortable opening their arms as pals to them, adults have the capacity to experience much weirder and more subtle emotions also. For example, adults oftentimes feel nostalgic. Children almost never do, because they have yet to have diverse life experiences. Nostalgia is an emotion that compares one's current emotional state to another emotional state in the past (see, e.g., Pinch and Reinecke 2009), so adults no longer have simple emotions, so to speak. Orangutan emotion, one might say, is simpler than adult human emotions (Steiner et al. 2001), and for that reason it might be easier for children to get much more attached to them, to make believe, and maybe even pretend to be an orangutan...

“But there's one thing I don't like about orangutan!” Bejo comes out of the blue.

“What's that?” I could not predict what I'm about to hear next.

“They are the only things that's almost as cute as I am!”

“So you think you are...” Vio, his pal, seems vexed.

“Cuter,” Bejo answers, shrugging shoulders. Vio immediately slaps his shoulder hard enough for me to hear... “Aaaaauu!”

(Kai Bejo and Jeovana Viorell, personal communication, May 5, 2015).

Didit the producer notices that children, including his own daughters, play fantasy games, and make-believe more than he does. So for them, he thinks, it's probably easier to slip into the imagination of orangutan life. He told me:

It [children's emotion] may look random. But inside, it's very regular. That is, music for adults can be organized like, like it's already punchy from the beginning of the song. But for kids, it's very organized, the dynamics. How do I build emotion [in the song]? Usually if I make music for adults, I can do more. Like, exploring to build emotions, which can be random [i.e., unpredictable at times from an adult's perspective]. But for children, we can't randomly build emotions. I could raise the dynamic very slowly, not as quickly as adult music

(Didit Saad, personal communication, July 14, 2017).³⁶

While Didit wants to start simple and then get more complex, the consideration is always on “which tempo can make the children dance, and which keys don't pierce their ears, [so that]

³⁶ *Kelihatannya sih gitu tapi didalamnya sangat teratur. Gitu, kalau untuk musik-musik dewasa bisa gak teratur, di depan udah punchy ya, tapi kalau anak-anak sangat teratur sebenarnya, dinamisnya. seperti bagaimana saya bisa dapat membangun, build, emosi gitu. Biasanya kalau sebelum-sebelumnya saya bikin musik untuk orang dewasa saya bisa lebih, apa namanya, explore untuk kembangkan emosi, emosinya bisa random, gitu, tapi kalau untuk anak-anak kita gak bisa se-random itu.*

Oppie [the adult musician] doesn't have to scream [to be in kid's vocal range]" (ibid.).³⁷ He also wants to use simple chord changes, falling fifth, and a lot of repetition as I detail below.

Once Didit became involved in this project as a session guitarist, he could not help but notice that regularity. Although he was supposed to have just filled in the guitar track, he felt he should rearrange the song as a producer. Oppie was up for it, so they sat down in this room where Didit and I are now chatting. Oppie first asked Didit to “position yourself to hear the song as a little child, through imagination, simulation. So, I tried and listened to the first song guide, my mindset changed to that of a little child as I look back at my own childhood” (ibid.).³⁸ That's because it can be difficult at first for those who are “used to entertaining adults without having yet to entertain young children” (ibid.).³⁹ One of Didit's and Oppie's primary concerns, then, was to find “suitable instrumentation for the orangutan song according to my feeling.”⁴⁰ They would spend time to pursue the pickiest of details. For example, when they went through a selection of acoustic guitars that they own, they found that certain guitars of Didit's, like Martin, a guitar brand, have more of a rock sound, whereas Oppie's Taylor, another brand, sounds more suitable for folk.⁴¹ Since Oppie wants to make a kid's album with music that's “simple with an acoustic guitar, not complicated,” they chose hers (ibid.).⁴²

This partnership goes back decades. Didit has been playing music since before he released his first record with the band Plastik in 1996. Didit played the guitar for three Plastik albums until 1998, when he left the band to pursue his career in music production. Oppie made her debut as a singer-songwriter in 1993. This was when female singers would sing the song that somebody else made for them, where one could typically hear them singing what Oppie now sums up as “women have to say yes, not allowed to say no” (Oppie Andaresta, personal communication, August 21, 2017). Oppie gained popularity as she was one of the first women to wear jeans without putting on makeup, high heels, and thick, fake eyelashes. She became the archipelago's “first female rock star” (Diana Tarigan, personal communication, April 28, 2017), a role model for many Indonesian women to see it's okay to just be themselves and not live their

³⁷ *Kita harus pertimbangannya selalu semenjak itu pertimbangannya selalu anak-anak, jadi tempo yang mana yang anak-anak bisa dance, key yang mana yang anak-anak tidak sakit telinga heheheh, jadi oppie nya tidak harus teriak.*

³⁸ *Saya disuruh dengar, sambil membayangkan. Membayangkan anak kecil mendengarkan lagu itu, jadi saya memposisikan saya mendengar lagu itu menjadi anak kecil. Simulasi. Saya dengarkan pada saat itu saya mendengarkan, mindset saya saya rubah jadi anak kecil. Saya pikir sebagai anak kecil waktu dulu.*

³⁹ *Karena kita harus bisa, kita sudah terbiasa menghibur orang dewasa, sudah biasa, tapi menghibur anak kecil belum pernah.*

⁴⁰ *Instrument yang cocok untuk lagu orangutan menurut saya.*

⁴¹ *Yang saya punya itu martin, martin-nya itu sound-nya. Lebih rock. Tapi yang tailor-nya Oppie lebih cocok untuk folk.*

⁴² *Jadi sederhana dengan gitar akustik, tidak complicated,*

lives as eye candy for blokes. Ever since, Didit and Oppie have been part of a community of musicians known as “Potlot” that’s named after a street in South Jakarta where they gather.⁴³

After decades of musical partnership, Didit and Oppie were quick to arrive at a mutual understanding that “song arrangement is all about illustration, about how to choose colors to paint a picture. For a children’s album, perhaps I could use pastel tone, but for the adults, I use sharp colors, somewhat more saturated” (Didit Saad, personal communication, July 14, 2017).⁴⁴ Didit had studied every different guide track of the “Orangutan” song and the rest of the songs on the album Oppie brought to his studio since 2016, so he knew the music inside out and backwards. But it was only when they picked the guitar sound that Didit could envisage an agile orangutan, brachiating away from one tree to another, and then taking a rest. He wants to exemplify one of the “images that sound *like* what they mean” (Kohn 2013:30; italics mine):

“Let’s just play a little.”⁴⁵

Didit walks out and comes back to the control room with one of his guitars.

“So... how do we call it when orangutans live peacefully before humans come in and start cutting down trees?”⁴⁶

Instead of defining something, Didit very gently strums a simple tonic-subdominant, two-chord progression in D major...

“For me,” he then plays the same chords but with arpeggios creating a funky groove, “that’s, too strong for me. So I’d rather go...”⁴⁷ and he strums the chords ever so gently.

“You *can’t* say something like this with language. It’s different. It’s illustration” (ibid., italics mine).⁴⁸

Even more vital, Didit adds ukulele to the song’s second refrain in the higher register. Oppie becomes much more involved by playing it in this latter part of the song, whereas she’s only partially involved by just singing in the early part. The ukulele was not embedded early on, but when she sings the second refrain, it’s guitar plus ukulele while it’s never just ukulele. “I’d call this *hikmah* [wisdom],” Didit knows I’m doing an academic work, so he’s helping me find a buzzword, “The thing is, if we speak about wisdom, then it’s something big, something wide. So I try to widen the frequency range. The first time I made this part [the second refrain], I used the

⁴³ A lot of big names in Indonesian pop music, such as Slank, Andy Liany, Kidnap, and the Flowers, originated from this group.

⁴⁴ *Buat saya aransemennya itu ilustrasi semuanya. Tapi lebih ke bagaimana cara memilih warna untuk ilustrasi, warnanya ya. Kalau di yang di untuk album anak ini mungkin saya memakai warna-warna yang agak pastel, tapi untuk yang dewasa saya pakai warna yang agak tajam, agak lebih saturate*

⁴⁵ *Misalnya, let’s say kita main dikit.*

⁴⁶ *Jadi apa namanya, bagaimana si orangutan itu pada saat mereka hidup damai sebelum ada manusia ada tebang pohon, hutan, mereka damai.*

⁴⁷ *Buat saya itu terlalu keras, jadi saya lebih ke...*

⁴⁸ *Kalau pakai bahasa, tidak bisa. Iya, beda. Ilustrasi.*

guitar [instead of ukulele]. But after I fill in the guitar, Oppie says, ‘Yo, let’s do it with ukulele [the second time].’ She said it’s nice to have two guitar tracks panned out [in different octaves], and it just makes it even better if you use ukulele. So I followed her direction and I took it again using the ukulele so that there were two [double-tracked] guitars and a ukulele [one octave above]. Like zooming out” (ibid.).⁴⁹

So it’s just tonic-subdominant back and forth, that is, quite simple. The first time around, the refrain is the simplest, painting a picture of wild orangutans live out in the forests without excessive human intervention. And the second time it repeats after the chorus part, ukulele joins one octave above. So that way of illustrating a scene sounds iconic when Didit says, “*like zooming out*” (ibid.). Whenever these interlocutors use the word “like,” they are talking about something similar, something iconic. Clearly, there is a sense in which he’s saying that *enlarging the harmonic range is like enlarging the visual field*. They are iconic of, analogous to, and metaphors of, each other.

In the next section, I trace memories of how the song was recorded with and for children. I familiarize myself with key technicalities of recording their voices. I show that Oppie and Didit teach children singers how to sing with flaws, as is often the case with adult musicians who can’t always stay in sync with the rhythmic, pitch, and tonal variations of a song. I then discuss how adult musicians could imagine what it’s like to listen to their songs as a child. Further, I explain why, by the end of the recording session, Oppie feels a need to go out in the jungle and actually hear some wild orangutan sounds for herself.

Calling Childhood through Music Recording

At A-Systems Studio in Bintaro, Didit, Oppie, and Yoko the recording operator are taking turns to guide children through their virgin experience of studio recording. They had no other choice but to take turns because children could easily drain their energy if one lets them. Sometimes it takes a mother (Oppie) to tell children to stop joking around all the time. And it takes a producer (Didit) to get the kids vocalize in a certain way. It also takes an operator (Yoko) to retake their vocals when they go out of tune too much...

“Are the kids in tune?” Oppie asks Yoko from a recording booth after the kids sang a chorus.

⁴⁹ *Bahwa di situ ada kalau saya nyebutnya hikmah, I don’t know in English, hikmah, itu adalah hikmah dimana kalau hikmah itu adalah very wide, something. Soalnya kalau kita bicara wisdom itu something big, something wide, jadi saya coba bikin wide dari frekuensi lebih lebar. Pertama kali saya bikin pakai gitar, waktu sebelumnya pake gitar juga sama-sama jadi saya take dua track, satu yang rendah. Satu lagi yang gini. Tapi setelah saya isi gitar, Oppie bilang yang ini ganti ukulele deh. Oppie senang ada, ‘oh bagus pakai itu cuma lebih bagus lagi kalau kamu pakai ukulele.’ So saya ikutin akhirnya saya re-take lagi pake ukulele dan saya delete yang gitar jadi ada 2 gitar dan ukulele. Sepert zoom-out.*

“...” Yoko remains silent, standing next to Didit in the control room. Rather than answering that right away, she asks Didit, “Is this better off copied & pasted later [when the chorus section repeats for the second and third time]?”

“Don’t just copy and paste it,” answers Didit, “it’ll sound stiff” (April 15, 2017).⁵⁰

Oppie and Didit saw this coming from the beginning of the project. They were already very concerned with melody and rhythm, so when something went out of the ordinary, they’d immediately ask Yoko for a retake “until it seemed perfect” (Didit Saad, personal communication, July 14, 2017).⁵¹ Serendipitously, however, it didn’t take more than half a day because “here we use three children. In one take we use them all. For example, if one out of three goes out of tune but the other two are good, we okayed it. When two of them go out, we’d do a retake” (ibid.).⁵²

“Why two, not three?” I asked.

“Well, because if it’s too perfect, if all three of them are in tune, then the ‘children’ aspect will be lost. The kids must be out of tune [to some extent]. Even us adults go out of tune” (ibid.).⁵³ So it’s not a children-specific decision that their being out of tune and to view this as OK. It would be more so than if they let each one of the three children sing each part separately and combine them later on digital audio workstation software. The imperfection somehow turns out to make the song sound fuller (Bates 2016:113) as they take all three voices straight away with one mic, and take them one more time to stack them on top as though there are six voices. They did that on and off depending on different parts, but all choruses were always double-tracked to sound fuller. Minor edits were done on computer, as it saved time to fade out some minor mistakes.

“[Recording children’s voices] that [quickly] was beyond our expectations,” Didit is happy, “because we were ready for the worst. Before we got here, there was no song guide, i.e., a rough, temporary track that serves as a reference for overdubs, for children’s voices because we could just slightly imagine what they could accomplish [in the studio environment]” (ibid.).⁵⁴ Once there were kids in the booth, it was either a) the music matched the children’s voice, b) or

⁵⁰ I then had permission to audit what they were doing through a social media live streaming; “*Ini anak-anak tune-nya ok gak?*” “*Ini copy paste or record aja?*” “*Kayaknya jangan di copy paste, nanti kaku.*”

⁵¹ *Jadi kita memang take-nya itu memang sampai dicari sampai perfect.* \

⁵² *Tapi di sini kita kan pakainya tiga orang anak, dalam satu kali take kita pakai tiga orang anak yang mana, misalnya dari tiga anak kalau yang salah itu cuma satu, tapi yang dua itu benar, itu boleh dipakai, kalau yang salah itu dua yang benar hanya satu, re-take.*

⁵³ *Jadi ok, karena kalau terlalu perfect, kalau tiga-tiganya perfect jadi hilang anak-anaknya, anak-anak kan pasti ada out of tune. Orang dewasa out of tune juga*

⁵⁴ *Tentunya dari anak-anak, begitu ada, karena sebelumnya kita kan ada di awal proses, lagi aransemen itu gak ada suara anak-anak, gak ada guide suara anak-anak, bahkan guide aja gak ada kan, jadi kita cuma bisa membayangkan entar kalau ada anak-anak kaya gini.*

not. The kids were generally busy learning how to speak English and do mathematics so they could only practice so much under the supervision of their mothers at home. Didit and Oppie were ready to do some serious editing on their laptops on the spot. But they were not looking to produce “a perfect album. It’s an album full of limitations, just like we talked about. Nobody’s perfect. [Even adults]” (ibid.).

That said, things could be easier with adults. I’m not saying all adults are good, but Oppie, for example, can record her vocals in just a few takes, up to three times. She already knows the whole process. She knows how to “sing with the room when a room doesn’t have proper acoustic treatment, keeping certain distance from the microphone and the walls, in order to enhance the vocal acoustics” (ibid.).⁵⁵ She appears to have mastered how to build the mood, at times by singing the first and second choruses contrastingly. The little ones seemed completely unaware of that. They would sometimes stand a meter away from the mic and start screaming.

In fact, the kids told me later that they were “more scared than a cat” (Kai Bejo, personal communication, May 5, 2017) ...

Bejo said, looking at his pals, “I was actually more scarred than they were!”

“No, you were not!” Vio slaps Bejo’s shoulder for the fifth time today. The way they tease each other seems to indicate how they actually have a thing for each other.

“Noooo!” Bejo screams and smiles, “You guys were not scared. I was scared as, scared-er than a cat seeing a giant dog! Exactly that. I was nervous. So nervous.” Then he turns to me, asking, “Do you know how old I am?”

“Nine?” I copied what I’ve heard from his mother.

“I’m TEN! I’m older!” His pal Radit jumps in all of a sudden, giving me ten fingers, “in January!”

“Ha - congratulations,” the words came out of my mouth automatically

(Kai Bejo, Vio, Radit, personal communication, May 5, 2017).

Beneath the veneer of playfulness, the kids provided expert insight into their musical learning. Their mothers were listening in on our chat,⁵⁶ requesting that I help them practice speaking English:

“How did you prepare for this [recording]?” I asked them.

“You can read the lyrics. Yeah, this is recording,” Vio replied.

“Just the lyrics or the musical score?”

⁵⁵ *Jadi dia juga udah tahu ini ruangan gak ada acoustic treatment jadi dia nyanyinya harusnya jarak yang segimana sehingga dengan ruangan yang kaya gitu tetap bisa kualitas vokal-nya tetap bagus.*

⁵⁶ I extend my gratitude to Lia Agnesia, Radit’s mother, and Linda Irawati, Vio’s, for inviting me to their homes to chat with the kids.

“Ah!” Bejo snaps his fingers, “the melody is in the sound!”

“You learned it by ear.”

“Exactly!” Bejo continues, “We [the kids] sing together in recording. But in some parts when she [Oppie] has to do it alone, she just did it alone.”

“And how did you know which part she had to do by herself?”

“The part that she doesn’t teach us!”

(Vio and Kay Bejo, personal communication, May 5, 2017).

And, interestingly enough, the night before the kids recorded the “Orang Utan” song, one of them had a dream...

“Have you ever been to a forest?”

“Oh! I’ve ever [been there],” Radit remembers.

“We have dreams!” adds Vio.

“Uh, I was sleeping in my dream,” Radit comes back, “Then I got disturbed by tiger. It’s beautiful... white and smart. And there was an orangutan... *aaaauuu!*”

“*Au! Au! Au!*” his pals call, “*Uuuuu Auuuu!*”

“*Aaa—choo!*” Radit ends up sneezing

(Radit, Kai Bejo, and Vio, personal communication, May 5, 2017).

This brought back to my mind the conversation I had had with Oppie earlier, which I cited to open this chapter,

Aaaaauuu... because the sound of the orangutan, it’s like, like in the movie, isn’t it?

Something like that (Oppie Andaresta, personal communication, March 17, 2017).

Then she told me, “It’s *dimana-mana* [everywhere]. Sometimes we also watch television where...” (ibid.). Here she is referring to another children’s song, titled “Orangutan” (1996) by Zico.⁵⁷ As mentioned earlier in my methodology section, it appears to be the oldest known Indonesian popular song about the orangutan, and it happened to be a children’s song as well. The next section will illustrate how Oppie and I would find out that both that song and hers used different ape calls under the umbrella of the orangutan. Zico’s “Orangutan” (1996) is interesting not just because it homogenizes monkey and gibbon “calls” in it. It’s also interesting for its music video, where the producer shows a macaque, another type of primate that lives and competes with gibbons and orangutans in some of the same areas. Macaques are not as vocal as the gibbons, but still quite vocal, more so than the orangutans.

“Like in the [Ragunan] zoo [in South Jakarta that I’ve been to],” adds Oppie, “But... can you call it *ketemu* [a real encounter]? A meeting with the orangutan? [After I performed the song at Sound For Orangutan], Hardi [a Co-founder of Centre For Orangutan Protection] has

⁵⁷ I did my best to trace this person for a few years but could not find their whereabouts.

invited me to come see them for myself. I want to make a short movie about them, so when I do education tour, I can play it [with my song] ...

... I think I'm going there" (ibid.).

Revising “Orang Utan” (2017) in the Jungle

We could be in Jakarta when, the day before recording, Radit the child singer dreamed about hearing a primate “call” upon getting ambushed by a white, beautiful tiger. We could be in Jakarta, but we could also be in East Borneo five months later. Patches of dawn light pierced my eyes through a mosquito net. My morning breath stinks so bad that I begin to wonder how many hours I slept. No dream emerged from my being knocked the most unconscious I’ve ever been. I have never felt this rebooted before, I say, even after having used sensory deprivation tanks for restricted environmental stimulation therapy. Minutes later Oppie comes out from an adjacent barrack. She claims she too had the deepest, dreamless sleep of her whole life. It took us a few hours to realize how far we’ve come, literally, to meet orangutans.



Fig. 1: Oppie Andaresta walks into the Centre For Orangutan Protection’s primate rehabilitation sanctuary in East Kalimantan on September 6, 2018 (Photo by author).

In what follows I describe how Oppie and I come to hear a real orangutan “call,” which sounds as different as night and day compared to what many, including Oppie, would quote outside the jungle. I hypothesize that we may have heard what could not often be heard in the wild. I explain how orangutans could have become more vocal in captivity. At the end of our

stay, Oppie decides to keep the non-orangutan, gibbon “call” in the “Orang Utan” song with the real orangutan sound added in.

Oppie and I are visiting an orangutan sanctuary. Charisa Fraser, an Indonesian veterinarian I know who had done a field research project here shortly before we arrived, writes:

Centre For Orangutan Protection (COP) Borneo was built as a space for orangutan habitat and rainforest conservation. This is one of the go-to conservation sites in East Kalimantan, which works in conjunction with the Natural Resources Conservation Center (BKSDA) through the seizure of wild orangutans kept as pets, or for other illegal uses [e.g., wildlife trade, meat consumption]. This is done using diplomacy within reason such that owners are convinced to release the primates to the COP facility [where they go through rehabilitation] to be released back to their habitat (Fraser 2017:2).⁵⁸

Part of the forest we’re in is reserved for said activities. The nearest airport (BEJ) is approximately 60 kilometers away from this site. There are no road signs in the jungle, of course. So the way to get there is by memory or by using GPS coordinates (Oktaviana Sawitri, personal communication, January 9, 2018).⁵⁹ There is no phone signal, no Wi-Fi either. The reserve spans over 5 hectares out of the 7,900 hectares of Labanan Concession Forest, and contains orangutan clinic, enclosures, human barracks, kitchen, toilets (sit and squat), and food warehouse for both human and nonhuman primates. Rubber boots are commonly used to provide traction on muddy surfaces. Currently, the facility is managed by a primatologist turned conservationist I had met when I participated in a boot camp for primate justice volunteers in June 2015, Yogyakarta. This man named Reza Kurniawan supervises a dozen staff members, including two veterinarians, animal nurses, rescue and release staff. They include both local Dayak and non-local Indonesians. Unless there is a 24-hour emergency rescue/release mission, they work from 7 a.m. until 5 p.m. Western Indonesian Time (WIB). And they all live here with occasional outings to a village/city nearby, to satisfy fast food cravings and call their family and friends. A volunteer from Bogor who spent three months just last year at COP Borneo would later recall:

When I got a signal [outside the jungle], I called home. It turns out my parents were hospitalized three weeks ago! I had no idea... because I didn’t go out to find a signal

⁵⁸ *Centre For Orangutan Protection Borneo didirikan sebagai tempat konservasi orangutan dan hutan hujan sebagai habitatnya. Lembaga konservasi ini merupakan salah satu tempat konservasi di Kalimantan Timur dengan bekerjasama dengan unit pelaksana teknis Balai Konservasi Sumber Daya Alam (BKSDA) dalam kegiatan penyitaan orangutan liar dari warga yang menjadikan orangutan sebagai hewan peliharaan atau tempat lain yang memelihara orangutan secara ilegal. Seringkali kali kegiatan ini dilakukan dengan menggunakan diplomasi dan alasan yang kuat sehingga dapat menyakinkan pemilik untuk melepaskan orangutan kepada COP Borneo agar mereka dapat dilepaskan ke habitatnya kembali.*

⁵⁹ 1° 54 '2 "N117° 11 '49" E.

for a month. So after going through [some photos in] a family group chat room, I wondered, I asked my mom, ‘Wow, why is my father using crutches?’

(Septian “Petz” Adrianto, personal communication, December 3, 2016).⁶⁰

Word has it that a musician from Java is now out in the wild in complete isolation. They say he suddenly showed up volunteering for a mission to trail a released orangutan and monitor its post-translocation livelihood. Reza told me what he was doing without any human contact; he is just watching, observing how the orangutan survives in the wild from dusk till dawn.⁶¹ And I heard some interesting stories about him, his music, and his relationship to a bandmate that didn’t work out due to religious differences. But they’re still in the band together. I will discuss this in more detail in the last chapter of this dissertation.

Orangutan rehabilitation assumes a multi-year project. Humans try to do it with the orangutans that had been taken from the wild, poached at oil palm plantations, or captured for the black market for various purposes, e.g., trading, human entertainment. Once they are at the refuge, they are first kept separated in cages. The three-part housing system in COP Borneo — a quarantine cage and two enclosures — is appropriate to their proclivity for solitude. The quarantine cage is for those that qualify for release. They have spent years in this facility until they reach the point where they seem capable of living on their own. The first enclosure consists of four sections, each of which contains a two-orangutan squad learning to copy wildlife skills. These are young orangutans. They’re very small, but males can be aggressive to females as they are much larger in size. And we see one dominant male who is aggressive to other males. Reza says victims could later grow stronger and retaliate, and become bullies themselves. So some males are kept separated also. The other enclosure is partitioned into four individual sections. The ones in there are stuck here for good, kept extra-isolated since they’ve picked up a zoonosis. For example, an orangutan named Memo, whose “call” Oppie and I are about to hear next, was found to have picked up a strain of hepatitis from a previous human contact. So laboratory tests are done to rule out all human visitors that carry hepatitis A, B, and C, tuberculosis, and HIV. These things pass between humans and all other primates, such as gibbons, which have taken over the surrounding areas. To come to here and work with orangutans, Oppie and I had to be tested also.

Most refugees that survive here and elsewhere, like Samboja Lestari Rehabilitation Centre in East Kalimantan, had been kept by people, so their behaviors seem “not very normal”

⁶⁰ *Waktu saya dapat sinyal, saya menelpon orang rumah, ternyata orang tua saya dirawat 3 minggu sebelumnya, 3 minggu di rumah sakit, saya gak tahu, karena saya sebulan gak turun untuk nyari sinyal, dan gak ngabarin orang rumah, jadi setelah turun lihat di grup keluarga, wah ini kok bokap kok pake tiang gini-gini, belajar jalan, tanya ke nyokap*

⁶¹ *Berada di alam bebas tanpa ada kontak dari manusia, nah yang dilakukan kita adalah mengawasi, mengamati dari dia belum bangun, biasanya bangun jam 6 atau 6.30, sudah mulai agak terang, disinikan waktu Indonesia bagian tengah nih, jam 6 masih gelap, apalagi di hutan kan? Kita sudah standby nih di dekat sarangnya, jalan ke hutan sampai kita amatin.*

(Ade Fitria Alfiani, May 14, 2017). The CEO of Borneo Orangutan Survival Foundation told me “they [the orangutan refugees] have lost their wilderness competence after being kept by people [plantation workers and wildlife traders]” (Jamartin Sihite, personal communication, April 22, 2017).⁶² The COP Borneo veterinarian told me how the orangutans come to “eat biscuits. Well, that case isn’t very normal, right? Sometimes they just sit down and start crying. So we wait [until they get back up on their knuckles]” (Ade Fitria Alfiani, May 14, 2017).⁶³ Some orangutans show the compulsion to repeat certain things on a loop, and “if the cage doesn’t feel good, they habitually mutilate themselves. In many cases they have head wounds” (ibid.).⁶⁴

Anxiety accumulates, and amplifies when the night is young. Out of nowhere Oppie and I hear an orangutan shouting, “*Kraawgh!*” Those sleeping with us in one of the barracks assumed it came from one of the adult males because it sounded very low. But since we are almost asleep and the night is pitch-black, we did not go so far as to see what happened. And then, over there somewhere, we heard long songs... “*uuuuaaa!*” These songs bouts involve a pair of primates, male and female, who would sing them for about five minutes together.⁶⁵ It’s

⁶² *Itu adalah anak-anak orangutan yang sempat dipelihara maka dia sudah kehilangan kemampuan liarnya.*

⁶³ *Dimakanin biskuit. Nah, padahal itukan gak normal banget kan? Kadang mereka duduk dan nangis, jadi kita tungguin*

⁶⁴ *Kalau kandangnya gak bagus dia kadang sampai melukai dirinya sendiri. Kepalanya banyak yang luka, ya seperti itu.*

⁶⁵ These “calls” use both exhalation and inhalation to make sound, unlike us humans who are not very good at making sounds when we inhale. So these nonhuman primates make these “calls” both by alternating in-breath and out-breath. Each out-breath sound is different than the in-breath sound. It allows each representor to create their “call.” Humans cannot do that in language, and this has little to do with lungs. Even if human lungs do not have much air, one has trouble making sounds with larynx on the in-breath. It hurts, because air is meant to pass only one direction. And the inhaling human muscles and the larynx in particular are quite fixed and unable to articulate. With our-breath, however, humans can change sounds easily. So the “aaauuu” part has been remembered incorrectly as “uuuuaaa,” i.e., a gibbon “call.” Gibbon “calls” have the constant tone as we have just heard. Their vocal standard comes from opening their mouth as a duet sharing a rising tone through a tone that has broad-tuned harmonics. “Aaa” is tuned broader than “ooo.” As a result, many more harmonics of many more frequencies are produced in addition to the many higher ones when a gibbon closes down their mouth... “ooo,” as the closure allows fewer frequencies to come out of the mouth. Rather than articulating with their tongue like we humans do, they just open and close the sounds out with their lips. They also have a very long breath so the “call” can last for many minutes whereas orangutan “calls” are short. In sum, all of those “calls” have one thing in common: no articulation, that is, they do not involve movement of mouth, face, and tongue. The same is true with our laughter, sobbing, and crying (see Deacon 1997:429). The evolutionary account of why non-linguistic innate vocalizations communicate emotions could better articulate, for example, changes in breathing pattern due to autonomic arousal are made socially accessible by automatic tension of the vocal folds. Indeed, the contrast between the ingressed vocalization of gibbon songs and

loud enough to wake up such heavy snorers as Reza, who eventually got up to go pee in the middle of the night and said, “It’s... the gibbons [not the orangutan]” (Reza Kurniawan, personal communication, September 4, 2017).⁶⁶

The next morning, Oppie and I helped feed the orangutan with hepatitis I mentioned. To prevent zoonosis, we made sure to put on masks and gloves in its immediate vicinity. This orangutan, named Memo, was confiscated in 2012 from Sebulu Village, Jutai Kartanegara Regency, East Kalimantan. The name Memo is used but no one knows what it means as it was given by the previous owner who had no clue why he named her that. But he remembered he had kept her there for at least six years. The leader of the rescue team describes the day she was rescued:

After we got Memo, we did a medical check-up. It turned out she has hepatitis. I contacted the previous owner and the entire family checked their blood. The first child and mother, and father the owner of the orangutan have hepatitis also (Ramadhani, personal communication, January 4, 2017).⁶⁷

Memo was considered unique because one of her favorite activities is to take a shower every morning during cage cleaning. In fact, all enclosures need a good clean per day since all primates except most of us humans are difficult to care in terms of their defecation. Orangutans live in the trees so nature never posed them a problem of soiling their dens. Other animals like dogs, cats, or wolves do not urinate or poop in their nests but go somewhere else, which is why they can be trained about this. But even apes like orangutans and chimpanzees cannot be trained to not poop on their foot and cage because they are used to constantly moving across single-use nests in trees when in the wild. In captivity, however, orangutans like Memo could be in constant contact with feces and be susceptible to diseases if we stop cleaning their enclosures.

When Oppie and I tried turning on the water pump, a keeper named Daniel came over to help because it just would not pump at first attempt. Running it every day for years has been damaging its parts bit by bit. So Daniel was pulling the lever up and down many times to unlock its mechanism. And then we heard...

“Phh!”

Memo had just called out to us using a “call” that we’ve never heard before. At first, we did not catch what that indicates. But she just kept doing it. Daniel said Memo has been calling him more frequently like that over the years. The “call” sporadically stopped as we gaze at her, and it

human minimization of ingressed vocalization cannot be fully explained in terms of breathing alone. The reasons for human discomfort in producing ingressed vocalization merits further research.

⁶⁶ “*Mereka... itu owa* [an Indonesian onomatopoeic name for the gibbon species].”

⁶⁷ *Setelah penyitaan Memo oleh tim medis COP dilakukan medical cek up dan hasilnya memo punya penyakit Hepatitis. Saya menghubungi pemilik sebelumnya kalau Memo punya penyakit hepatitis dan seminggu setelah itu keluarga tersebut melakukan medical cek up seluruh keluarganya. hasilnya ialah anak pertama dan ibu pemilik orangutan terjangkit hepatitis juga.*

stopped for good the moment the pump started pumping up water. Later we learned that this type of orangutan vocalizations is found elsewhere in both sexes once in a while (Reza Kurniawan, personal communication, September 7, 2017). On this site, however, only Memo, who is stuck there for good, produces that so it became her signature “call.”⁶⁸

Oppie and I came to notice how “*phh*” could be an imitation of the water pump sound. The pump actually clicks four times to operate, and Memo likes to repeat “*phh*” exactly four times. We then saw her using the same “call” on several different occasions, for example, as a solicitation for food. When Oppie and I showed up again with a bag full of fruits, such as bananas, oranges, watermelon, and sometimes Sumatran *salak* fruit, she’d make that “call” also, not four times but once or twice. We felt that this can be a very general request given in a similar emotional arousal state... “*phh*” (I want something from you; I expect some interaction with this human), not unlike a domestic cat who can walk over to our food dish, look at us and ‘*meow*’ until we give it something to eat. Whenever Memo makes any sound like this one, it works like “I’m making the sound to make you think of the water pump. If I make a sound like that, then it should bring to your human mind, “Oh, I see. She wants the water pump.”” Clearly, Memo’s “call” is a non-linguistic convention as it need not be defined as ‘it means this.’⁶⁹ Although it’s not a normal vocalization that uses vocal cords, Oppie decided to put it in the song.

⁶⁸ This works like a dolphin’s signature whistle. And it reminds me of people who develop a distinctive greeting. My father makes a particular coughing sound in the hallways . . . “Ahem,” so my brother and I always know it is him without a glance. That is how we humans, dolphins, and orangutans create signature sounds.

⁶⁹ A very common example of this would be a laugh (Deacon 1997:57). People don’t say a laugh means something, anything. Rather, it’s an index of one’s state of mind as it indicates that one experienced humor. On the other hand, people laugh at those whom they want to reduce. People also find themselves in certain cultural situations when they are supposed to laugh or not laugh. That smiley face in front of their boss who makes a terrible joke is an index. People laugh even though they do not understand the joke, or do not think it’s a good one. They do that because they want to be accepted. When I was a kid, I skipped classes to play music in a band. My mother found out that I was in a garage blasting guitar riffs instead of being in a classroom. “We need to talk,” she said. The tone of her voices indicates a high level of frustration. Suddenly, her phone rings. She answers her friend, then, she goes... ‘Ha-ha-ha!’ The real laughter, however, is an index that is harder to fake. One can usually tell when someone is really laughing or making a faint laughter. Fake signs do not have a tight correlation with their reference. When signs are tightly correlated to their reference, they are more trustworthy. Although people laugh in different societies under different circumstances, there seems to be a lot of similarity in the way it oftentimes unintentionally comes out of the body. These sounds, including Memo’s, are strongly programmed in the nervous system in a conventionalized manner (ibid. 59-68, 230-247). However, it is still an index, not a symbol. Even though the index-as-such initiates whole linguistic communication, they still indicate that a change in relationship has taken place. So whatever people say after they laugh is contingent upon indices *that do not necessarily mean anything*.

I found it strange at first to witness these communications that don't say, 'I want to tell you that it means something.' As with any music instrumental piece, primate "calls" wouldn't have to use another system in order to show how they link up to some other definition. If there is nothing intrinsic that links one sound to another, then one needs something else to create this linkage. That seems to be why, in epistemology — whose primary task is to map linguistic properties to what's in the human mind, which is *already* mapped by experience to what's in the world — that "something else" is other words. So I had long been tempted to make sense of all sound via con-text, a two-tier code story as part of "the totality of the interrelated network of words" (Kohn 2013:28). However, what Oppie, Daniel, and I had just experienced compelled me to question why music, with primate "calls," without lyrics, still works by virtue of likeness and contiguity, that is, why certain way of communicating accomplishes certain "dynamics central to living and thinking that are not built from [those] quanta of difference [we call language]" (ibid.:100).

If language has got to be the basic form of correspondence that can serve as the model for all kinds of reference, then arbitrariness must be the diagnostic feature of all signs. Take, for example, what linguists term onomatopoeia, i.e., the imitation of a sound that resembles the signified. In Peircean terms, that imitation should emerge via icon (a relationship of likeness to the physical object that sign represents) and index (factual physical linkage), whose lack of syntax, arbitrariness, and conventionality satisfies the prerequisite for the most basic types of signs. That said, when epistemologists insert icon (the likeness of that orangutan "call" to the sound of water pump) or index (the contiguity Oppie and I had in the vicinity of that pump and Memo) into all kinds of communications, somehow it seems not as powerful as that abstract and arbitrary modality we call language. But the hierarchy of signs in this case, at least, is actually just inverted, for arbitrariness is not the basic but the most derived feature of reference. Icons and indices are prior to symbols/words, and this in part explains the ubiquity of onomatopoeia in many languages. If arbitrariness requires a whole lot while simple correspondence does not accomplish anything, then the widespread manifestations of simple icons and indices in the biological and musical worlds should be ignored. As is the case with Memo, and as we shall see, hearing Oppie's musicalization of that "call," arbitrariness should not be able to capture all relationships.

This exceeds the immediate realm of just knowing things by having dialogic and translational experiences. Indices, like Memo's "calls" and Oppie's ukulele chord progressions, can communicate without words, whereas words, such as lyrics, cannot do without the indices. And the problem is, phenomenology argues that we cannot possibly know other people's lived experiences from the first-person point of view. One cannot yet have direct access to the phenomenology of other beings (Jackson 1996; see also Dewey & Bentley 1949). As exemplified throughout the following chapters, there are instances of musical and shamanic communication that emerge through a broader sense of experience than that of metaphysical semantics. It is not entirely an experience in a mindful sense, but a reacting to the "things" in the

world. The reader could now ask how we can use such instances and modalities of communication to know, and how it is that we have knowing at all.

Knowing “*phh*” ... but then also knowing that “*aaaauuu*” is actually a gibbon “call,” Oppie would proceed to have them both represented in her song from here on out. On the day we left East Borneo, she would invite all rehabilitation crews and village residents — like Shanti, who recently moved in to nurse orphaned infant orangutans — to gather in front of our barracks. Oppie wanted to thank them for having us on such short notice, by singing the song that she got to revise as a consequence. Oppie and Didit would start out with song parts and put them together to get the whole set of musical expressions in “Orang Utan” (2017). The song actually had no whole to begin with, while the only whole is the gibbon/orangutan “calls” that were there before Oppie used them as indices. Upon hearing different “calls” in the same location at the same time, she not only rebuilt the song, but she also put different primate “calls” together to accomplish the same end. To Oppie, Shanti, and the rest of us in the jungle, it became apparent that gibbon habitats are orangutan habitats. They both were restricted to the warmest, wettest locations in Southeast Asia millions of years ago; way back, before oil palm tycoons and wildlife traders could even start contemplating the world’s fastest deforestation and primate injustice. Any change in ecology affects these different primates in a similar way. That is why Oppie started homogenizing different primate “calls” in the same song to communicate the same thing politically.

Here she has no full band, no kids, no background instrumental music. Still, she has a ukulele she carries wherever she goes. A simple, gentle strum would suffice as “*aaaauuu*” remains part of the chorus melody, with “*phh*” as a bridge-passage added in. When the song is over, tears pour down Shanti’s cheeks. Oppie comes and hugs Shanti goodbye, and the rest of us join in with tears, smiles, and laughter. She tells me this on our flight back to Java, “So... all the differences became one” (Oppie Andaresta, personal communication, September 7, 2017).⁷⁰

Semiotic Analysis

Having stated my empirical data, I provide an analysis of the referential integrity of the relationship between the song’s instrumental parts and primate “calls.” Next, I introduce a sociolinguistic perspective on quoting parts in music instrumentals (Monson 1996). I then offer an alternative approach that is based upon the work of the nineteenth-century philosopher Charles Peirce (1905).

With regards to how different primate “calls” ended up getting homogenized, the following regularities could be found:

- a) The orangutan is being mimicked by a non-orangutan “call.” Part of Oppie’s use of that is melodic, and

⁷⁰ *Jadi... semua perbedaan digabungin jadi satu.*

- b) There are breaks in the music where she chants the “call” between melodic lines, and
- c) The real orangutan “call” is sampled in the background, where there is a conscious attempt to break away from the melodic structure, which clearly makes it an index of the orangutan, not of the music.

Even if Oppie were to sing this to orangutans instead of humans, her making the “calls” is not about the primates. It is about orangutans in general; and, there is no such thing as orangutans in general. There are orangutans in the world, but the *concept* of orangutan is a more abstract thing, and that is what the “calls” bring to mind.

Terrence Deacon (2006, 2011) discusses how people sometimes make the mistake of thinking that the meaning is in their head when it is not. Deacon argues that meaning is something that is not in the nervous system, not in the sound, not in the words, because what’s in somebody’s head is a bunch of neural activity. Hence, he suggests, words function precisely because they have this relationship to something that is absent. The point of bringing absence into the discussion is to recognize that whenever somebody, not just Oppie, uses a semiotic relationship, it is generally something present that is necessarily linked to something that is not there in such a way that brings the absent thing to one’s attention.

The question, then, becomes, ‘what is the relationship between music and the “calls?”’ If the music is about orangutans, if the words in the music are about orangutans, then they each refer to each other in addition to how the words refer to one another in and among themselves. Put simply, the words refer to the “calls,” which refer to orangutans, and the words refer to orangutans, and, to some extent, the “calls” refer to and point to the words of the song by sounding like what people think is associated with the orangutan. Indeed, the “*aaauuu*” part turned out night and day different from “*phh*” or any other orangutan vocalizations we’ve heard in the jungle. But if Oppie has convinced her audience that the sound she’s making is from orangutans, the audience will get the meaning.

What happened in the jungle was absolutely not the direct communication to the orangutans. They remained silent when Oppie tried singing to them. They just wanted to grab my iPhone. Singing the song was all about communication to people. Oppie could put “*phh*” into the song as she was communicating to those that knew what it indicated because they had an experience of its correlation to Memo. Shanti, the one who cried after hearing the song, for example, had had the experience of Memo making that sound. Interpreting that sound requires that one has an experience of what is part of a whole, i.e., it being part of what the orangutan does under certain conditions. Although some audience members would not know whether this is a regular orangutan call or just Memo’s unique vocalization, the “call” oftentimes brought to their mind the concept of orangutan.

Here, the way in which a word “means by virtue of the ways in which it is inextricably embedded, through a dense historically contingent tangle of grammatical and syntactic relations, with other such words in that uniquely human system of communication we call language”

(Kohn 2013:28) becomes of secondary importance. A word has got a conventional sign vehicle. Its meaning is conventional as its linkage to what it means is by agreement, not by any intrinsic features. The intrinsic feature of the sign vehicle could make it an index, but the intrinsic feature of a symbol does not determine what its reference is. No word is intrinsically meaningful when there must always be an agreement (see, e.g., Chapter 5 for the legal case of marrying within the faith). That is why there are “double” conventions: one of choosing the sign vehicle, and the other of how it links to what it means (Deacon 1997:40; Fisher 2016: 16-20). And these are two separate conventional relations.

Even if somebody was to tell people that “*aaaauuu*” is an orangutan “call,” instead of a gibbon “call,” it nevertheless brings orangutan to mind. Even though it’s not produced by orangutan, people think orangutan when they hear that because they have been told that it does. The only reason it worked outside of the jungle is because no one else had had the experience of hearing orangutan in the wild. If I showed my data about the *Phh*... to another orangutan refugee center where this individual primate didn’t exist, where the sound was never produced, where the water pump never went on, where there was never a water pump, nobody would know. Unless they have something that is really physically linked, it’s not indexical.

While the music becomes a way by which to conventionalize primate “calls,” still it works as a correlation with something else. The conventionality is about a sign vehicle, but a conventional sign vehicle can be about its reference in a non-conventional way. There can be conventional icons and indices, like “*aaaauuu*,” but there can also be non-conventional icons and indices. For example, just simply a laughter or hiccup indicates something about a person. If I hear that person with a hiccup, I know that there is something in their digestion that is disturbing them. It indicates precisely that, but without being conventional. On the other hand, an index like “*phh*” is conventional because Oppie could instead have done away with “*aaaauuu*” elsewhere. In this way, both orangutan and gibbon “calls” are conventional, even when they simply indicate something by direct association. One can interpret the “call” in a variety of ways. Still, one definitely *can* say that sound is now an index of that experience because a) a primate made it, and b) one has the experience of hearing an orangutan made up even without saying why the primates did it and what it refers to.

Once we were back in Java, Oppie recognized that “*phh*” may not communicate orangutans to everybody. To quote the “call” that people outside the jungle wouldn’t know, she would have to provide that experience before the song: ‘You know, I was in the jungle, and we visited this orangutan sanctuary. One orangutan used the sound that I’ve never heard before, and did it in a particular situation. We still don’t know what it means. But the orangutan kept doing it. So I decided to put it in the song.’ She did that sometimes, sometimes not, whilst her incorporation of “*aaaauuu*” remained constant. All throughout, she was communicating the same politics; i.e., ‘Stop deforestation.’

It’s not that the sign itself is changing, but it’s the interpretive competence of the listener that is changing. The audience outside the jungle has little or no experience to allow it to

interpret the “call,” so it’s not an index for them. An index has to do with a sign vehicle that is connected with something else, and the interpreter knows the connection “by being [...] in its individual existence connected with the individual object, when I call the sign an Index” (Peirce 1931 [1906]:414). At the level of general logic:

A sign is anything which represents something else (so far as it is complete) and if it represents itself it is as a part of another sign which represents something other than itself, and it represents itself in other circumstances, in other connections. A man may talk and he is a sign of what he relates, he may tell about himself as he was at another time. He cannot tell exactly what he is doing at that very moment. Yes, he may confess he is lying, but he must be a false sign, then. A sign, then, would seem to profess to represent something else (Peirce 2019 [1909]:233).

A relativist account of such a process is proposed by Ingrid Monson (1996), who argues for a focus on jazz improvisational interplay. Monson offers a fascinating account of what philosopher David Lewis sums up as “the description of the psychological and sociological facts whereby a particular one of abstract semantic systems is the one used by a person or population” (Lewis 1970:19). Put simply, it’s about how jazz instrumentalists introduce recognizable excerpts amid their performance of any piece. If listeners do not know that the quoted phrase is from famous melody, then it’s just more jazz improvisation. These interactions exemplify the notion Monson introduces as “intermusicality” (1996:125; 185-191). The term describes how jazz listeners could be acquainted with lots of other tunes and styles. And so jazz musicians will be quoting different tunes in the middle of a piece as well. If I’m not mistaken, this will link their music to that other music as a pointer to it by also being iconic of it. It can be a sample in the similar sense that Oppie has got primate “calls” in my case, which brings a historical memory to certain people and the emotions that they might attach to that as part of the experience of the music.

In discussing references across a repertoire of thousands of tunes and other musical properties, Monson draws on Michael Silverstein’s contextualism (1976). Silverstein is a linguist who did not like the formal linguistics of his day. His complaint was that the exclusive look at the referential function of language does not paint a full picture of reality. His argument was that what occurs in everyday speech is contextually sensitive, that is, the same speech can be interpreted in lots of different ways (e.g., you/I, here/there, this/that). As a result, Monson (1996:85) posits language as the simplest form of correspondence that serves as the model for all kinds of reference. What comes front and center, then, is how what her interlocutors say about their patterns of quoting any sound becomes inextricably contextual, whilst the sign’s non-discursive referentiality largely goes out the window with this story. Boiling all things iconic and indexical down to an arbitrary map correspondence can be traced back to Saussurean semiology (1916), i.e., an idea that everything is an arbitrary set of rules that does a code mapping with “culture” being the driver. So there is a kind of symmetrical-reciprocal mapping between signifier (the form which the sign takes) and signified (the concept the sign represents). Music instrumentals, then, become a link between a concept and a sound pattern, not a link

between a thing and a sign. One could say that the sound pattern could be understood also as a sign vehicle for the record, for example, but *not* by treating everything as a code through a mapping relationship.

I could see this coming because people quote things commonly. But quoting seems much harder in non-literature because it does not bring in words or the theme. Musicians like Oppie can quote something directly without having to define anything because it will sound like what it refers to. While quoting is iconic in that sense, the icons can be used to point to some primate as indices. A similar thing is oftentimes done in visual arts, where one quotes things by painting them again. For example, a Sumatran artist named Ihsanul Fikri produces sound by drawing an orangutan on canvas, by using an inertial system that's sensitive to the directionality of his brush movements. Or, in Balinese monkey dance (*kecak*), mimicking some movements happens. However, modern music in the West has brought a variety of natural sounds into music. My favorite example is John Cage (1952), who tried to expand the notion of what music is by quoting silence or by blowing into a cup of water through a straw. These non-discursive signs widened the boundaries of music enough that I can begin to talk about natural sounds as though I am quoting music. It's not the same as quoting things from literature.

I like to apply Peircean perspective to any such interplay. Although Peirce did not do any musicology, I could pick his brains because he was most interested in logic. So I am standing in the present and saying how one might learn from what he could have said about the musicalization of some primate "calls." When people quote a passage of language, it brings with it a meaning of its own. When a musician quotes a particular melody, however, it does not necessarily come with a meaning. But the musician is bringing one's previous experience of listening to a particular passage into the music. The quotation seems, in some ways, like a comment on the circumstance. But the music does not have a reference in the same sense because it now has the reference to something else that doesn't have a reference. On the contrary, a chunk of quoted texts communicates via a system of differences through a metaphysical mapping between things in the mind and the concepts/ideas. For example, the novel *Don Quixote* (1605) has a famous literary illusion. Don Quixote was hallucinating when he thought that windmills were monsters. So he ended up having battles with the windmills, and he tilted. When he is riding with lance on a horse, he wants to knock the imaginary monsters off their horses. This was called "tilting at windmills." Since that time (Mieder 2006), the concept has shown up in many writings with reference to someone battling something on the basis of an illusion. Despite the fact that it has taken on a new meaning, it still quotes *Don Quixote*. "Tilting at windmills" is no longer literal but metaphoric in its reuse. Musical reference does not have that because it is directly, or to be precise, non-arbitrarily iconic of past music. The simple Saussurean contextualism does not take that into account.

Concluding Remarks

Different animal “calls” can be homogenized in a song calling for the protection of a flagship species. Musicians found it futile to differentiate between them when they are communicating the same politics — ‘save the forest’ — since the primates quoted live and compete against each other for the same kinds of fruits in the same areas. They learned that any change in ecology would affect both species in the same way. If somebody destroys one’s habitat, then they are destroying the other, and vice versa. This fact is central to my claim that the mediating referential relationship in the song is formed by exciting “analogous sensations in the mind” (Peirce 1893:168-69), in which two things do not have to be very much physically alike in order to be communicated as icons. Speaking in Peirce’s terms, bringing animal “calls” into music works differently than just quoting words from literature, or having the “calls” differentiated, or drawing them again on canvas, or having them present on stage. That way of pointing to a thing by being iconic of it *exceeds* words and phrases (that cannot be fully understood without additional contextual information). This instantiates what I study throughout the remainder of this dissertation: non-linguistic communications that emerge through a broader sense of experience that’s just simply reacting to the “things” in the world. I will consistently return to this theme of decentering language as the model for all kinds of reference.

2. Believe It or Not: How Rain Shamans (*Pawang Hujan*) Constitute Festival Logistics

“Thank God!” an event organizer’s gratitude springs up before my eyes. “We were actually facing a disaster,” her thanksgiving continues, “the rain was pouring down for two days. But, in a way, as it turned out, God gave us a path.”⁷¹

“A bit religious, yes?”⁷² her colleague cuts in on our talk under the banner of rationality. “Not many people know about this,” responds the organizer while keeping eye contact with us, and suddenly, with her eyes moving down and to the left, her sense of awareness departs the immediate realm of our conversation and travels back in time:

There was an accident [around 8 p.m. on August 13, 2016 at an annual series of Indonesian popular music festivals “We The Fest (WTF)”]. One of our power generators just died on us on one of the stages! All of a sudden, we hear a ‘blip’ and then a black out. But, thank God again... the [Indonesian] musician [on stage] says ‘the show must go on.’ We’ve got no LED, no lamp... and they just keep on playing. Good God almighty! But then, the headliner [a French band] goes, ‘We can’t do it like this.’ All of us backstage now start praying

(Sarah Deshita and Andhika Soetalaksana, personal communication, October, 15, 2017).⁷³

This points to a common experience of festival organizers and venue directors who rely on rain shamans in the tropics, at least in Indonesia. They have something to say about shamanism at a “level of insurance” (Prajna Murdaya, personal communication, October 30, 2017), such as calling it “God almighty!” (Sarah Deshita, personal communication, October, 15, 2017).⁷⁴ or as the title of this section put, “believe it or not” (Nikita Dompas, personal communication, October 30, 2017).⁷⁵

This chapter focuses on why event organizers hire rain shamans. My argument is that the organizers constantly wonder about a “meaning” in the normative sense, that is, the significance of the value of shamanism that they think can chase the rain away for outdoor music festivals. Empirically, I demonstrate how that belief has something of an agency as it seems to make things happen even when that does not make logical sense. My choice of shamanism as a

⁷¹ *Alhamdulillah! Sebenarnya itu kita kayak di kasih musibah, karena deres banget kan yang hujan dua hari itu terutama. Tapi in a way itu kayak dikasih aja jalannya sama Tuhan.*

⁷² *Agak religious, ya? Yang terjadi sebenarnya ini banyak orang yang tahu.*

⁷³ *Yang terjadi sebenarnya ini gak gak banyak orang yang tahu. Ada satu insiden ketika genset kita di salah satu stage kita kebakar. Tiba-tiba “blep,” [lampu] mati. Tapi alhamdulillah lagi! Ketika genset mati, requestnya mereka ada, ‘Gue main harus gelap.’ Gak ada LED, gak ada lampu. ‘Gue mau main aja.’ Gitu, ya. Allah alhamdulillah! Headliner kan gak mau manggung, akhirnya semua kayak berdoa.*

⁷⁴ *Allah Alhamdulillah!*

⁷⁵ *Percaya nggak percaya.*

case study results from running across a host of festival organizers and crews, whose minds have become *so* flexible that they derive, dream about, and reflect on, meaning in relation to the power of rain shamans. For those who believe in the power of shamans, I suggest, clouds in the sky can be conceived of as a spiritual body, with whom only shamans can communicate, and they then attempt to influence that entity by propitiating it. The real crux of this chapter, then, is based upon how — despite different religious orientations (e.g., Islam, Buddhism, Kejawèn) — organizers find a similar sense of meaningfulness in shamanism, in roughly the same sense that the song about orangutans I mentioned in the first chapter is “meant” to communicate something about their value. My goal in this chapter is to lay the groundwork for the following one, which will delve deep into the actual non-linguistic work that’s being done by the shamans themselves.

The chapter unfolds in three steps. First, I provide information on important concert venues, whose managers hire full-time shamans. Next, I detail environmental factors that hinder sound amplification in tropical festivals. Last, I look at why the organizers think they need shamans.

Venue Logistics

A summary of Indonesian venue operation and event management is given here. The summary provides basic social information on the rental property business of large concert venues as well as smaller spaces that employ shamans.

In Indonesia, a majority of large events happen at Jakarta International Expo (JIExpo) when they are too big to fit in on the other venues. JIExpo is an exhibition hall primarily, but back when I was in the field (2016-2017), it was just starting to do more conventions. The difference between exhibition and convention is that, an exhibition is almost like a large event usually focused on a specific industry, where people come and sell things, whereas a convention has a meeting component to it. So, oftentimes entrepreneurs, merchants, and government officials gather to have discussions on policy, where a lot of experts come and talk about something that they are interested in. While approximately 80% of the activity JIExpo does is exhibition and about 20% is convention, most of the time conventions are stacked on top of exhibitions. Before I moved into the field in 2016, conventions usually had not really come to this venue as stand-alone events, but by mid-2018, JIExpo would complete the process of building a 11,000 square meter convention hall with a 2,500 person theatre to accommodate such events (Prajna Murdaya, personal communication, October 30, 2017).⁷⁶

Festivals and large rock and pop concerts are also frequent in this venue, just because, again, they are usually for acts that are too big for any other venue. Specifically, JIExpo hosts events that require multiple venues in one complex. Not really many venues in the Jakarta area,

⁷⁶ This information results from a retrospective reconstruction of rough notes taken during a casual, informal gathering with Prajna Murdaya, Managing Director of Jakarta International Expo.

not to mention the entire Indonesian archipelago, can do that. And JIExpo is the one in Central Jakarta, so people get to see more of that year after year. Given all this, there is something interesting about Synchronize Festival (2016-present), whose promoters took the oldest, most rundown corner of the JIExpo property. These corners appear towards the back where it is empty pretty much the entire year except for one month when they run the historic Jakarta Fair (*Pekan Raya Jakarta*), which is a major annual series of consumer products fairs held for the last 50 years.⁷⁷ But the Synchronize organizers wanted to have their festivals in that place as though they were going to produce something almost like the anti-high-profile concert, even though the festival had a mix of very high-profile artists. It is partly for this reason that the JIExpo Managing Director introduced me to the Festival Director as “the only guy who just wanna get his hands dirty and do it” (ibid.).

What’s interesting about Synchronize was that people come see musicians playing folk, acoustic, dangdut, disco, and heavy metal in the same festival, and they all seemed to be cool about it. I was backstage with the JIExpo Director, Synchronize Festival Director, and Java Jazz Director, in addition to a lot of musicians whom I had met through primate justice music events. The general consensus backstage was that it was really chill. One of the reasons why they said it was so chill was because the venue was so, for want of a better word, “rundown,” which meant that people seemed to feel like they could just be themselves across the genre divide. The festival had four outdoor stages, and a fifth one was indoor, in addition to a mini room for rave party in comparison to other huge spaces. Roughly the same array of spaces can be said of other titanic festivals that take place in open fields that are part of the complex, such as Java Jazz Festival (2006-present), Djakarta Warehouse Project (2008-present), and We The Fest (2014-present).

For the production of these events, JIExpo’s role may appear deceptively limited to just providing the space, while event organizers take care of everything else. However, behind the scenes of rental property business, the JIExpo managers assure that a) no one gets mugged and there are no pickpockets, b) there is no garbage on the floor, and c) people pay a standard amount for their parking instead of paying the local mafia for off-site parking spots. To accomplish these tasks, the JIExpo Director has to negotiate with the local mafia to keep the parking spaces at a rate that is not exorbitant. The word on the street is that there is almost an official mafia rate, which is slightly higher than what the venue charges during the Jakarta Fair, because, I have heard an audience telling his buddy, “It suck to be you. You came late” (July 16, 2017). Despite the fact that JIExpo has capacity for approximately 5,000 cars, the mafia deal is made once or twice a year, typically during the Jakarta Fair, and the Java Jazz Festival, according to the musical director who leads the festival program team annually during the first week of March (Nikita Dompas, personal communication, October 30, 2017).

⁷⁷ Jakarta Fair had been held elsewhere during 1953-55, 1968-91. Subsequently, it has been moved to and held at JIExpo since 1992 (see also Wallach 2008:50).

Such collaboration between these managers and the mafia became commonplace base upon a realization that the mobs also need to make a living for themselves. At the end of the day, people use the term “ecosystem” in which to “just be friends with everybody just like everybody out [there], play a little game. It will all work” (Prajna Murdaya, personal communication, October 30, 2017). The notion of ecosystem works in such a way that the mobs cannot just kill any event by robbing people, unless they want to miss out on their annual paycheck. A typical message that has been sent to the mafia in recent years articulates that no event will be successful if it has a reputation for getting people’s wallets stolen. Fewer cars will come in and there is less chance of overflow. As a result, the mafia parking squad will get less income. And the festival goers will hardly be convinced by an advertisement saying that there is only a 5% pickpocket rate. The fact of the matter is that

It’s only a thing, if you make it a thing. Mafias are gonna be there forever, and you’ve gotta make peace with them. These guys aren’t born yesterday either. These [anonymous local mobs], they’ve been around for decades. Some of them are created by the past Presidents and stuff like that. [They] fund a lot of dollars, and bring in busloads of people [as thugs and enforcers] from outside Jakarta. In Indonesia, especially in Java, it’s like ‘just be cool, dude.’ And people are using that as a weapon only if they want to (ibid.).

In addition, the managers must placate the Indonesian Regional Police (*Kepolisian Daerah*). The cops have reportedly figured out how to make an extra living also. One afternoon, a journalist and I were driving through Kebayoran Baru, where other cars and motorcycles were running into each other from many directions. Swarming down an alley, we ran into Bulungan Outdoor, one of the legendary underground venues, especially for the metal community.

“Just few hundred meters from here,” said the journalist who was then one of the Editors at a famous music magazine, “[is] the only place that still exist since the 90s, it’s Bulungan.”

“I’ve read it in a newspaper, that they were closing,” I remembered.

“It... it’s not really closing,” he answers after a coughing spell, “because the restaurants in front of Bulungan, they [filed] complaints to the police whenever there was an event. The parking spots got taken by all the kids. And, the noise from playing concerts, you know, but um...,” the speech converts into silence as his thoughts meander.

Minutes later the journalist breaks the silence on what happened, “...they [restaurant owners] paid the cops to make it harder for these kids [metalheads] to get the permit to make an event there. And what the cops did was not just [stopping to] give the permit to the kids, but raising the price. Yes, they raised the price for the permit, to whomever wants to make events there. But, for the ‘right’ price, they issue the permit. So, they were taking money from the restaurants, but they were also taking money from the kids for the ‘right’ price.”

HJ: To make them compete over the space? That’s like...

Journalist: ... like some fucked up shit you can do, right? Fucking police, oh my gosh.

HJ: That's what prison guards do to the inmates. I've seen that on American TV. They put up the prime cell for auction, and cellies offer a price for the real estate.

Journalist: Yeah, yeah, that's it! That's *IT*. So, the cops always wanted to get the most [money] out of everybody. The restaurants, metalheads, and the business... blah, blah, blah, 'Okay... can you help us?' 'Yes, of course. I will help you.' They will always get the money, get the money. And then, hmm, what can we [metalheads] do?

HJ: Probably not much.

Journalist: So, the police always thought that the...the ideal situation is the kids can still make an event there. But, it's just a lot more expensive.

HJ: Ha, because the event HAS to happen to keep the restaurant people mad?

"To keep them coming," remarked the journalist as he recommends me a Makassarese rib soup at the restaurant where he usually parks his van during gigs, making a left into its parking lot across the street from Bulungan. "I guess we can park here."

Several such hints of the Indonesian police-mafia linkages have been raised in the live production community. What many people find difficult therein is to see the fine line between the police operating like the mafia, and the mafia doing policing. Providing input into scholarly study of cronyism, with which some gangsters and police officers may be tainted, and particularly those in Indonesia, seems to have been fraught with challenges. Acquisition of such data is scarce to this day, because not unlike most other field researchers with whom I corresponded in the field, I hear only one side of the story (mobs and cops remain silent). The best I could do is state a strong, intuitive case without verifiable facts. Here comes somebody who not only runs one of the few major concert venues, but also grew up in the family of one of the former Presidents of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (*Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan*, PDI-P). He told me:

Generally, if there's a lot of power, when you have a lot of power and a lot of visibility, politicians will come. If you have a lot of people, and a lot of money, mafia will come. That's human nature, and that can take on many different forms (anonymous, personal communication, November 2, 2017).⁷⁸

When these venue directors go out and deal with mafia or police, typically it is about money. These transactions usually start with one individual calling another,

'Alright, dude. How much do you want?' And if they [mobs or cops] want too much..., which, surprisingly, they don't really ask that much! 'Alright, bro. This is how much you make. Are we cool with this amount?' 'It's cool.' Finished! That's it. There's no like, just don't say like, 'We pay the police! Get outta here.' No-no. You know how it works, right? These mafia, everything, that's kind of how it works (ibid.).

⁷⁸ This individual was educated in the United States and speaks fluent English.

In this ecosystem, things aren't just black and white, right or wrong, and a level of complexity grounds the operation not just of the large concert venues but also of smaller spaces. To name a few, South Jakarta's Rossi Musik and Borneo Beerhouse share an affinity for facilitating heavy and experimental musics. Despite having hosted a variety of styles, ranging from children's piano school recitals, drum & bass parties, through "underground" heavy music events (Wallach 2008:226-236), individuals who busy themselves with the continuation of these venues often come out of the closet to admit they have a "pattern, a certain stance of music [they actually] like to display (Syafwin Bajumi and Abi "Borneo," panel discussion, October 14, 2017).⁷⁹ And so, the venues are occupied predominantly by post-pubertal youngsters whose preferences converge on a fairly narrow range of styles, such as metal, punk, and rock (see Wallach 2008). Oftentimes, these youngsters reach venue rental agreements with low upfront cash by instead offering their motorbikes as collateral to pledge for repayment upon completing their events. To reimburse the venue and the police on time, these kids collect all sorts of pocket money from their pals. And then they ask venue directors for guidance through the bureaucratic administrative procedures, such as obtaining the police license (*ijin kepolisian*) and tourism industry permit (*ijin industri pariwisata*), whose prices fluctuate irregularly during the aforementioned negotiations between adjacent restaurant owners and regional police.

The population in these smaller venues comprise secular Muslims whose non-halal lifestyle embraces "beer drinking, hell raising" (a slogan for a neighboring partnership called Lawless Jakarta). I became acquainted with a lot of them through Orangufriends, a group of youth volunteers that have organized the second annual Sound For Orangutan concert at Borneo Beerhouse in 2013. I know from hearsay that there was no way around police bribery when permits for the primate justice concert were issued.

Tropical Spontaneity and its Challenges

I now shift focus from the logistics to the aspects of tropical environment that get in the way of festival sound amplification. I focus on how delays and cancellations occur due to spontaneous weather changes. I capture how technical crews express a feeling of futility when having to abruptly end the show.

One day, I noticed that the mass of people backstage use the term "work system or goal system techniques"⁸⁰ almost exclusively in reference to the work of physical sound reinforcement. Specifically, it refers to the use of live audio transducers, such as microphones, electronic instruments and signal enhancers, whose line level outputs feed the inputs of the front-of-house mixing console, which in turn governs the overall amplitude via a configuration of loudspeakers distributed across and beyond the full width of the stage. In every multi-stage,

⁷⁹ *Kami punya pola, punya pandangan tertentu untuk musik yang ingin kami tampilkan disitu*

⁸⁰ *Sistem kerja atau teknik goal system.*

multi-day event, such as Soundrenaline (Bali) and Java Jazz Festival (Jakarta), literally the same “work system” properties are put to use by most of sound engineers and stage managers. Oftentimes, they would seem vexed as they do not know exactly what equipments they are getting until the last minute when they come through the backstage door. Musicians would seem perennially numb when meeting event organizers who seek excuses for providing barely usable acoustical properties just under the wire (e.g., “Djakarta City Sounds,” October 13, 2016). Leveraging random devices requires highly competent operators, indeed. The role of technicians is thus seen to outweigh at times what the festival and venue managers accomplish with the mafia and police in the sociopolitical domain, resulting in the aforementioned synonymization between “work system” and “the goal system techniques.”

I found it strange at first to think about and listen to such pragmatics on sound system, which, for linguistic anthropology and its variants, should have apparent social contingencies (e.g., Gell 1998; Born 2005; Flood 2009). My attention could have been directed more towards the dominant narrative in scholarship by interpreting everything relativistically. One could, for example, perform the relational sociology of analyzing what causes the resources of talent behind the Indonesian “work system” to be “too centralized in, and unevenly distributed outside, Jakarta” (Anak Agung Ngurah Rai Widya Adnyana, personal communication, April 29, 2017; Reza Upe, panel discussion, October 14, 2017).⁸¹ My approach differs from that focus on relativity, given that some problem-solving units of my inquiry could be obscured if I were to just focus on their “danger-fraught, provisional, and highly tenuous attempts at communication — in short, the politics — involved in the interactions among different kinds of selves that inhabit very different, and often unequal, positions” (Kohn 2013:150). In certain interactive domains, as I discuss below, the prospects of sound engineering judgment and technical competence appear independent of all else. The allocation of a viable sound system is key to reducing performance angst in a tropical milieu. The relevant ethos is felt intensely in the following passage:

Actually, the crew members already know we’re meeting there. We ourselves are *ready*. But if we don’t have a decent system once we arrive at the venue, for example, where the audio quality appears inconsistent, we already start panicking since we are not confident with the sound we have. We don’t even ask for the so-called ‘sound riders’ [i.e., the demand specification of the model, capacity, quantity of acoustic properties that shall be ready for use at a particular venue; usually available for established/foreign musicians]. But we better prepare ourselves for whatever we’re getting. Well, that turns out to be our weapon

(Barlian Yoga, panel discussion, October 14, 2017).⁸²

⁸¹ *Terlalu ter-central, jadi kaya di Jakarta, seharusnya kita lebih merata.*

⁸² *Sebenarnya kita sudah tahu itu bakal apa yang kita temui. Kita hadapi karena kita sudah ready dengan diri kita sendiri. Kalau kita gak punya system yang bagus begitu kita ke panggung kita ketemu, ... kita sudah panic duluan, karena kita gak percaya diri dengan sound yang kita punya. Justru kalau*

The angst caused by technical uncertainties prompts musicians to hustle with their own crew. In addition, there is the lack of trust in the electric power grid. According to a band manager, the electricity supply throughout the archipelago falls far short of demand, apart from a few privately developed planned communities for government officials and entrepreneurs, such as Menteng and Bumi Serpong Damai (Jeff Adriano, personal communication, October 23, 2017; August 4, 2019). As a result, spontaneous delays and cancellations are seen to occur at far too many public events, not just concerts (e.g., Hammersonic 2016, Art For Orangutan 2016, Synchronize 2016/2017, Java Jazz 2017). When that happens, the production crew, musicians, event organizers, and venue directors alike are reminded of the futility of all their efforts when subjected to the immense impacts of voltage fluctuation on the live audio production.

This is especially the case for live production sites, whereas recording studios allow for a sense of user control and less hassle. Actually, the energy draw for studio equipments is not that high. The biggest draw would be the mixer and monitors. The second highest draw is some of the vintage microphones that still use vacuum tubes. Most recording studios, at least in Indonesia, use a high capacity UPS (Uninterruptible Power Supply), all the audio equipment goes to the circuits there, separate from all the non-audio stuff, such as fans and battery chargers, which are notorious for injecting a lot of noise into the circuit. Technicians wire the UPS in a separate room, into certain outlets that are labeled. All the dirty power then goes into the UPS and gets converted through a process of charging the battery, which takes DC and inverts it back into AC. Thus, whatever the studios run is supposedly clean. These studios are taking battery power which is already isolated from the dirty city grid, in order to create their own plug-in power. That said, recording engineers get around hum even when everything is just going back to the same ground that that UPS has put in there. The engineers can usually overcome it and it is certainly not as bad as when just plugging things straight into the AC mains (Sumantri, personal communication, October 8, 2017; Prajna Murdaya and Nikita Dompas, personal communication, October 30, 2017).⁸³

Electrical problems can occur at any time of day except for a short time window between 6:00 and 6:30 p.m. – during the Islamic prayer break when power loads are relaxed as a result of millions of Muslims halting their worldly activities to pray to Allah (Sumantri, personal communication, September 30, 2019). This fact contributes little to live audio production as almost every single festival of all types takes a break coterminously (e.g., Jakarta Fair, Indonesia International Motor Show). My favorite example comes from Hammersonic, Asia's biggest international metal festival held annually in Jakarta since 2012. On May 7, 2017, I was backstage with Arian Arifin and Sammy Bramantyo, members of the band Seringai who had headlined a Sound For Orangutan event back in 2015. Seringai had just headlined one of the

kita mau jalan ataupun siapapun teman-temanmu jalan sama band, yang paling penting itu bukan kita minta 'riders,' tapi lebih baik kita siapin diri kita sendiri apa yang kita punya. Nah, itu lah senjatanya.

⁸³ This information also results from a retrospective reconstruction of rough notes taken during a series of casual, informal gatherings.

three Hammersonic stages and we went on to drink local beer with the production sound crew of Entombed A.D., a legendary Swedish “chainsaw” metal band.

“Why the break?” asks Arvid Bergendal, the chainsaw sound guy.

“Oh, it’s a prayer time,” answers Bramantyo sipping his pint.

“I fucking knew it!” shouts the Swede once one of his predictions becomes reality, “I was like, maybe it’s because they need to set up the stuff for Megadeth [an American Grammy-winning headliner of the day].”

“Nope,” the Indonesians respond as their smile lines frame their lips, except those of one event staff (who later I found out was a closet Muslim). He seemed tense, and then the Swede turns to him,

“You’re drinking... but you’re Muslim.”

“Yes.”

“I love you!”

The general consensus backstage was that it is okay for people — Indonesian or not — to believe whatever they feel like believing so long as everybody loves music, while foreigners like the Entombed Soundman found it “fucking cool [to see especially how] they [hijab-wearing females] are oppressed but they are rebellious [metalheads]” (Arvid Bergendal, personal communication, May 7, 2017). Whilst drinking like there’s no tomorrow, the Swede’s focus diverged from politics in consequence of his virgin experience of a specific performance angst in this tropical milieu:

I hear your President [Joko Widodo] is a metalhead. And I was like, ‘I wanna move there.’ Now that I’m here, ‘Okay, it’s too hot’ [referring to a high level of humidity that would signal impending rain, which could have shut down the festival if it had happened ten minutes earlier that night.] I was sweating on the [front-of-house] mixer. I was afraid the mixer was gonna break because of my sweat (ibid.).

Notice: this happened at one of the thousands and thousands of outdoor venues that are grandfathered into seasonal tropical cyclones on top of the archipelago-wide electricity shortage. Under such circumstances, many technical crew members say they roll with designated musicians without necessarily liking their music or personality. Tellingly, whether a crew member maintains proximate social ties with the musician may be of secondary, even tertiary significance when it comes to risk management. Very rarely have I seen somebody “brood about what didn’t happen, and spend a large part of each day musing about the way things could have been if events had transpired differently” (Deacon 1997:22). Life’s fractal contingencies are felt instead to just happen and change with little apparent sense of purpose. A strange epiphany emerges when loads of sound engineers stop harnessing arbitrary meaning to all relationships and “just work.”

It’s just not important whether you like the band. What matters are knowledge, money, and happiness... if the band and the music turn out not my taste, well, indeed I could

still be happy with some salary. Important is to have two, or even just one of those three facets [implying a capacity to stay at ease without thick knowledge and economy]. But then, why not experience these festivals where lots of new bands, and the bigger, older bands collide? Sometimes it just so happens that new bands kick ass, old bands suck. And [the respective] concert technicalities cannot be encountered elsewhere. That's about professionalism. So, the crew will not be there just simply because their buddy is in the band

(Barlian Yoga, Reza Upe, and Reno Nismara, panel discussion, October 14, 2017).⁸⁴

These technicians just flat out accept their “work system” responsibilities whilst event organizers think it is predominantly the musicians on stage who aptly amplify their sound. Quite the contrary, the engineers point out that “when these bands take their tasks on stage, they can only go so far. Their on-stage job is dependent upon the human resources working off-stage” (Reno Nismara, panel discussion, October 14, 2017).⁸⁵ Nonetheless, “the audience seem generally oblivious to what the technicians do... like those who come see the shows, they see from afar people in black clothes walking, all busy. ‘Who the hell are they?’ (Reza Upe, panel discussion, October 14, 2017).⁸⁶

Live production crew offer a set of explanatory insights. First, musicians rely on sound technicians as the representatives of the overall behind-the-scenes crew, a population that amounts to about a dozen in-house staff members whose tasks range from loading/unloading equipments through their specific set up and sound check to troubleshooting their malfunctions. Next, roadies mediate the general communication between the crew and the musician when a particular need arises, for example, by printing out set lists and making them visible on the brightest spot on stage under the glittering lights. Consistently, these individuals enhance their skills and pass them onto “the next generations... important awareness of those around us,

⁸⁴ *Ini nih udah kerjaan aja gitu Pokoknya gak penting lu suka bandnya. Kalau dari gue ada tiga. Pertama ilmu, kedua duit, ketiga happy. Nah, ditiga ini nih, dapat gak lu di band nih? Ok, gue gak dapat ilmu nih. Ya, udah. Gue dapat happy sama duitnya aja, ya udah jalan. Yang penting dua dapat aja, atau satu dapat aja. Tapi Kalau dari lu senang kenapa lu gak menghargai diri lu untuk belajar lebih, gitukan, karena lu gak akan dapat dari mana-mana, dimana ada banyak band baru disitu, band lama yang lebih besar? Kadang gue mengobservasi band baru itu kaya kualitas soundnya dan segala macam, kadang-kadang suka terlampau jauh dengan band yang lama gitu. Ya, lu belajar mengenai teknis yang lebih aja. Itu balik ke profesionalisme lagi. Kalau disini gue bisa, karena banyaknya crew-nya kan karena gue dekat dengan bandnya.*

⁸⁵ *Mereka bisa mempertanggung jawabkan di atas panggung dengan musiknya mereka aja deh, gak jauh-jauh. Nah, tanggungjawabnya lagi yang lain adalah SDM [sumber daya manusia] diluarnya*

⁸⁶ *Mereka tertarik gak sama apa yang dia, ini. Orang sering nonton konser gitu. Terus ada orang baju hitam-hitam jalan, ramai. ‘Ini apa, sih?’*

[facilitating] mutual respect among the population while being technical also (Reza Upe, panel discussion, October 14, 2017).⁸⁷

DESPITE all this, delays and cancellations occur due to spontaneous weather changes. The constant barrage of corruption and cronyism that engulfs the venue operation now seems almost irrelevant. In the face of such futility, MCs typically blame “technical difficulties” for having to abruptly end the show. These technicalities lead to frustration among both backstage and off-stage populations. In the backstage, musicians and I would sit for hours until the rain stopped. On the evening of July 21, 2017, an event titled “Soundsations: Arena Rock” was scheduled to be held at Taman Ismail Marzuki in Central Jakarta. The show did not start until several hours after the doors opened. Some of us in the tent backstage were amplifying our anxiety by counting how many people were leaving the venue as the rain spattered. Experienced musicians told a bittersweet joke about the thousands and thousands of audience members they let go when slammed by a supercharged thunderstorm at the Hammersonic 2016. Off-stage, atop a thorough caking of mud people start to bump into each other on their way out, engaging in quarrels and fist-fights, just like what I had seen at an event named “Sonicfair” held in Bandung on rainy October 22, 2017. When I asked a veteran audio technician, he shared:

During the rainy season, rain must fall. In Jakarta, the weather’s a bit unpredictable. Isn’t it? In December, rain pours down out of the blue, and all of a sudden, it stops. So, yes, we must prepare for the rain

(Barlian Yoga, personal communication, October 14, 2017).⁸⁸

Though fortunate in having been in charge of hundreds of concerts, this technician further articulates how social complexity blurs out where spontaneity occurs:

Ideally, come rain or shine, we must go on. We can proceed through some downpour, but during heavy rains, yeah, we have to stop when things get scary and worse. There’s a limit also [as to how far we can go]. So, if there occur high winds that’s strong enough [to signal a thunderstorm], then we have no choice but to cancel [the entire day]” (ibid.).⁸⁹

Another professional echoes that when it rains, indeed, the activities will all be rather more troublesome due to the safety factor (Reza Upe, personal communication, October 14, 2017).

⁸⁷ Untuk generasi-generasi selanjutnya, karena itu yang bikin sebuah tim itu jalan gitu, itu sih jadi kayak ada pengertian dari atas kebawah, saling menghormati segala macam, kalau technical... masalah awareness dengan orang sekitar kita.

⁸⁸ Selama musim hujan pasti hujan, ya. Di Jakarta agak sedikit unpredictable kan cuacanya. Sekarang tiba-tiba sudah mulai hujan, bulan Desember musim hujan. Tiba-tiba gak hujan, jadi ya kita mesti prepare untuk hujan

⁸⁹ Maksudnya, Hujan atau gak hujan, kita musti jalan terus. Jadi kita bikin yang, walaupun hujan kita bisa jalan. Kalau hujannya sudah parah banget, scary, worse, dan ya, kita harus stop, ada limitnya juga. Jadi kalau sudah mengarah ke dengan angin yang cukup kencang mau gak mau kita harus meng-cancel.

Having dealt with the ever-spontaneous daily and hourly chances of precipitation, these engineers seem reluctant to reinforce sound on roofless stages...

Somehow all of their stages did not have that [roofs] installed on top. Everything on all stages got wet. So perhaps we producers cannot really perform under such conditions, where we got canceled once, and then delayed again because the rain doesn't seem to stop and it's just impossible. And the so-called "safety shortcut" [cancellation] happens (ibid.).⁹⁰

Encountering the wet lumps on the floor, stage crew suffer from a slip, trip, or fall. Casualties emerge often without exposing themselves into a theatrical spotlight. Stages can collapse, and when they do, it is thought to have something to do with rain accelerating the corrosion of metals on wet and weakened soil structure. Some seemed uneasy to witness their colleagues "falling off the disintegrating stage" (Reza Upe, personal communication, October 14, 2017).⁹¹

As a result, event organizers bring in rain shamans as a "precautionary measure" (Barlian Yoga, personal communication, October 14, 2017).⁹² A backstage conversation I overheard and then engaged in points to what will be discussed in depth in the next section (Reza Upe, Rendi Raditya, Barlian Yoga, personal communication, October 14, 2017):

"Mostly it works," an engineer said.

"You believe that stuff," his colleagues wondered, "believe it or not? (*percaya gak percaya ya*)"

"Well, it was raining just one kilometer away, but not a single drop on my stage."

"Yeah, right... it works, of course," a colleague said with a grain of sarcasm.

"I don't know. I can't just say that I believe..."

... but there is something about it."

Organizing Meaningful Coincidences

I now take what is to be the final step in this chapter. This is where I leave the reader with organizers' expressions of wonder that arise when recruiting shamans for three specific music events through and beyond a wet season. I say 'beyond' because these people hire shamans all year round, even in the dry season. Miracles, the organizers say, can occur through paranormal

⁹⁰ *Entah bagaimana... jadi semua tidak pakai roof. Jadi semua di panggung basah. Jadi kita juga, kita gak mungkin bisa main juga dengan kondisi safety yang tidak memungkinkan gitukan. Jadi hampir satu kali cancel, satu kali mundur karena hujan gak berhenti-henti terus panggung tidak bisa ini. Ternyata terjadi shortcut, safety short cut itu sudah sempat terjadi.*

⁹¹ *Agak masuk ke bawah akhirnya miring segala macam.*

⁹² *Kan ada pawing hujan. Di setiap hujan pasti ada, promoter pasti ada. Precaution aja buat mereka.*

activities when one doesn't just simply respond to external events, but tries imagining and creating the external realities. Simply put, there is a story about how a cosmology could be based upon what they feel goes on in their mind. Rain shamanism, then, instantiates a belief that posits every phenomenon as having mind-like features with a hint of material-like features. I examine the assumption through Abhidhamma Buddhist Psychology, a text to which some prominent interlocutors refer when describing miraculous events.

Case #1: October 2016, The Synchronize Festival

One account that sounds stranger than fiction tells how the annual series of Synchronize Festivals was launched outdoors at Jakarta International Expo. The rainy season had just started, so it had been drizzling on and off the days before. On the first festival day, conditions were deceptively dry yet cloudy. Then, a sudden cascade of water pouring down that evening sent me running to the backstage, where the venue director was calming the event organizer, "You know, we would have broken even [i.e., matched total cost and revenue] if it hadn't rained the first day" (Prajna Murdaya and David Karto, personal communication, October 28, 2016). At first the organizer seemed to adapt and cope in a way. He reminded me of the Cheshire cat, when he would smile with all these teeth. He was looking around at everybody, grunting, and people were going like "Yeah!!!" Actually, he must have been masking anxiety as I could smell the alcohol in his breath ten feet away.

A few hours earlier, the venue director was gabbing on the phone with a shaman, looking out his office window at the dark cloud moving swiftly towards him. According to his memory, the shaman said, "Sorry bro. You've gotta have some rain. You can still decide when it's gonna come down." "...okay, cool. Just, just, you know, keep it dry for the beginners [i.e., the opening acts]. But when the pros [musicians] come out, (finger snapping) we don't have it [protection]" (Prajna Murdaya and Rusdianton, October 28, 2016). If the rain starts early morning, people could skip the openers and arrive late to the venue just to see the headliners, and have less time to spend money on food and merchandise on the spot. So that whole day went by without a single drop, and as soon as the opening acts were done and the pros came in people heard the rumble and crack of thunder. The rain came down, caking mud all over the place. When I asked the venue director whether he knew how shamanism is practiced and by whom, he answered, "I have to talk to my people about it" (Prajna Murdaya, personal communication, October 30, 2017).

Two days later, a competent jazz guitarist is getting ready to take the stage with his band Tomorrow People Ensemble. Although it didn't rain the day before and the weather today appears calm, he still remembers the heavy rain two days ago. As would anyone else, when playing electric guitars, he is dealing with a lot of 'power,' less in terms of any meaningful intersectionality, than in a Peircean pragmatic maxim: all his instruments work with built-in magnetic pickups that transduce string vibrations into high voltage signals. Most of the time it's

safe — until raindrops sprinkle on shoes and clothes and turn them into electrical conductors, creating contiguity relations between and among the stage, human body, and the guitar. This could lead to electric shock that is severe enough to knock anyone out, and that is the scariest thing one can imagine. Further, lightning strike causes sudden power loss, surge, or drop, all of which could damage their beloved tube amplifiers or inject extraneous noise. Thus, it is not only about the event; the event is typically just getting postponed, but the rain takes away safety. When the guitarist asks the event organizer whether he has met with “the person people recommend” and learned anything about the guy and his shamanism, the answer is, “No, not yet” (Nikita Dompas and David Karto, personal communication, October 30, 2016).

Case #2: March 2017, Java Jazz Festival

Five months later, this guitarist would be working for another festival called Java Jazz, but this time as a Program Coordinator. Approaching the end of the wet season, more and more musicians seem eager to play outdoors, where they are met by thousands and thousands in attendance and millions watching on their mobile devices. Everyone over there would be “very, very sad,” if the event is canceled just because of rain (Nikita Dompas, personal communication, October 30, 2017; Stephanus Adjie/Revision Live, personal communication, October 22, 2017). As mentioned earlier, if it rains really hard, the event has to stop, although, very rarely if the fans are out there in the rain, some of the artists will go out in the rain also. This happened in the case of a band named The Groove at the Java Jazz this year. The Coordinator had them play outdoor when it was raining intermittently and the thousands in attendance seemed to care less about whether they got wet as they rolled with the musicians. When I asked the Coordinator whether the Java Jazz organizers used a shaman, he replied, “We did, but we don’t know who he is. I don’t know where they actually hide... probably under the stage, aren’t they?” When the coordinator asked the President of Java Jazz Committee, “Hey Dewi, do you know who’s our *pawang hujan* [rain shaman]?” she answered, “I know him, but I’ve never met him. Just sending fees to the ones people recommend me” (Nikita Dompas and Dewi Gontha, personal communication, March 3, 2017).

Case #3: May 2017, Hammersonic Festival

Two months after the Java Jazz, and seven months have passed since the sudden cascade of water pouring down sent me running to the backstage on the Synchronize opening day. Actually, the rain that evening made a chunk of audience disappear when a veteran metal vocalist was on stage. That musician is now working a second job as the Event Logistics Coordinator for the Hammersonic Festival, headhunting a shaman. He is Stephanus Adjie who has been renowned for leading Down For Life, one of Java’s most respected metal bands and the co-headliner of the 2015 Sound For Orangutan Event. In May 2017, the Hammersonic promoters brought him in because he has had experiences with *jumenengan*, a traditional

salvation ritual that commemorates the coronation of a king. The official palace of the City of Surakarta makes offerings, such as butchered chickens, and cone-shaped rice dishes, and distribute them to the people who come and pray. It is distinct from, yet similar to, rain shamanism in that people try to communicate with non-humans, such as ancestors, the nature, or a deity, for blessings in preparation for an upcoming event. The blessings, of course, include weather control. This ritual has been a staple in Java's heavy metal circle at least since 2004 when Adjie began promoting a historic, large-scale annual series of concerts titled Rock In Solo (Stephanus Adjie, personal communication, September 15, 2017).

Now the rainy winter has passed, supposedly, but “over time we [organizers] learned that this thing we call ‘rain’ can fall in the same way [spontaneously] during the summer” (Sarah Deshita, personal communication, October 15, 2017).⁹³ Adjie is no shaman, of course, but the promoters hired him for being good at detecting “so much bullshit in this business [where] a lot of people say, ‘Ah, we know the guy.’ And then we [the promoters] hire one and it’s still raining. After the rain, the shaman says, ‘The cloud is too heavy. We need to let it rain a little’” (Ravel Junardy, personal communication, September 15, 2017). When I asked the Promoter whether he has met a shaman in the recruitment process, he said yes, and he actually mentioned the name of a famous one to whom I will be introduced in the next section. But when I asked him how the ritual was done, he asked me back, “How do I know? We’re just trying to find who’s the best. Then I contact the person. Success! No rain [this year]. I paid them for working well, not for nothing” (ibid.).

The promoter then told me “a really funny story”:

Last year in 2016, we didn’t use shaman, because we don’t want... a lot of our team members believe in our own God. And some of the Directors said, ‘Why are we still using the shaman? We must trust God [Allah]. And we must pray to God [ourselves]. So, we did not hire a shaman. And then there was really heavy rain! (ibid.).

“Rain? Oh, that was a storm,”⁹⁴ corrects Adjie as he is still haunted by the memory of last year when everything went “messy” (Stephanus Adjie, personal communication, September 15, 2017).⁹⁵ “Yes, it was like a storm,” agrees the promoter, “A storm at the festival. We had to stop the festival for like four hours. That was really a huge loss, the worst. Then, in 2017, I said, ‘No, we must use, MUST USE a shaman!’” (Ravel Junardy, personal communication, September 15, 2017).

In these processes, organizers do not really care whether shamans are coming from different religious backgrounds. At first, I assumed that they were going to compare, for example, the Chinese shaman to the Islamic or one who follows local Javanese beliefs, Kejawèn, as I do in the next section. Even after Islam has taken over what we now call Indonesia at the

⁹³ *Kita belajar banget bahwa yang namanya hujan di musim panas itu sama.*

⁹⁴ *Hujan? Oh, itu storm.*

⁹⁵ *Kacau.*

municipal level, some people today still believe that there is a “great power in their environment with the Universe; whether it be what the Catholics call God, the Muslims call Allah, or the Buddhists call Buddha (Stephanus Adjie, personal communication, September 15, 2017).⁹⁶ This points to a notion that “God is not up there but in a tree, then think twice before cutting it down because the tree has a life” (ibid.).⁹⁷ Part of my suspicion, then, was that those who employ shamans would be aware of things that shamans have in common and that may have more to do with the local culture than they do with either the Chinese or the Islamic background. But it’s just that they want the shaman to be good, one might say, an effective shaman who can control the weather. It does not matter what their background is, even though there is a negotiation always about who to get. What matters is not the religion, but the success or failure, and as stated earlier, these decisions are made solely on the basis of reputation.

In effect, the organizers think of the weather as being the result of a kind of spiritual body, with which only a shaman can communicate, and which the shaman does not have to mechanically move but rather influence by praying to it. The Rock In Solo Promoter pays a shaman “actually just to help his prayer,”⁹⁸ because “the shaman’s prayer is more audible than our prayers” (Stephanus Adjie, personal communication, September 15, 2017).⁹⁹ The Java Jazz Coordinator says he used to not believe such a thing until recently. “Well, when it rains, it rains,” he used to say, but now he says, “Well, we need to delay the concert because there are people who have different abilities than us the normal people. The shamans have the special ability to talk to the God of rain” (Nikita Dompas, personal communication, October 30, 2017). The Hammersonic Promoter tells me, “it’s basically because he [the shaman] cannot stop the rain, but move the cloud. So, he’s got maybe like a supernatural power” (Ravel Junardy, personal communication, September 15, 2017).

Simply put, these people would actually be more curious about how shamanism is practiced rather than curious to see why it works. The assumption here is that only shamans can learn how to stop the rain, and the majority of population do not have a direct access to the shaman’s phenomenology (Bani Terasyailendra, personal communication, November 4, 2017).¹⁰⁰ Further, I have many times heard people comparing the Indonesian rain shamans to Tibetan monks and Christian mystics insofar as they keep what they do a secret, and share it only amongst people who are practicing it.

⁹⁶ *Ada kekuatan besar di alam ini dengan alam semesta; entah kata orang beragama Katholik menyebut itu Tuhan, orang Muslim menyebutnya Allah, ataupun orang Buddha menyebutnya Buddha.*

⁹⁷ *Tuhan tidak diatas sana tapi, oh di pohon ini, ada orang akan berpikir dua kali untuk potong pohon deh. Kayak orang sangat percaya pohon itu ada nyawanya, ada penguasanya*

⁹⁸ *Membantu mendoakan saja sebenarnya sih.*

⁹⁹ *Doanya pawang hujan lebih didengarkan dari doa kita gitu*

¹⁰⁰ This information results from a retrospective reconstruction of rough notes taken during a night out at a beer garden.

What these people observe may be the state of existence, in which what they observe changes as a consequence of the fact that they are observing it. What they observe, basically, exists as input for this demand. When they talk about how when they observe something, it is actually different than when that thing is not observed, sometimes they go deeply into some religious texts. For example, I was often asked whether I have read the *Abhidhamma* (अभिधम्म), which is one of the fundamental books in Theravada Buddhism. Based on what can be felt to go on in the human mind, the book ascribes around one hundred consciousnesses into four spheres: three are condition and one is ultimate.¹⁰¹ The ultimate, obviously is nirvana, which is an unconditioned state of emptiness. And because all possible consciousnesses are deemed egoless and non-self, they are broken down into four fundamental building blocks. The first is based on the sense sphere, which is what we see, hear, and touch, the stuffs that we usually experience. Second is fine material consciousness, which could be our thoughts about a material object. Third is the immaterial sphere of consciousness, which emerges when meditating on immaterial nothing. Fourth is supramundane consciousness, where Buddhists claim to have begun to transcend the grind of living, i.e., the rise of “unwholesome” feelings that are rooted in greed, hatred, and delusion. After all, matter is there, if not an atom or quark, but when Buddhists look at the human experience, its fundamental building block is actually consciousness (A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma 1993: 27-32).

The people who hire shamans tend to look at that kind of structure and apply something of that categorization to their blocks of experience. They believe that some shamans can make the clouds move, and communicate with the rest of the physical world. Any belief that something is true seems to have a real effect on what is true because they believe in what *is*.

In my upbringing, I had heard of that Buddhist psychology, but I never really was able to read it because I was not mature enough and every time I tried I just fell asleep. It just seemed so systematic and dry. But now that I am reading it with informants after I am a little bit older, I am beginning to understand why it is so methodical. The way in which it treats all consciousnesses as though they are non-self and egoless relieves my angst from being a finite life form aware of its own demise. People would also recommend this book to me because it actually breaks down the world into something that they can grasp: “So, there’s basically four kinds of consciousnesses. Only four! Okay!” (Prajna Murdaya, personal communication, October 30, 2017). In particular, those who are overwhelmed by different kinds of experiences would see the psychology as refreshing because it starts to make things less complex. They are basically

¹⁰¹ *Abhidhamma* defines consciousness as the mental formation when it comes in contact with the object and non-object, and there arises a cognition where it is some stimulus from the sense sphere one starts to identify as something of meaning, which usually is accompanied by feeling. And there are certain kinds of feelings that are associated with certain roots. For example, a consciousness rooted in greed can only have joy or neutrality. It means that the thinker is not going to have restlessness or doubt, about which one can feel happy cluelessly. The book delineates and dissect things, such that reader can empirically observe this.

ironing out, factoring out stuff that is not relevant in navigating through this constant process of interpretation called life and seeing what kind of experiences they can generate. How people create such a cosmology based on what goes on in the mind is best exemplified in the following conversation on shamanism between a venue director and program coordinator:

PM: It works. For me, I've told myself, 'It works.'

ND: If you speak Indonesian, '*percaya nggak percaya* (Believe it or not).' Something like that. You believe it, but you don't believe it, you know.

PM: That's true... but if you really believe it, it'll work better

(Prajna Murdaya & Nikita Dompas, personal communication, October 30, 2017).

Rather than passively giving in to external events, these interlocutors say they actually are creating the externalities. It is like talking about Schrödinger's equation, in brief, of how when they observe something is actually different than when it is not observed. Especially those who are scientifically Western, engineers and venue directors, tend to find it liberating to see that if they are conscious of something, then that is actually what creates realities. And the fact that these people are having this conversation in front of me, and the table in front of us is brown instead of green, they say

There's a lot... in there. People start becoming little less rigid about how they perceive things that happen to them. The point is, they [Buddhists] say that it's actually a discreet flow. It's a flow of discreet consciousness that appear so fast that becomes like a moving picture. You start to understand why you call quantum mechanics quantum mechanics, because quantum mechanics is quantum, it means discreet. It's not continuous, right? So, you start to see it sort of converges with Buddhist philosophy. I began to experience things that I think might be aligned with these kinds of things. I was wondering like, there's a quantum wave function applied to matter. So, matter and energy are actually continuum. I'm just trying to understand. These [Buddhist] fundamentals... if that's the case, then that's cool, right? So now I'm playing around with my current experiences. It's really liberating actually (Prajna Murdaya, personal communication, October 30, 2017).

To summarize: Grounding oneself in this kind of meditative experience turns out to be the gold standard for designing this very interesting laboratory. Although I have had some strange experiences during my lifetime (e.g., lucid dreams), I was very curious to see these people actually talking about energy, vibing and stuff. Then I thought about it further and realized that if I would just think very cerebrally, it would make no sense at all being an observer in that flow state we call shamanism, where the ego is simply just a projection of something that one experiences of a certain blink of an eye. But if I take a look at this through the Abhidhamma matrix, then I begin to see how all of this could seem like a constant stream of consciousness. So, encapsulating the physical — a moving cloud — in the fundamental vehicle of consciousness appears to put everything together symbolically. And it stays remarkably neutral inasmuch as one can play one's own experience to it and see if that shows extra clarity. Notice we were just

talking about things that are related to sense-objects. But later, beyond the scope of my thesis, the book starts talking about consciousnesses driven by karma, which means that there are things we do now that we can kind of change, but there will be also fact about things that have come in the past. It is not too simple, but it is not undeliberately complex.

Concluding Remarks

In this section, I argued that the value of shamanism emerges from a voluntary organization of meaningful coincidences. Empirically, I showed why event organizers think they value rain shamanism even without getting into the nitty-gritty details about who acts as a shaman and how it's done. This social information was first contextualized by outlining briefly some prominent processes of Indonesian venue operation and event management processes. The information was then situated within the spontaneity of tropical weather, which causes concert technical crews to express a feeling of futility when having to abruptly end or delay their shows whenever it rains. Next, it summarized some cosmological experiments the organizers say they do, when seeing things like a cloud as a kind of spiritual body, whose intentionality can change in mysterious ways. In the next chapter, I will show how the shamans of different religions have common ways of doing things despite their different religious worldviews.

3. Exceeding Meaning: The Work of Rain Shamans at Festivals

“Say magic,” utters a Dutch interlocutor from the passenger seat in front of me.

“Say what?”¹⁰² an Indonesian driver responds after having been on autopilot for an hour, leaping back into consciousness as we see a venue appearing beyond a curtain of rain.

“It’s raining everywhere except right here,”¹⁰³ the Netherlander’s state of wonder continues.

I am riding in the backseat of the car with Stephanus Adjie and Step Vaessen on a rainy morning in May 2017. We are heading to an event titled “Hammersonic,” Asia’s biggest metal festival held annually in Jakarta since 2012. I just met Adjie, the driver, in his capacity as the Event Logistics Coordinator for Revision Live, today’s event promotion company. But I first heard of him as one of the musicians who headlined a primate justice concert a few years back (Sound For Orangutan 2015). Step, the passenger, is from the Netherlands and has been together with Adjie for a few years. They have been living together, throughout her tenure as the Indonesian Correspondent for *Al Jazeera*.

A week before the event, Step had eavesdropped on a phone conversation Adjie was having with a shaman... “Hey, hon, whom are you calling?”¹⁰⁴ “A rain shaman (*Pawang hujan*).” Step laughed a big laugh, according to Adjie’s memory, and planted a seed of doubt, “You’re organizing an international music festival, and you believe in the rain shaman?” (Stephanus Adjie, personal communication, May 1, 2017).¹⁰⁵

Now, Adjie is raising his eyebrows and giving Step an I-told-you-so look. And he goes, “You were laughing like you didn’t believe any of this, like there’s no such thing as rain shaman. Look, just a few hundred meters outside, it’s pouring everywhere! Like the whole rest of the city [we’ve just passed through], from our house [in South Jakarta] all the way up to Ancol [a beach in North Jakarta], except just here.”¹⁰⁶ Then I hear Step reevaluating the mysticism, “Well, I’m seeing it for myself now” (Step Vaessen, personal communication, May 7, 2017).¹⁰⁷

This chapter presents in-depth case studies of the communication work that’s being done by virtue of the recognition of *likeness* by a famous shaman and other shamans with whom I studied. The shamans do things (blowing smoke) that look *like* what they want to accomplish

¹⁰² *Apa?*

¹⁰³ *Semua hujan di sini saja tidak hujan.*

¹⁰⁴ *Sayang, telpon siapa?*

¹⁰⁵ *Kamu bikin festival internasional kemudian kalian percaya pawang hujan?”*

¹⁰⁶ *Ketawa-tawa kayak kamu gak percaya dengan saya, pawang hujan itu tidak ada. Itu di luar Eco Mansion sebentar aja berapa ratus meter hujan semua kan, depan Ancol hujan! Hampir semua Jakarta hujan. Di rumah sampai Ancol hujan, begitu masuk ancil hampir dekat ke Hammersonic gak hujan. Sini aja tidak hujan.*

¹⁰⁷ *Nah, ini saya lihat dengan kepala saya sendiri.*

(moving clouds). I argue that shamans convince deities by virtue of their deeds rather than just describing differences in things. I pay close attention to the cases when shamans are not at all interested in ‘talking’ to a variety of deities, while elucidating their proclivity to convince the deities to do something for them by engaging in the three following practices: 1) burning things to create smoke that looks *like* cloud movements; 2) fasting and abstaining from sex before and during festivals; 3) reciting texts and prayers in foreign languages that they don’t speak. By looking at the ways the shamans physically respond to how deities work in metaphysical ways, I suggest that, within this frame of reference, a focus on “meanings” may not be the best way of validating ethnographic knowledge.

The chapter begins with the story of how I met a popular shaman who many people think can push and pull the rain clouds with his fingers. Next, it provides social information on rain shamanism in Indonesia and neighboring countries. I add new evidence to the social contexts that I laid out in the previous chapter, with emphasis on how people become professional shamans, whether they get paid, and whether some of them happen to be more successful than the others. The following subsection offers a semiotic analysis of the three modes of nonlinguistic shamanism that I mentioned above.

My First Encounter with a Shaman

When Adjie, Step, and I arrived at the venue, the gates were not yet opened, but the queue of metalheads waiting to mosh and bang their heads stretched several hundred meters along the central promenade. Hundreds of thousands of them actually waited through the sunrise, some wearing a slew of Western band T-shirts that say “Eyehategod” and “Godflesh,” whereas a kid put on “Thank’s [sic] God I’m metalhead.” I asked that guy where I can get that shirt, and it turned out he’s done the silk-screening himself to express his faith.¹⁰⁸ Despite the variation, both types of individuals march side by side into a designated prayer room (*mushola*) during their lunch break. “I find it quite interesting,” a guitarist would later recall, “if they [the pious metalheads] do search for [the lyrics] on the Internet, they would say otherwise [that not all of their favorite metal songs defend and promote creationism]” (Nikita Dompas, personal communication, October 30, 2017).

The Managing Director of Jakarta International Expo comments on the prevalence of sporting English expressions that are not necessarily understood by their wearers: “Yeah, they [some metalheads] may not understand sort of how politically charged it is. I have a plywood factory, and people would walk around wearing T-shirts with Osama bin Laden’s face on it. And then the person who was working with him has another shirt that says “Jesus Inside.” They’d be sitting next to each other at the same workshop” (Prajna Murdaya, personal communication, October 30, 2017).

¹⁰⁸ *Kaosnya gue sablon. Gue Muslim.*

Thousands more joined the crowd as the day progressed, and by the time a legendary Swedish “chainsaw” death metal band, Entombed A.D., started their set around 4 p.m., thousands and thousands of metalheads were in attendance. Wallach et al. (2011) offered a vivid description of what is likely to happen here as elsewhere:

The band takes the stage and launches into its first song. The music is distorted, pounding, and brutal, and it is so loud that it seems to fill in the space between the musicians and the audience members. Sweat pours down the singer’s face as he bellows the lyrics in a voice that is half rasp, half-scream. The instrumentalists—bass guitarist, electric guitarist, and drummer—gnash their teeth and grimace as if in pain (Wallach, Berger, and Greene 2011:3).

While harnessing a low-pitched, guttural vocal technique metalheads call death growl, the Macedonian vocalist Lars Petrov could not help but gaze up at the sky between songs, only to discover the dark cloud moving swiftly towards us...

“Do you see the cloud?” Petrov asks us the crowd in what a musician next to me perceives to be a raspy “Viking” voice (Ricky Siahaan, personal communication, May, 7, 2017).

“...” we, the audience, raise our heads to look at the sky and gasp, and then we hear Petrov shouting,

“SATAN’s coming!”

The silence is shattered by the roar of hundreds of thousands in attendance. Apparently, everyone now feels like something is coming, without necessarily slipping into the imagination of a biblical story, as the large chunk of cloud meanders menacingly a tad far from our venue. That cloud somehow splits into two, three, and then those clouds start moving in opposite directions, going everywhere except above us. Indeed, this experience of spontaneity is both shared and personal. A veteran hardcore musician would later assert how meaningful it was for him to feel protected and watched over inside a “laser dome” beneath an “electromagnetic shield” (Bani Terasyailendra, personal communication, November 4, 2017).

Backstage, Adjie seems relaxed about his role in the recruiting of a good rain shaman, who allegedly contributed to the splitting of the cloud. “Believe it or not,” Adjie turns to his Dutch partner, “that’s what’s up in Indonesia. Not sure if something like this could exist in Europe (Stephanus Adjie, personal communication, May 7, 2017).¹⁰⁹ This apparent success is fortunate, especially in light of the supercharged thunderstorm that slammed and shut down the same event last year in the absence of a shaman. The Chief Promoter of Revision Live now seems to be having the time of his life as I hear him testifying how

It’s really happening. I mean, I saw with my own eyes the cloud is moving! The sky was already dark. And after that, the clouds are moving towards the north. And

¹⁰⁹ *Ya itu, kayak believe [it] or not, tapi di Indonesia seperti itu. Nggak tahu kalau di Eropa mungkin tidak ada.*

there's no rain at all! You know, [shamanism is] really contradicting what I believe [Christianity] but... it works!

(Ravelius Junardy, personal communication, May 7 & September 15, 2017).

Being around these people subsequent to witnessing the cloud movements myself made me curious about how rain shamanism is practiced and why it works the way it does. “Who the hell is this guy?” I ask around, and Adjie tells me that the shaman is actually Buddhist: “Interestingly enough, it just so happens that he's Chinese [Indonesian]. His name is Willy, one of the rain shamans [with whom Adjie is working in Solo and Jakarta]. And as it turns out, he's the best in Jakarta, and may even be the best in the whole country. He is known for some of the big series of events for which he is often used. And that amounts to almost all events in Jakarta, not just some small campus events but, for example, Djakarta Warehouse Project [one of the major series of rave festivals in Asia]” (Stephanus Adjie, personal communication, May 7, 2017).¹¹⁰ This could indicate that shamans may use their own way in accordance with their own religion to wrestle with the weather, as though there is a Muslim way of communicating with clouds and a Buddhist way of communicating with clouds. As will become clear in the next section, however, I would later find it impossible to overlook salient common features between the Buddhist and Muslim shamans in their attempts to communicate with elementals, nature spirits, and deities.

I spent the remainder of this day searching for that shaman who, everyone said, was controlling the weather. Specifically, I was told to look for a “tiny person, small and short, an old man in his seventies maybe, who has been praying and fasting relentlessly for the last few days, doing all sorts of rituals” (ibid.).¹¹¹ Revision staff members tried phoning the shaman to hook me up with him, but got no answer. They said he was around here somewhere, but no one seemed to know his current whereabouts. By the end of the day, the shaman never really appeared in public at all, but instead Adjie and I ran into a small table placed in a dark corner outside an artist's dressing room. Adjie told me the table was there from the beginning of the event, and it was for the shaman's prayers. We breathed in the lingering smell of old smoke, and found a trace of recently burned incense through its ashes scattered around a small bronze altar.

Although the night was young, Adjie, Step, and I decided to call it a night when the festival ended with a dose of thrash metal given by the American headliner of the day, Megadeth. And when the event crew came rushing over and disassembled the shaman's table — a ROARING thunder blasted our eardrums, making us all cringe! With a flash of lightning across the sky, the rain finally started to fall. Standing there in the rain, I mumbled...

¹¹⁰ *Cukup menarik, dia Chinese, Pak Willy itu. Dia salah satu pawang hujan dan ternyata pawang hujan yang terbaik di Jakarta, bahkan di Indonesia mungkin. Terkenal, untuk beberapa event-event besar dia sering dipakai. Hampir semua event di Jakarta, bukan event kampus aja kayak DWP party.*

¹¹¹ *Kecil, kecil pendek, mungkin sudah 70 tahun, sudah tua dan dia akhirnya berapa hari sebelumnya doa, ritual, puasa, ritualnya macam-macam.*

“What the...?!”

“What’s up bro?” asks Adjie.

“How often is it that you have an event, especially when it rains elsewhere, heavily, and the shaman comes in, and the whole day is scorching hot... and when it’s over it just rains?”

“Very often,” Adjie shrugs his shoulders like he couldn’t care less. And yet this brings to his mind how

That could happen after the shaman worked it all out, after he gave the place a good look. And the rain starts pouring after the event is done. Soon as we come out of the venue, it pours. It’s often, often true. Once in Cilandak [a neighborhood in South Jakarta], and this is not too long ago, in the Cilandak Field. They actually didn’t have any tents for the event. It was a garden party with skies really wide open. So, it was about to rain, and eventually it did. When the event was supposed to have finished already, this guy still wants to party more. He says, “Until 10 p.m.!” And so on, until around 10:30, the shaman pulled down his table. And people start getting on their vehicles, shortly thereafter, it starts pouring

(Stephanus Adjie, personal conversation, May 7, 2017).¹¹²

“I gotta go talk to this guy.”

“Willy the shaman? Yeah, I can give you his number,” Adjie swipes up the screen to unlock his phone, and remarks, “Jeez... he might like to be interviewed as well, I mean how long has he been doing this... It must have been a very long time.”¹¹³

A Relativist View of Rain Shamanism as a Time-Honored Practice

We now apply an area studies approach to rain shamanism as the long-lived practice of mediums in service of event organization that, festival authorities believe, prevents rain from impacting box office success. In Southeast Asia,¹¹⁴ its usage is predominantly but not fully limited to

¹¹² *Itu memang sering, sering kejadian. Pas dia lagi kerjakan, pas ada tempat. Dia sudah kasih lihat tempatnya kan? Itu kalau seandainya sudah selesai acara nih, dicabut. Kita jalan keluar, tahu-tahunya turun. Itu sering, sering benar. Di Cilandak belum lama ini, Pelataran Cilandak. Maksudnya gak ada tenda, jadi benar-benar terbuka banget. Iya party-nya party garden dia, benar-benar terbuka. Jadi seandainya mau hujan, sudah benar-benar semua hujan. Jadi pas acara itu selesai kan dia masih pada pesta ya. Dia bilang jam 10 selesainya, jam 10 itu dia orang masih party lah. Nah, kira-kira kita jam 10.30 cabut meja, terus kan kita orang keluar kan naik kendaraan, nggak lama itu diluar turun, rintik-rintik hujan.*

¹¹³ *Pak willy mungkin mau di-interview juga, nah, dia itu pengalaman dari tahun berapa... Udah lama, lama sekali.*

¹¹⁴ In neighboring countries such as Malaysia and Singapore, rough equivalents to these shamans are termed “*bomoh*.” They are enlisted to perform spiritual acts, though typically to treat health problems. Residents of mainland Malaysia make frequent use of the services of *bomoh* (Justin Weinstock, personal

Indonesia and Malaysia (see, e.g., Rafi 2007; Galo 2016). As will become clear in the subsequent sections, the term “*pawang hujan*” is used in Indonesia to describe individuals who actively move the rain away by: 1) burning things, 2) abstaining from sex, sleep, and eating, and 3) reciting in a language that they may not fully understand or do not understand at all. Before analyzing each set of examples to point out their common features, this section succinctly outlines their extra-ritualistic contexts, and the ways in which they are currently being used “as common[ly] as renting a sound system for a concert” (Galo 2016; personal communication, October 16, 2017). At this stage in my research, I limit my focus to how the shamans do something not for the music, but for the occasion.

With over ten thousand islands to choose from, Indonesian rain shamans work wherever their services are needed and do so on location or remotely. The shamans with whom I interacted work in a variety of locations ranging from the Jakarta metropolitan area (Depok, Bogor, Bekasi) through other cities in Java (Bandung and Solo), and all the way over to Borneo. On the one hand, the vast majority of them offer their services for free to their respective communities with the aim of maintaining authority over certain areas of spiritual jurisdiction. For example, shamans in Central Java are “interestingly enough, social, just like you and I,”¹¹⁵ when they work free of charge for non-commercial events such as wedding (Stephanus Adjie, personal communication, September 15, 2017). Another example comes from the shamans who work full-time at Jakarta’s National Monument (MONAS) and International Expo (JI Expo). They say they compete with each other by sending each other rain clouds...

Well, those shamans [at MONAS] would oftentimes throw the clouds at us. This is before I joined JI Expo. They hired up to three shamans, really. Once I joined [the JI Expo shamans], people started calling us equally powerful as them. ‘Praise be to God [Allah]!’ [After I joined JI Expo], it didn’t rain for eleven days and ten nights. Here is its significance. Please excuse me. I’m not gonna say that the shamans there [at MONAS] are incompetent. No-no. But if somebody over there wants to take on three or four of us, go ahead. Let’s get it on. Even if I’m there alone, ‘Thank God,’ right? I can do it. Really at the JI Expo there were two, three people. But the fact is each of us has different ability. Not the same, different!

(Rusdianton, personal communication, November 7, 2017).¹¹⁶

communication, November 28, 2018; Joanne Tan, September 25, 2019). Thus, people there have not seen as many *bomohs* in recent times, with the exception of Ibrahim Mat Zin, the self-proclaimed “king of shamans (*raja bomoh*)” who fueled a media frenzy by performing a sequence of rituals “which he said were meant to protect Malaysia from a North Korean nuclear attack” (The Straits Times, March 15, 2017). The shaman later admitted that those were fake rituals “instructed by someone to do all this drama to protect their own interests” (ibid., April 26, 2017).

¹¹⁵ *Cukup menarik, mereka sosial juga, sama.*

¹¹⁶ *Nah, itu seringkali dia ngebuang ke JI Expo gitu loh. Itu saya belum masuk disitu dulu. Sampai tiga orang, begitu. Saya masuk dipanggil sama yang disitu. Alhamdulillah! Sampai sepuluh hari sepuluh*

What he basically said was that if a place has more shamans, then it is more likely that it will not rain. But also, numbers don't matter at times in such handiwork of shamans, when they bring in the more powerful shaman and say, 'It's got to be him.'

On the other hand, experienced shamans work both within and outside their own backyard. For example, a shaman in Jakarta likes to spend hours making very many paper birds on his day off. And he airmails them to event organizers in Borneo. That, he says, allows him to "transfer" his energy without necessarily having to be present when the event is held remotely. And then the shaman phones somebody local there to put incense on an altar, and light it up alongside candles or lamps so that "Buddha can smell it" (Willy, personal communication, October 11, 2017).¹¹⁷ Some kind of information is deemed transmitted and received when

I [the shaman] see things. I have telepathy. I see things from afar, [as a clairvoyant]. So, before work, I'm more or less requesting for the good weather. I can transfer [my energy] from Jakarta to Kalimantan, so it doesn't rain over there. The way that this is gonna work is rather strange. Just because the transfer was done successfully once, twice, and thrice, it's not a coincidence. But it's been done really well. I'm just not allowed to do cherry-picking. We must ask [God] for permission. Me, I'm just making a medium, one that's made from paper, a paper bird. [Over there in Kalimantan], there are two shamans one person from Java and one from Kalimantan. The employer doesn't tell me that, but I can detect their presence. Why ask for my help when there are *pawang* already? Because, [during the rainy season in Kalimantan], if it rains, it can be incredible for like five hours. Everything can be cancelled.

(Willy, personal communication, September 26, 2017; see also Galo 2016).¹¹⁸

Implementing both on-site and off-site work strategies leaves these shamans with the option of working extended hours. They like to get up early and go straight to the location, wherever folks need them, anywhere events are held. Here comes the shaman who is "always there for however long the client wants it, hours and days. No problem. If they need me for just

malam itu tidak turun hujan. Nah, disitu artinya begini. Maaf-maaf. Tidak mendikte orang itu nggak bisa. Bukan ya. Artinya kekuatan disitu tahu, tiga orang pun tidak mampu. Satu orang pun bisa. Jadi istilahnya mau tiga orang empat orang? Ya, silahkan saja. Saya kalau sendiri ya, Alhamdulillah, kan? Bisa. Memang di JI Expo ada dua, tiga orang. Cuma istilahnya begini. Kemampuan orang itu berbeda ya. Tidak sama, berbeda!

¹¹⁷ *Habis itu dia wangiannya dari dupa, tso.*

¹¹⁸ *Lihat. Ya, saya kan punya telepati. Saya bisa lihat jarak jauh. Jadi sebelum kerja, saya kurang lebih, saya mohon supaya udaranya bagus. Saya bisa transfer, supaya jangan sampai hujan. Ini, kan, kejadiannya agak aneh. Sekali, dua kali, tiga kali, empat kali, lima kali, ini bukan kebenaran. Tapi ini benar-benar terlaksana dengan baik. Hanya saya gak boleh terlalu sembarangan. Kita harus minta ijin, disitu minta ijinnya. Aku ini membuatkan satu media, media itu dari kertas, di buat. Burung hawk. Ada dua. Tapi dia gak mau ngucapkan. Saya bisa deteksi disana ada pawang, pawang satu orang dari Jawa, satu dari Kalimantan. Tapi dia gak mau terus terang gitu. Kok kenapa ada pawang tapi masih minta bantuan? Karena kalau kena hujan, itu bisa luar biasa. Lima jam, bisa gagal.*

one day, one night, we must be there and work there” (Rusdianton, personal communication, November 7, 2017).¹¹⁹ Anytime people need the service, the shaman just “works, prays, entreats, and does what it takes to figure out where to send the clouds” (ibid.).¹²⁰ This is echoed by an emerging talent who is widely regarded as “a capable person” (Vinson, personal communication, October 11, 2017),¹²¹ who thinks “what’s important is to work no matter how long I’m not allowed to eat, even at a wedding reception, which is one of the most delicious places in town” (Ahmad Fathori, personal communication, October 11, 2017).¹²² The same is true for a veteran shaman who told me that “the important thing is we are on standby for work” (Willy, personal communication, September 26).¹²³ His employer reports that he was present at the venue up to five days in preparation for that one-day metal festival I described in the beginning of this chapter (Adjie, personal communication, September 15, 2017).

Appropriate physical fitness is attained and maintained through these shamans’ lifelong exercise habits. Activities that promote cardiorespiratory endurance keep their complexion radiant, helping them gain lean muscle while shedding body fat. Like many others of his profession, a vigorous senior shares his secrets to getting in a workout on a daily basis: “I always exercise. I run with this [barbell]. Oftentimes, [I’m] running for fitness, with a twenty-five-kilogram barbell. I’m sixty-one years old, but still strong enough to run several kilometers, once from here [Pondokgede Sub-district, East Jakarta] to Cililitan [Kramat Jati], a round trip [approximately 8.5 miles] carrying it [the barbell]. If there’s no relationship [between mind and body...] indeed, if we want to do things for ourselves, then we must be fit. If we are sick, then how could we pray [for an extended period of time] and stay focused [during fasting and rituals]?”¹²⁴ (Rusdianton, personal communication, November 7, 2017). A shaman in his seventies says likewise; when we first met, he wanted save us time by printing out an interview he has had with a journalist, to whom he said, “Physically, I’m still quite fit to do a few rounds of National Stadium when working. You have to be strong physically because you don’t get a lot of sleep” (Willy and Galo, *The Wknd*, March 24, 2016).

Due care is exercised when employers have shamans sign their agreements. Short-term contracts mandate shamans to perform spiritual acts in less than a week or two, during which the

¹¹⁹ *Tetap saja saya disitu. Selama dia sampai berapa jam atau berapa hari. Tidak jadi masalah. Mau satu hari, mau satu hari satu malam, kita harus disitu, bekerja disitu.*

¹²⁰ *Bekerja, berdoa, memohon, kemana kita harus kita ini, gitu loh.*

¹²¹ *Memang orang bisa.*

¹²² *Yang penting selama saya kerja, walaupun panjang waktunya itu gak boleh sembarangan makan. Saya itu kalau kerja dimana? Tempat wedding, tempat yang paling enak*

¹²³ *Yang penting kita standby untuk kerja.*

¹²⁴ *Saya selalu olahraga. Lari. Ini pakai ini. Lari, fitness, lari bawa dumbbell 25 kilo. Saya sering keliling. Saya masih kuat lari berapa kilo. Pernah dari sini sampai cililitan pulang pergi. Itu dumbbell saya ada buat lari. Kalau itu tidak ada hubungannya, kalau itukan untuk diri kita kan memang kan harus fit juga. Kalau kitanya sakit bagaimana kita mau berdoa? Mau konsentrasi, disamping itu kan?*

employer assumes the right to claim a refund in case of failure. For example, one of Indonesia's top shopping malls posit that shamans, should they fail to stop the rain for a certain amount of time, pose a risk of harm to their shoppers, retail tenants, and property investors. A shaman there showed me the contract, which reads "if the rain persists for more than 25 minutes, he will not be paid for his services on that day" (Vinson, personal communication, October 11, 2017). The same logic applies to long-term contracts. For example, a coal mining site in Palembang, South Sumatra, need not pay their shamans if it rains there for more than two consecutive days. One of their shamans I've met was on a six-month contract, claiming he had pulled off preventing rain over the past four months (Fathori, personal communication, October 11, 2017).

All things considered, the number of clients is much larger than the event promoters I have discussed. The shamans are mindful to widen their niche in their respective communities, while also attracting considerable attention of high-profile customers. Within the scope of my thesis, a relatively large proportion of the client pool consists of concert halls and exhibition centres, event organizers, and, even more vital, musicians.¹²⁵ Beyond that, the rest of the pool includes the current and past Presidents of Indonesia with their familial and social networks of politicians, congressmen, trans/national tobacco industry, gambling cartels, mafia, police, five-star hotels, shopping malls, wedding organizers, sports tournaments, recreational parks, government institutions and national security forces.¹²⁶ A shaman recalls:

President SBY [Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono], he'd often play golf out here [Halim Airport]. So... I'd go ahead and take care of him. [Before I became a shaman] I was originally working as an airport security. Yeah, I was a security guy there. But as it turned out, I had done it [the ritual] before. It just so happened that I have learned it already by just being around old folks who were doing it for a long time... by experience, through my parents, from generation to generation. Jeez... back then [1997] I was forty years of age. And then somebody just started using me as a shaman. I got called in for this one place, and once people found out about this, they began to call me shaman. The 'rain handler,' they call me. Calling the shaman became like calling me. And, back then, the President's son [Edhie Baskoro Yudhoyono] had a

¹²⁵ To name a few: Concert and exhibition halls (Jakarta International Expo), organizers (Ismaya Live, Revision Live, Java Festival Production, Orangufriends, Rock In Solo, JERIN Festival) and even more vital, musicians (Iwan Fals, Kotak, Nidji, and Wali) (Willy, personal communication, September 26, 2017; Fathori and Vinson, personal communication, October 11, 2017; Rusdianton, personal communication, November 7, 2017).

¹²⁶ To name a few: Presidents (Joko Widodo, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono) and their offspring (Tommy Suharto, Edhie Baskoro Yudhoyono), congressmen (Tinton Soeprapto), tobacco companies (Djarum, Sampoerna/Phillip Morris), hotels (Grand Hyatt, Mandarin Oriental, Ritz Carlton, Mulia, Darmawangsa, Mercure Jakarta Cikini), malls (Metro Indah), sports tournaments (BWF World Championships, Torabika Bhayangkara Cup, Indonesia Open), parks (Taman Mini Indonesia Indah, the National Monument), and government institutions (the Indonesian Police Academy, Air Force, the Presidential Security Force, the State Intelligence Agency).

wedding reception in Senayan [Jakarta Convention Centre]. I took care of that guy. I was also there at Cikeas [a luxury village in Bogor, one of Jakarta's satellite cities, where a majority of right-wing former Presidents and politicians hang out]. So, during the two terms of Mr. President SBY, I would go ahead and practice rituals. That shows his trust in me. Even the Air Force event, he knew I could do it all.

(Rusdianton, personal communication, November 7, 2017).¹²⁷

It looks to me as though they become shamans as spontaneously as it rains. As described above, people live as though they are not solely responsible for their becoming shamans. My interlocutors would oftentimes seem uncertain to take credit for the practice of their new identity. But, as I detail below, historical contingencies partially affected how they got to where they are today.

That old Chinese shaman whom I mentioned in the beginning of this chapter got to started practicing around 1998 with the historic outbreak of rioting that terminated General Suharto's 32-year old military dictatorship. Thousands and thousands of businesses and properties owned by ethnic Chinese were burned down alongside their churches. Some military groups and ordinary Indonesians murdered over a thousand Chinese people in their population. The stereotype that the Chinese are all rich and powerful despite being non-Muslim, second-class citizens, became a mental shield they used to buffer the pain of acknowledging economic inequality and existential dread. So they gang-raped hundreds of Chinese women also, without knowing that a lot of the victims were actually poor, while the rich ones fled overseas to escape from the pandemonium. Abidin Kusno (2003) offers a sobering look at how the Chinese have been the popular targets for the wrath of the natives ever since the dawn of Indonesian anti-colonial nationalism at the turn of the twentieth century. He writes, "the gang rapes [seem to have] introduced new, more extreme and lasting violence into the vocabulary of anti-Chinese sentiment [given that ethnic Chinese suffered even greater attacks in 1965-6]" (Kusno 2003:151). Rising out of the cultivation of difference is Willy the shaman, who paints this picture further in an interview he had with a journalist:

I was having a hard time after the 1998 riots. I couldn't find a job and couldn't feed my kids. So, I had to work for this mafia guy in Kalijodo [Indonesia's largest red-light district, that later turned into a family park]. I didn't really like it because, well,

¹²⁷ *Waktu Presiden SBY itu kan sering main Golf. Itu saya terus yang 'mawangin' [i.e., menjadi pawang] di situ. Kita masih security tapi sudah melakukan itu. Ada prosesnya pertama saya belajar dulu sama orang-orang tua terdahulu. Dari pengalaman, orang tua, turun termurun dari orang tua. Nah, setelah itu saya sudah berumur empat puluh tahun. Saya dipergunakan menjadi pawang hujan. Setelah itu, itu sudah mulai orang-orang tahu say, bagaimana orang itu panggil saya segabai pawang. Saya setiap panggilan, orang mawang. Sama saya, panggil pawang sama saya. Waktu Presiden SBY itu. Itu waktu resepsi putranya di Senayan. Itu saya juga disitu. Cikeas saya juga. Jadi kalau Pak SBY 2 periode itu saya terus yang mawangin. Itu kepercayaan kepada saya. Sampai ke Paspamres. Dia sudah tahu, saya semuanya."*

you know, he's a mafia... Then one day, my niece who worked for an event organizing company asked me if I wanted to try out as a pawang hujan [i.e., rain shaman]. I had to be able to prevent rain successfully for three events in a row. I succeeded and I have been employed by the company ever since. It is a large event organizer for a cigarette company

(Willy and Galo, *The Wknd*, March 24, 2016).

Things do not seem to have changed much twenty years later. When I was in the field (2016-2017), the hardline Islamist forces imprisoned Jakarta's first Chinese Governor, Basuki "Ahok" Tjahaja Purnama (b. 1966). "Ahok" was jailed for simply saying religion should not be mixed with politics. And because I look Chinese to some Indonesians somehow, many interlocutors told me to be careful and stay alert when navigating predominantly Muslim/non-Chinese areas. In those areas people would oftentimes shout at me, "Ahok!"

DESPITE the ethno-religious and political differences that caused a major shift in the shaman's professional career, today his practice has actually outgrown the limitations associated with them. He no longer must help the gangsters run "the place where people go for entertainment (i.e., the Kalijodo brothels)" (Willy, personal communication, September 26, 2017).¹²⁸ Given the history of anti-Chinese discrimination and violence, I found it strange at first how he says, "Believe me. My clients are Muslims. They oftentimes call non-Muslims like me. Buddhists and Christians also do that. The word is out... that I'm that good" (ibid.).¹²⁹ In addition, it is an open secret that there are a lot of shamans from different religions working at Grand Hyatt Jakarta and Doubletree by Hilton Hotels. Across the religious divide, they all wear the same uniform along with the hotel managers and are just members of the staff (Vinson, personal communication, October 11, 2017).¹³⁰ Interestingly enough, Muslim shamans are on the same boat. They seem content when

Muslims use my service, which non-Muslims use also. There's no problem. Just buy and sell. Buddhists, and Christians, that's just another one [of my clients]. Their accessories and fantasies can be used so long as they're happy. If something I use doesn't make them happy, no problem! Really, that doesn't influence what I do

(Rusdianton, personal communication, November 7, 2017).¹³¹

Thus, it's a matter of the practice rather than of the belief. Regardless of whether they are Muslim or Buddhist, Chinese or non-Chinese, they are inclined to do *similar* things with a clear awareness of things that they have in *common* that may have little or nothing to do with either a

¹²⁸ *Tempat hiburan rakyat.*

¹²⁹ *Percaya, klien saya Moslem tapi percaya, dari mulut-mulut-mulut, saya ini good gitu. Yang non-Moslem seperti saya ini seringkali dipanggil orang Moslem.*

¹³⁰ *Banyak dari Grand Hyatt, dia dari Doubletree... baju kita ini manager marketing.*

¹³¹ *Banyak orang Moslem pakai ini, yang non-Moslem juga. Nggak masalah. Jual-beli. Buddhanya, Kristennya, boleh aja. Nggak masalah. Aksesoris ini atau fantasi yang senang, pakai ini. Yang nggak senang, gak apa-apa. Nggak pengaruh itu.*

religious or ethnic framework. As we shall see in the following section, these shamans are just trying to effectively control the weather. What matters to them is success or failure, not the cultural specificity, because that's what forms the basis of their professional public relations.

A Semiotic Approach to How Shamanisms Work

The preceding sections have sought to illustrate the social contexts of rain shamanism through festival logistics. To explicate their relationship to each other, the sections painted a critical relativist picture of what functions the shamans have in a society, where people set up the concerts and determine what the shamans are. Clearly, organizers believe the shaman's being there makes a difference, when there has been no rain for a certain period of time. The extent of this belief prompted me to gather evidence about how people become professional shamans, whether they get paid, and whether there are good shamans or bad shamans. Just knowing how promoters hire rock stars to bring in an audience, and then a shaman to keep the audience, is interesting. Such a narrative is, however, likely to underestimate the influence of the non-linguistic forms of shamanic communication that are semiotic in one way or another. For example, what kind of logic inform what shamans accomplish when burning things on an altar all day long? This section systematically makes predictions and guesses about WHY shamanisms work the way they do, through a separate analysis of each of the ways they communicate with their deities.

I want here to ask: In what way does the study I am conducting with music, orangutans, and ecosystem share common features with the shamanic experience? The reason I am posing this question is because I notice the possibility of comparing the non-linguistic form of communication used by shamans with that of the song I studied in the first chapter. "Orang Utan" (2017) was an attempt to make something happen in the ecosystem through musical communication. I am very curious as to whether the shaman is thinking, 'If I do things that are physical, they may be iconic of what I want to accomplish,' in ways that are similar to the ways incorporating the physical orangutan sound into the song makes its process of interpretation much more direct than just singing words about the primates. By this, I mean both musicians and shamans communicate their thoughts through

a mode in which the signifier is *not arbitrary* but is *directly connected* in some way (physically or causally) to the signified – this link can be observed or inferred: e.g., 'natural signs' (smoke, thunder, footprints) [...] recordings ([...] an audio-recorded voice) [...] being *similar* in possessing some of its qualities

(Chandler 2003:37; italics mine).

To attain this objective, I delve into the semiotics of why shamans work beyond semantics. My focus is on how they use iconistic and indexical activities, which, as Chandler describes above, may be more directly connected to what they want to produce than just saying something. The section juxtaposes two cases where the shamans involved in both primate justice concerts and the

larger event management processes believe that these non-linguistic communications are important. I frame this approach in terms of how shamans actively chase the rain away by:

1) Burning things: Use of incense, candle, and joss paper to create smokes that simulate cloud movements. Making something and moving it physically becomes iconic of getting clouds to move.

2) Asceticism: Before and during a festival, shamans deprive themselves of sleep, sex, and eating, which is a near-universal way for humans to indicate to deities how serious they are.

3) Communicating non-semantically to the elements: Indonesian shamans pray in a language that they don't fully understand, such as Arabic and Hindi. Their prayers tend to be repetitive while also getting louder, to catch the attention of deities. This tendency seems to suggest that even the shamans themselves cannot be absolutely certain whether the deities are listening to their requests at all times.

In this section, I examine how shamans make distinctions that are parallel to these modalities, as they actually practice or demonstrate their rituals before my very eyes. Furthermore, I discuss why they prefer one mode to another, while at times using them in combination. I then move on to show why in these cases words are less important than sounds, objects, and actions.

One of the things that shamans will tell people, at least in Indonesia, is that words just don't do it — that language alone cannot make things happen at least in this case of warding off rain because words are radically separated from physical processes. In Peircean terms, Eduardo Kohn remarks that

A word [...] although it can serve an indexical function — pointing to something (or, more appropriately, someone) — it does so *indirectly* by virtue of its relation to other words. The relation that such a word has to an object is *primarily the result of the conventional relation it has acquired to other words* and not just a function of the correlation between sign and object (Kohn 2013:47, 53, italics mine).

When I first met Willy the shaman, he was busy smiling and burning things all day. Something about the way he smiled with eerily glowing eyes seemed to signal a high degree of certainty that this, and some of the other physical things he does, may be iconic of what he wants to accomplish.

“You see... these ashes, the ashes of God,”¹³² Willy opens his mouth as he flips over his urn to show me what's inside. He says, “Underneath, there is the power of script,”¹³³ but I see nothing but ashes (Willy, personal communication, September 26, 2017).

“What writing?” I wonder, I can see nothing.¹³⁴

¹³² *Itu ada abu yang dari sini, abu para dewa.*

¹³³ *Dan dibawahnya pun itu ada kekuatan tulisan.*

¹³⁴ *Tulisan apa?*

In fact, Willy has written down a pledge on a piece of paper that he promises to fast and not fall asleep before and during an upcoming event.¹³⁵ He has then burned it to ash. With regard to this characteristic of shamanistic and magical thinking, the following regularities could be found:

- a) I blow the ashes into the air to make wind happen, or
- b) I create a small fire with lots of smoke, even though I know that smoke is not going to turn into clouds, but it's a way of modeling the cloud movements.

Just saying or writing some words is not going to make things happen, especially when he considers this urn in which he just burnt his pledge as “the most potent, powerful thing amongst all my objects” (Willy, personal communication, September 26, 2017). Another thing he prioritizes is a censer he calls “*xianglu* (香爐),” which he uses for holding burning incense during a rain handling ceremony. As he moves the torch and lifts it over the censer, he starts thinking out loud

Wouldn't we all be better off asking for God's protection with something powerful? With everything we could imagine. Between heaven and hell, we're right here on Earth. We're begging the goodness of God [i.e., dry weather]. Regardless of whatever happens up there in heaven [i.e., cloud formation], just don't let it pour down on Earth (ibid.).¹³⁶

Important is how his *physical act of burning* the pledged note is assumed to guarantee the delivery of the note's syntactic and metaphysical meaning.

The same logic applies to the daily routine of young and upcoming shamans of both non-Chinese Islamic and Chinese Buddhist backgrounds.¹³⁷ The first thing they do in the morning is to install utensils, and set up the ritual offering table. So they arrive at the venue long before the scheduled reporting time. They make sure to bring enough coarse bamboo papers in a bag full of incenses and censers for the burning ritual (Vinson and Dio Eka, personal communication, October 11, 2017). Once they light up the sandalwood incenses, the candles, and the papers to create their own small ceremonial fire that sits on the table, they then proceed to monitor the clouds until they “feel safe for sure” (ibid.).¹³⁸ They rarely take a break to keep their bodies hydrated, and eat very little for the sake of bowel movements such that they don't

¹³⁵ *Ya, ini sudah agak khusus dibuatnya. Saya buat nggak sembarangan. Ini gak boleh tidur gak boleh makan*

¹³⁶ *Ya, kita kan minta mohon sama yang kuasa? Semua ya. Langit dan Bumi, kita kana da di Bumi. Kita minta yang bagus walaupun terjadi apapun di langit. Jangan sampai ditumpahkan di bumi.*

¹³⁷ Although there are Balinese Hindu and Javanese Kejawèn rain shamans, I have not seen one mention of them at the many festivals I've attended.

¹³⁸ *Sampai benar-benar aman.*

get too sick when it's done (Fathori, personal communication, October 11, 2017).¹³⁹ They then resume their prayers around 6 p.m. with the many Muslims who halt their festivities for their evening prayer at the venue. When they pray, the shamans again burn the papers until they are ready to call it a day and put everything away (Vinson, personal communication, October 11, 2017).¹⁴⁰ When I asked a Muslim shaman whether he and his colleagues have a different take on this, he said, "Basically the same sequence. It's a matter of the Universe. There isn't any difference. And that's the bottom line (Fathori, personal communication, October 11, 2017).¹⁴¹

In this respect, many shamans discard all kinds of subtle differences that they think have nothing to do with their goals and procedures as *pawang hujan*. And because words can at best be treated as part of an arbitrary convention, these shamans would seem to find the linguistic reference not very useful for the practical applications of their rituals. Rather, the shamans act to affect something. And the goal of their activities is simple and straightforward: to influence and repel the rain clouds with their performance instead of just saying things. There lies the hierarchy of signs that runs counter to what linguists might assume: arbitrary meaningfulness is the most derived, and thus not the basic, feature of reference. These shamans like doing things that appear to have physical linkages to what they want to achieve.

The flip side of this general focus on burning is that, if they run out of sandalwood oil or bamboo paper, especially when the religious goods store is closed or too far away, they must confront and overcome the fear of failure (Willy, personal communication, September 26, 2017).¹⁴² Neglecting to stock up on these objects is regarded as a shortcoming (*kekurangan*) by deities,¹⁴³ a cause to which they attribute any failure:

Once I left those things behind, and almost failed my ritual. But I managed to pull it off. These objects are relevant as long as it does not rain while the event is ongoing. Don't wait until there is a failure (ibid.).¹⁴⁴

Doing ethnography on this type of correlation between the shaman's ritual and self-interpretation made me realize that I was also thinking of some strange experiences I have had with that shaman that could be considered as causal. Minutes after I first met him, I almost got hit by a motorcycle and lost my favorite snapback hat. But I managed to jump out of the

¹³⁹ *Buat isi perut dikit-dikit lah, biar gak masuk angin; "masuk angin,"* which literally translates as "wind entering," is an umbrella term for feeling unwell. It is an interesting choice of expression here because "angin (wind)" is part of the objects being manipulated in these shamans' rituals.

¹⁴⁰ *bakar kertas lagi, terus pas sudah selesai, sampai selesai jam 10 baru kita beres-beres lagi.*

¹⁴¹ *Pada intinya sama. Urutan kerja, kronologisnya. Ini masalah alam semesta. Nggak ada ini. Itu saja sudah.*

¹⁴² *Khawatir bisa ada kegagalan.*

¹⁴³ As I said in the introduction, proper nouns are quoted alongside their English translations, while others are footnoted.

¹⁴⁴ *Ketinggalan, sempat akhirnya hamper gagal lah gitu. Tapi tercapai. Hubungannya ya, supaya selama ada event dan itu supaya hasilnya baik. Jangan sampai ada kegagalan itu ya.*

accident without being harmed. The second time we met, my laptop suddenly died and wouldn't turn back on. And since I am writing about him now, maybe tonight he is going to text me out of the blue. Actually, he did that upon my exit from the field. I was in Korea, and we hadn't spoken in months. Just when I was talking about him with my family, 'So, I was in Indonesia. And I came across this guy who says he can stop the rain,' my phone buzzed on the table and a message from the shaman popped up on my screen:

"Hello there, how are you doing now? What's happening? Greetings to your family."¹⁴⁵

"It's him..." I said to myself.

"Who? The shaman?" my partner asked after hearing me speak to myself while looking at my phone. And then she whispered in my ear, "*Shhh*, he knows we're talking about him" (Franshe, personal communication, December 5, 2017).

The way to not think of these instances as causal is to say that it's just a coincidence. But both shamans and I tend to almost unconsciously treat coincidences as significant. If I am not mistaken, we are both looking for meanings,¹⁴⁶ and the significances we attribute to these coincidences are sometimes indexical, sometimes iconic. In burning things all day and having the clouds clear, which they just did, the shamans try to impose meaning. Creating smoke and blowing it into the air can be interpreted as iconic of getting clouds to move, though the two things are not exactly the same. Things also have iconic and indexical features as in the case of the shaman who called or wrote me after I spoke about him. In both cases, the shaman and I deceptively constructed a correlation in time, as though its indices were not just *a* correlation, but *the* correlation as one seemed to cause the other. Immediately after noticing the relationship, the coincidence, I asked myself... Did he cause this? And then, if that's the case, how did he do it? Did he hear us? Did his unconscious, magical mind hear my partner and me conversing? Or was it simply that every time we talk about the shaman, some kind of meaningful connection in the universe brings us together?¹⁴⁷

Next, I turn to a discussion of asceticism that reifies how these shamans spontaneously establish correlations all the time. Asceticism is the second mode of non-linguistic communication by which shamans actively chase the rain away. Although burning things made his eyes glow with unmistakable delight, Willy actually had not feed his bodily needs in the last

¹⁴⁵ *Halo, apa kabar skrg ada dimana? Salam sama family.*

¹⁴⁶ Judith and Alton Becker (1981) wrote about causeless, coincidental interactions through the notion of *kebetulan*, and its Javanese parallel *kebenaran* with reference to the root of the word, *betul/benar*, i.e., true.

¹⁴⁷ To be clear, the shamans and I are not interested in the material causes of things in these cases, but instead in this sort of meaningful cause. We try to make things correlated albeit with little or no causal connection, similar to relationships between words, parts of words, phonemes, morphemes, and meaningful and sound units.

48 hours. Except evacuating bowels and breathing, he deprived his body of all the things it wants. He denied himself of something, not unlike the people who are most sacred in different societies throughout the world. One common example is the priests in the modern-day Catholic church of the world, who deny themselves of sexual relations and family life. After spending hours and days of depriving himself of food, Willy thinks he now has a better chance of controlling nature:

To be strong... to have the power, I'm not allowed to eat, and I don't dare to sleep. It's my habit, nothing special anymore. I don't act arbitrarily. If I don't have a gig, I might grab a late dinner. Then I sleep a bit in the morning around 5 or 6, until my eyes open at 11 or 10 o'clock in the morning

(Willy, personal communication, September 26, 2017).¹⁴⁸

As for denying oneself sleep, sex, and eating, shamans of a younger generation make similar statements.¹⁴⁹

It's not that we don't want to eat anything. Certainly, that's part of our learning from seniors. They say, 'Don't eat anything so that things go smoothly.' If the sky is bright enough, we just drink water, or beverages

(Vinson, personal communication, October 11, 2017).¹⁵⁰

When asked what will happen if he cannot resist the temptation of, for example, the West Sumatran Padang steamed rice (*nasi padang*) that helps my other interlocutors put on weight so easily, Willy replied, "The rain... will fall *spontaneously*" (Willy, personal communication, September 26, 2017; italics mine).¹⁵¹ If I have understood him correctly, the assumption is that this connection between things, again, extends beyond the immediate realm of just interpreting things, and extends far into an even broader trajectory of interpreting his own actions as possibly making a difference. The claim that 'the meaning of my celibacy can cause something to happen' may underscore how important it might be to recognize that both shamans and I, despite our different positionalities, reflect on and derive meanings from things spontaneously.

¹⁴⁸ *Supaya kuat... punya power, ini nggak boleh makan, nggak boleh tidur. Itu kebiasaan saya, sudah nggak khusus. Saya buat nggak sembarangan. Begini, saya kan hari nggak kerja datang tamu, mungkin malam baru makan. Dan saya tidurnya itu pagi. Saya bangun itu jam 11, jam 10 pagi. Tidurnya jam 5, jam 6.*

¹⁴⁹ A feeling of nostalgia arises amongst older shamans when they collaborate with these younger assistants. Well into his seventies, Willy reminisces about his heyday, in which he would "practically get no sleep, fast often, and hold carnal desires [...] which I think will be difficult for younger people" (Willy and Galo, *The Wknd*, March 24, 2016).

¹⁵⁰ *Pokoknya bukan kita gak mau makan ya. Itu memang biar kita gak apa ya, ajaran senior. Pokoknya, 'Jangan makan dulu supaya lancar.' Entar kalau memang keadaanya sudah terang atau apa, kita boleh minum, minum air.*

¹⁵¹ *Hujan itu... spontan.*

But the question remains: Why do shamans think that the assumption that there is a connection gives them magical powers? Why is it that normal human beings, like you and me, do not have magical powers, whereas if shamans deny themselves all the things that being a human being wants, then they can have a better chance of having these powers? Repeated observations of the layered and hierarchical preference for icons and indices over words/symbols in these shamans' communications pointed me in the direction of apprehending shamanism as a sort of intermediate state between being alive and being dead. These shamans would starve themselves to near death or they would engage in some active dance while burning things until they themselves are completely burnt out. And when that happens, I would not dare to distract them with talk, for the similar reason martial arts commentators refrain from post-fight interviewing a technically knocked-out athlete. So I had a few sips of water and just observed. After doing everything that their body would not want to do, these shamans would just collapse out of exhaustion and even forget where they were and what had happened recently. In order to have and be in control of nature, they would deem their physical body irrelevant and become more *like* the spirits — who do not need to eat, sleep, and have intercourse forevermore whilst watching what people do to their bodies.

In effect, the shamans are basically factoring out stuff that seems irrelevant in navigating this constant process of finding meaningful significance in climatic changes. And as they go along they figure out the third mode of non-linguistic communication that I mentioned earlier, in particular the way they influence the weather by praying to it in languages that they don't speak. Years, sometimes decades, of trial and error opened a new horizon for these shamans to notice *how mapping word form with meaning is unable to capture all relationships when communicating to the elements.*

Mostly they are awake at night thinking about the inevitable futility of languaging with people even when they are not on the job. So they typically stay home and turn inward except during work hours. In spite of that, the daily life of these shamans is constrained at least as much as yours and mine, not only by their body needs and desires, but also by the fact that they too are cultural individuals who speak a language. Perhaps it is time to reconsider the ritual offering table Adjie and I came across in a dark corner backstage in the beginning of this chapter. Willy put it there specifically to insulate himself from mingling with humans:

Yeah, I made it not too noticeable, more or less, you know. Just don't let it catch somebody's attention. I do that to avoid distractions from strangers who randomly start conversations. They bother me! Oftentimes people interrupt my focus, 'Where are you from? What's going on?' There are just so many questions, of all kinds. Once there was a naughty kid. That kid on a bicycle came over, played around my compass and eventually broke it. I liked the kid, felt sorry for him. Security guards wanted to get him out of the show. So I had to take care of that first

(Willy, personal communication, September 26, 2017).¹⁵²

Once Willy feels secure with putting chatty people like me off the trail, he and his assistants then take a step back and start communicating to the clouds in a language that they don't speak. These shamans only want the spirits to be involved when they chant eighty-four lines from a Buddhist scripture that transliterates Hindi into the Roman alphabet. The scripture is so dogeared and frayed that some pages are coming off the glue in the spine, making it impossible to find information about the publisher. For quick reference I cite below the first 6 lines:

1. *Namo ratna triayi namo ratna triayi*
2. *Namo ariayi*
3. *Avalokitesvara ariayi*
4. *Bodhisattva bayai*
5. *Mahasatva bayai*
6. *Maha karunikayai [...]*¹⁵³

I have deliberately left these lines untranslated in consideration of the fact that the shamans barely speak the language. Decrypting the codes derived from the arbitrary relationship between word meaning, words and syntactic relationships, and the relationship of meaning within sentences, wasn't even in their toolkit.¹⁵⁴ After reciting this part, they displayed illiteracy by actually calling this Hindi script "Balinese" (Vinson and Dio Eka, personal communication, October 11, 2017). They would then proceed to chant in transliterated Mandarin which they don't speak either:

Ceeng khao goap cin gan: Aum, siu li, siu li, mo ho siu li, siu-siu li, sat poo ho.

¹⁵² *Ya, kurang lebih gak terlalu menyolok lah. Jangan sampai menyolok. Jadi nggak banyak pertanyaan, 'Dari mana? Anda mau gimana?' Oh, banyak, macam-macam. Iya, susahnya cerita ya. Pusing! Sering lah. Ada anak yang nakal. Dia sempat mengambil itu kompas duduk, akhirnya itu pas lagi nonton. Itu dia injak ininya retak, di injak sama orang ininya retak. Dia bawa sepeda. Saya sayang sama dia, kasihan. Pada waktu dia diamankan sama pengawal. Saya amankan dulu.*

¹⁵³ For the full text and context of this mantra, see *The Great Compassion Mantra/Nīlakaṇṭha Dhāraṇī*.

¹⁵⁴ When these shamans began chanting the transliterated scripture, my thoughts were racing: What does it mean that many shamans pray in a language they don't speak? What does it mean to discard intersubjectivity — between subjects, within subjects, or both — from this researcher-researched relationship in the direction of dialogic forms of inquiry? How could I possibly shift the ground from thinking about me, the author, as authoritative and society as narrators into productions of knowledge that acknowledge and clarify that system of discrete form differences we call language? This may be a semiotic juncture that substantially decreases the difference-laden anxiety of postmodern ethnographers in the sense that it makes one less afraid of chance, spontaneity, and generality across issues of radical difference in perception and perspective. The Peircean pragmatic maxim of this project is to remark that there is nothing intrinsic to the structure of language that has any referential function. Relatedly, a senior emergentist "realized that the ethnographic problems I had isolated were already semiotic problems" (Kohn, June 2, 2014).

Ceeng sin giap cin gan: Aum, siu too li, siu too li, siu mo li, sat poo ho.
An thou tee cin can: Lam bus am boan tho, but too lam, aum, too loo too loo, tee bwee
sat poo ho.
Khay Keng Ki: Bu siang sim chim bi biao hoat. Peek chian bankiap lan coo g. Ngo
*kim kian bun teek siu ti. Goan kay ji lay cin sit gi [...]*¹⁵⁵

Given the dearth of context, I asked these shamans whether this text has any meaning at all. With a smile tugging at his lips, Willy replied that all these words are nothing more than mere sounds: “The sound is there always, but not in thoughts. The process goes like meditating on something big and beautiful. Rather outstanding. Dim, like a voice emanating from afar. So, while I’m working, to tell you the truth, I was working with gods and goddesses” (Willy, personal communication, October 11, 2017).¹⁵⁶ Oral transmission of these sounds seemed like the gold standard of their pedagogy, since some of them could chant the entire thing from memory without carrying the book.¹⁵⁷

Not unlike Willy, the Muslim interlocutors do their prayers amidst the lack of interpretive support in the sign vehicle (Fathori, personal communication, October 11, 2017; Rusdianton, November 7, 2017). These people may exemplify millions and millions of Indonesian Muslims who recite the standard prayers in Arabic. It can be asserted that these people have some ‘idea’ of the contents of their daily prayers, to which they can refer as they are using that trace. However, the contents of the verses do not immediately bring up the literal and figurative meanings of the various phrases they use to pray. A competent scholar of Islam suggested that “There have been many great Muslim saints who could hardly speak or read Arabic [as Islam moved into the Far East, and into Indonesia in interesting and troublesome ways]. But the formulae of the Quran read in prayers and acts of worship must be in the sacred language [or, more appropriately, sound] of Arabic which alone enables one to penetrate into the content [...]. That is why the Quran cannot be translated into any language for ritual purposes” (Nazr 2003:66).¹⁵⁸ It certainly appears to be the case that the Muslim shamans in this study

¹⁵⁵ These words were transliterated in Roman alphabets in the scripture that they were using. For the fanciers of sociolinguistics, this part of their script symbolizes the purification of mouth and body in such a way as to pay homage to the Earth spirits.

¹⁵⁶ *Selalu ada suara, bukan di dalam pikiran. Agak mantul* [a compound adjective: *mantap* + *betul*]. *Ada suara yang halus. Ada suaranya agak jauh gitu, jadi selama ini saya kerja, terus terang saya kerja sama dewa dewi.*

¹⁵⁷ *Ada juga mengingat. Nggak* [*membawa buku*] (ibid.).

¹⁵⁸ To be precise, this could be a semiotic extension of lots of magic traditions that have been built upon the idea that there are true names of things (e.g., “Ra” the Sun God of ancient Egypt, the biblical “Jacob,” or even “Thor,” a God of thunder). If a non-Arab Muslim shaman happens to know the true name of something, anything, he can then claim to have more control of it. Now, from the Western scientific perspective, a reader would say no. Saying words about the cloud, Arabic or not, while playing with smoke are usually not interpreted accomplishing anything. It is unlikely that there are really such things as true names when it comes to stopping rainfall because, again, words are disconnected so far from

prefer this type of inferential instead of predictive rigidity; certainly, they seemed to purge a mapping relationship in arranging words and phrases by reciting sentences without semantics. Long story short: “The meaning [of my prayer] is that we are *perhaps* asking for something” (Rusdianton, personal communication, November 7, 2017, *Italics mine*).¹⁵⁹

Meanwhile, one of the uncertainties the shamans face when communicating to the environmental and supernatural elements is that those elements often do not appear to listen. This is where the shamans become like me (again) — when somebody does not seem to listen to me, I tend to be repetitive and get louder. Oftentimes, shamanism displays those features as well. Below is an excerpt from my transcription of an Islamic prayer, in which font size increases in approximate proportion to the degree of loudness, with different indents representing the duration of pauses between the phrases:

... *Ya Muhammad, Ya Muhammad, Ya Muhammad, Ya Muhammad, Ya
Muhammad, Ya Muhammad, Ya Muhammad, Ya Muhammad, Ya
Muhammad, Ya Muhammad, Ya Muhammad.*

Nas aluka ijabat do'a syaabdulmajid. Bismillah ir-rahman ir-rahim.

*Wa lam yakun lahu kufuwan ahad, Wa lam yakun lahu kufuwan ahad,
Wa lam yakun lahu kufuwan ahad, Wa lam yakun lahu kufuwan ahad, Wa lam yakun lahu
kufuwan ahad, Wa lam yakun lahu kufuwan ahad, Wa lam yakun lahu kufuwan
ahad, Wa lam yakun lahu kufuwan ahad, Wa lam yakun lahu kufuwan
ahad, Wa lam yakun lahu kufuwan ahad, Wa lam yakun lahu
kufuwan ahad...*

(Rusdianton, recited during the ritual held in the backyard of Haji General Hospital, East Jakarta, November 7, 2017).

physical processes themselves. But some Indonesian shamans would posit that the names Arabs give things are the true names. And they try and figure out what would be the true name of a rain deity, which could sound like whatever they call it. The sound of that name, not the meaning, is then deemed usable to control the weather. It is like declaring, ‘This is what I call it.’ Oftentimes, that calling is considered very powerful since a true name communicates like an index, that is, something that is part of the thing, much like how the smoke becomes a sample of some cloud in such a way that the shaman wants to make some meaning out of it. Smoke is not exactly the cloud, but nonetheless it is seen as a representation to see what the moving cloud looks like. Again, the word “cloud” is only connected to the physical cloud through a convention agreement between people that ‘a sign is going to represent this.’ But smoke is much more connected to clouds because they look the same, behave the same. Given that clouds are *like* smoke, manipulating smoke is more iconic of directly manipulating clouds than just saying ‘Move’ to the clouds.

¹⁵⁹ *Artinya mungkin yang kita memohonnya ada yang...*

What tends to get repeated and louder are not just phrases but also verses. On the right-hand side of the page, my Chinese interlocutors made instructional notes. For instance:

“This one is being announced three times (*yang sedang berita 3x*).”

“Jump to pages 63-65 (→ → *Hal 63-65*).”

“Entirely specific story, 1,000 times, 10,000 times (*Segala bercerita khusus 1,000x, 10,000x*).”

“Go back to page 6 (*Pindah ke depan hal 6*).”

“Chant 3 times, as you move from the altar to the kitchen (*x3 altar depan ke dapur*).”

(Willy, Vinson, and Dio, photographed during the ritual held in Teluk Gong, North Jakarta, October 11, 2017).

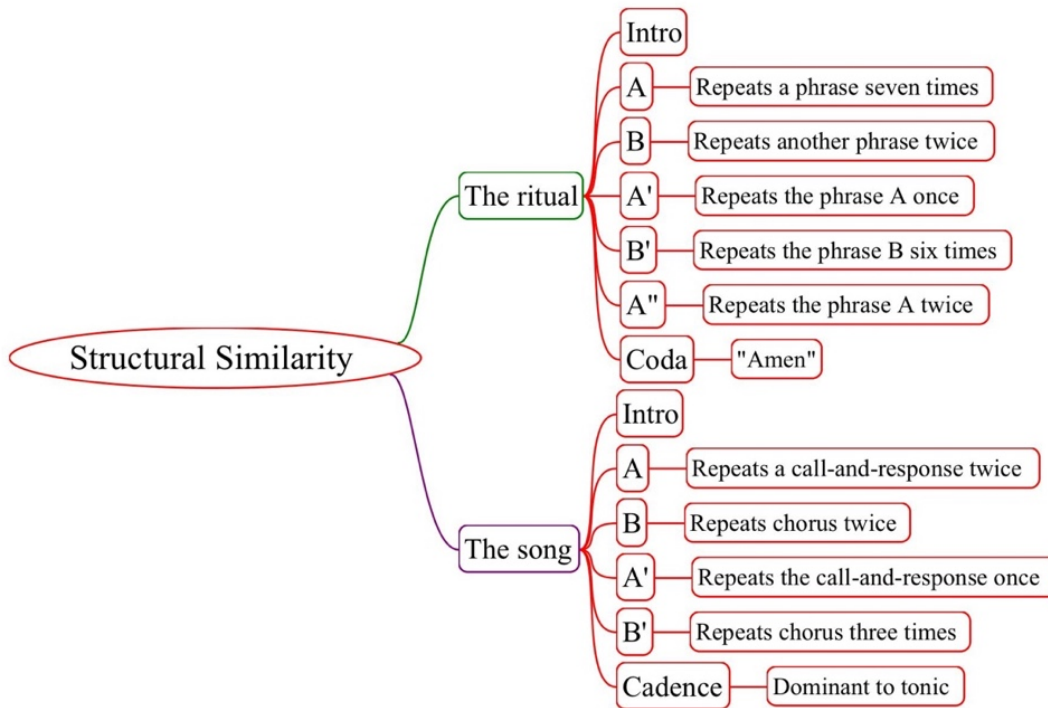
Things are repeated, repeated, and repeated again. It may be that their scripture serves the role of musical score; that is,

- a) The shamanism has a beginning,
- b) It has to do something multiple times, then it has a coda, or
- c) It has to do something, do something else, and go back to something, and then there is a sort of coda.

Since both shamans and musicians in this study are performing using a script or score, it seems to be the case that shamanism is performed in ways that are similar to musical communication. In my project’s frame of reference, there are common features shared by a musical piece, “Orang Utan” (2017), and these shamanic enterprises. As suggested in Chapter 1:

- a) The song has an intro,
- b) It has to repeat a verse and chorus three times, then it has a coda, while
- c) It has to melodize a primate “call,” sample another primate “call,” and go back to the melody, and then there is a coda.

In fact, the shamans and musicians both try and influence something with each of them doing specific things in similar orders. The object of the diagram below is to offer a snapshot of that similar overall structure:



The “snapshot” is valid insofar as things could have habits, regularities, and patterns, while my predisposition to look for patterns is one of those. I can say this because my analysis has not become tied to language, that is, the way that words refer to things. The sound and the meaning in these modalities far exceed a sort of code that each society sets up separately in each linguistic community. None of these communications is a form arbitrarily mapped to an idea through “the phonic and conceptual differences they involve” (Saussure 1983:119). Thus, I see no reason to not capture “a given moment as a frozen representation of a dynamic, multidimensional flow” (Brinner 1995:32).

Further Philosophical Reflections on Shamanism

Having explored both the general semiotic and social contextual terrains of shamanism, I can now see so many pieces to the puzzle that beg a bonus question: What prompts shamans to do work on the world, that is, to control it so that it is not just random? The predominant assumption among shamans and event promoters is that the world is more likely to be derandomized by magical forces, than by physical forces. And magical forces are meaningful; physical forces are just mechanism. So the shamans seem quite sure that they cannot single-handedly produce physical forces that move clouds. They could not pull the clouds and push

them away because that would need mechanical or other types of energy. As illustrated in the previous section, the shamans act instead according to the belief that there is another way to influence the weather. They would just interpret their own actions as potentially meaningful (significant).

Like shamans, people can be moved or threatened by meanings, by those who signal them that something good is happening over here, or something bad is going to happen. Pull fire alarms, people will move. Information — in particular, semiotic activities — seem to cause things to move and change, even if one gazes at the world through the lens of a shaman as animate, animalistic or spirit-like. Only when that level of “attribution by humans to nonhumans [occurs] of an interiority identical to their own” should meaning be able to have a *universal* application (Descola 2013 [2005]:129). If Willy thinks of the whole physical world as like a mind, then he should be able to communicate to that mind and influence the world’s behavior. Part of it would be this belief that everything could be animate to such an extent that shamans think of the weather as being the result of a kind of spiritual body with whom they tried to communicate. To communicate with the mind of the world without forcing it to do things, Willy, among many others, tried to convince a cloud to stay away, or wait. Although this may just be a part of the whole story, it may be crucial to acknowledge that the vast majority of people have the tendency to say there is some meaningful significance behind *all* events that take place.

A modern philosophical variant on this particular proclivity would be panpsychism, which posits that everything has a little bit of psyche (‘pan (everything) + psychism’). Panpsychists want to explain how people can have a mind, how they can be physical, chemical, and yet also have experiences. They seem deceptively neutral about physiochemical processes in things. UNLESS it affects them, the way physical things happen in the world cannot have what they call a normative character. Without consciousness and morality, they just happen, whereas right or wrong is what ‘we’ apply to them. What, then, shall we say about the tsunami that hit Aceh and wiped out a lot of people? Was the storm bad? While some people do not blame the storm for the tragedy, if they think in more animate terms, they might. In North Sumatra, I have many times heard tsunami survivors and their pals saying, “God was upset,”¹⁶⁰ or “People were wicked,”¹⁶¹ solely because the storm struck this area with a density of individuals who live under the sway of a particular religious denomination (anonymous, personal communication, May 14, 2018).

At the turn of the twentieth century, William James was one of the pragmatists to see every phenomenon as having a little bit of mind and a little bit of matter. Although James did not declare himself to be a panpsychist, he would say things that would eventually lead people in that direction:

¹⁶⁰ *Takut tuhannya marah.*

¹⁶¹ *Karena mereka durhaka.*

“The paper [seen] is in the mind and the mind is around the paper, because paper and mind are only two names that are given later to the one experience, when, taken in a larger world of which it forms a part, its connections are traced in different directions [...] To know immediately, then, or intuitively, is for mental content and object to be identical” (1895:110).

Seeing every phenomenon as having both mind-like and material-like features stands in contrast to the so-called Cartesian view of the world, in which mind and body/matter become totally separated. In the West, commonly through their modern and postmodern periods, Descartes appears to have had a stronger influence in the separation of the psychology and the physics. Thus, if James were a Cartesian, “the paper” that he mentioned above would just be a material thing that has no experience. That sort of Western view comes from Descartes, who ruptured the world into what he calls “*res cogitans*”; *res* means “stuff,” so if it is *res cogitans*, cogitation is “thought” (Brown and Normore 2010:278). This “thought stuff” is then paired with another unit that he assumes made up the world, “*res extensa*,” meaning “extended stuff” (ibid.). However, James held that there is only one kind of stuff and everything has got thought-like, psychological features to it (James 1895, 1904a, 1904b; see also Cooper 2002).

At the dawn of the new millennium, Terrence Deacon’s neurological research (2012) endeavored to humble both James and Descartes. Part of Deacon’s argument is that there could still be things in the world that do not have experience. As he explains, if one assumes the concept of normative as anything that can have right or wrong, correct or incorrect, good or bad, successful or unsuccessful, then one is oblivious to the fact that there *are* parts of the world without people — be it the surface of the Moon — that “lack any normative (or evaluative) character because there is nothing like a self to benefit or suffer” (ibid.:518). The key problem for Deacon is thereby to launch conversations on the evolution of meaning from the moment life started from something that is just suns and planets (that don’t think and worry, that are just there without correctness or incorrectness) to things that people have experience (which can feel heavenly or hellish). As a result, the term he introduces as “absential” offers an alternative perspective for James and Descartes in contrast to a popular belief that meanings are in our heads (ibid.:19-95). Along the lines of what Willy told me earlier (“The sound is there always, but not in your thoughts” (October 11, 2017)), Deacon interprets reasons why the reference of an idea, its content, is something that is absent.

I follow Deacon (2012) in arguing that symbols do not have any meaning intrinsically. For example, the sounds of the words that I am typing here now are sign vehicles that are not something physical, and it is in this sense that Descartes and his Western social constructivists may be right. These words seem to exist (*res extensa*) in space and time. But the concepts that are behind my words are nowhere, and yet they are here. And that is what the term “absential” is getting at: the fact that there are some things that are the way they are, that exist the way they are because of their connection to something that they are not. Anything that is referential could be said to have this feature of something that refers to something else, like this paragraph whose

purpose is nothing that is going on currently, but rather something that its conceptualization is maybe heading towards. But I am not there yet. Even if I say “absential” after having represented its meaning just now, still, its meaning is not in the sounds of any word. If the meaning of the word in sound is its abstract concept, then the concept may not be something in our brain that’s full of neurons. The idea — the content of this thought, the symbols themselves — might not be stuff at all and have any meaning intrinsically (Deacon 2012:19-95; see also Tzu 4th Century B.C.E.; Locke 1690; Bateson 2000:458; Deacon 2006; Kohn 2013:27-37).

“Absentially,” I reappraise the goal of shamans’ praying and incantations of their spell. Whatever the things that they were using (e.g., incense), and chose not to do (e.g., eating, sex), they tried to cause something else to happen (e.g., dry weather, paycheck, live music). These things were not what they were doing, and physically absent from this activity but somewhere else in the future because of something. Creating smoke is not doing something to cause clouds to accumulate or disperse them into the ether. Although it may look like it, it is not causally working in the same way. Perhaps, it is *working the way words work* on an interpreting being, depending on whether that being is interpreting it. If that’s the case, then a lot of those features of ritual communications are meant to get the whole world of physical clouds and metaphysical deities to pay attention to these shamans. On reflection it occurred to me that shamans could have been anxiously trying to get the spirits to listen, because, the spirits, if they exist, are doing other things and could care less about rain or shamanism. In this regard, shamans seem to be doing things to get that attention, i.e., that which makes spirits realize how serious and devout they are: 1) burning things, 2) fasting/sacrifice, and 3) sounding foreign. These could all just be like waving one’s hand, i.e., constructing indices that bleach out some of the semiotic constraints to make certain things more useful and easier to reproduce. If we critically engage how shamans communicate to spirits and clouds as part of the minds of the world, then there may be room for grasping this dynamic ‘feel’ of some of the more general modes of relating upon which human speech and arbitrariness rely.

Concluding Remarks

In explaining the actual communication work by shamans, this chapter has sought to bring an ethnographic ear to reasons why word meanings are *less* important than objects and actions in the cases I examine. The discussion is based on an abundance of Indonesian shamans who interpret a sequence of their ritual communications — burning things, asceticism, and praying in non-language sounds — as potentially giving rise to some meaning. The earlier sections’ interest in the social contexts of rain shamanism in Indonesia and adjacent countries added to the previous chapter on how the shamans became shamans, whose pay grades differ based on different skill sets. This final section of the chapter created complementarities by analyzing the three mode of nonlinguistic shamanism. As a result, the chapter argued that the actual communication work that’s being done by shamans *exceed* the quanta of semantics that’s just marking differences in things. It also showed how ethnographic knowledge at least in my case

could not primarily be validated by way of word meanings. The meaning of the sound of shamanic words are, then, their abstract concepts at best, i.e., semiotics without physical bases whose content of thought, the symbols themselves, could not be stuff at all and have any meaning intrinsically (Deacon 2011).

The shamans discussed in this chapter believe there is something doing the work of “telekinesis,” in ESP terms, that is, a physical movement produced without any physical interaction. If only a deity can do this work, then of course shamans must engage in activities to convince the deity. We cannot know how the deity does it because the deity’s way of doing work remains mysterious. However, professionally speaking, the shamans have to be sure that the deity understands what they wish. That is to say, the communication has to be clear and unambiguous. It has to be repetitive, and get louder. If this really *is* a work of communication, then it is not thermodynamic but semiotic. That is, trying to accomplish something by providing semiotic information, a request about getting this deity to do the physical work. As a result, the shamans and I have in part ended up in this Cartesian world, in which we have got a disembodied semiosis... If the shaman is about shifting clouds from place to place, by convincing a deity to help him out, then, the deity is not a mind doing work but rather a disembodied mind. To some extent, everything Peircean semioticians and emergentists have written about semiosis, being physical, goes out the window with this story. As an alternative, a classic linguist named Roman Jakobson has a paper on translation (1959), which could be relevant to these shamans. He talks about inter-semiotic translation, by which he means “transduction,” i.e., translation between channels or modalities. And yet, as my case studies have illustrated, translation is not simply transduction. Part of the issue here is: to what extent one sign can be mapped to another, and to what extent is the mapping out not going to work? This has been one of the challenges for the Western philosophy of translation for millennia inasmuch as translation and transduction are not the same. Part of this chapter hints at why rain shamanism may exceed mere transduction.

In the following chapter, I will offer a contrasting example to these shamanic communications. A group of guitarists will do their thermodynamic work on stage. In order to “move” the crowds, they use amp simulation technology to compensate for the degradation and inconsistency of tube amp acoustics in tropical venues. My focus, however, will remain constant on how the guitarists, first and foremost, recognize *similarities* between the real and simulated amp sounds in the lack of attention to difference.

4. Interactive Grounding: How to Keep Musical Communications Going

“You can hear electricity,” a competent guitarist told me, “Whenever you listen to a song, especially metal songs with heavy, distorted guitars, many songs end with the last open chord, like ‘*jeeeeng*,’ and it just fades out with *listrik kotor* [the dirty electricity]” (Ricky Siahaan, July 15, 2017). We were gazing at the stage PA speakers from behind thousands in attendance showering a lineup of bands with their attention. That night, even the high-profile acts seemed unable to prevent our ears from picking up this parasitic oscillation. The oscillation would then bring to the guitarist’s mind a relevant experience: “I had a Mesa Boogie Dual Rectifier [a tube amplifier]. I sold it dirt cheap last year because the electricity blew the tubes. Back in 2012, it started to have some unidentified problems. We had to stop a couple of shows for like an hour.” Although the issue had been mitigated by procuring the same, brand-new amplifier with a set of power line conditioners and surge protectors, he still could not get a consistent sound out of the rig season after season. “Temperatures can affect [tube] sounds. And there’s always some problem on stage, after it rains. Sometimes there is an electrical, *ground* problem” (ibid.).

This chapter is about how guitarists ground their interactions with their audience beyond the metaphysics of words, via a reductionist technology that allows them to ignore subtle physical differences between the real and simulated amp sounds. Empirically, the chapter describes HOW, due to erratic weather patterns, Indonesian guitarists have been toying with the idea of simulating the sounds of tube amplifiers for touring purposes. In much the opposite direction from pursuing things they themselves cannot control (e.g., paying a shaman to convince a deity to stabilize the weather), the guitarists exude calm by working on the things directly in their circle of influence (e.g., the inconsistencies with tube amplifier rigs). To reproduce the “sonic DNA” of their tube amps in just about any environment and get consistent tones, the guitarists are always on the lookout for emerging technologies, in particular the second-best thing to a true tube-amplifier that can offer “an unprecedented technique to extract the exact tone and feel from [any] amp, [which] not only captures the amp itself but every aspect of the [speaker] cabinet and microphone configuration as well” (Kemper GmbH, 2020).

I take up the lack of clear distinction between the real and simulated sounds in order to make a point about iconism, i.e., mediating referential relationship based on formal similarity. Thus, the chapter not only builds on but also extends discussions from previous chapters about iconic and indexical communications by exploring further ways of preserving reference. The focus is on what *enables* a vast majority of guitarists to ignore any subtle differences between the real and the simulated sounds. By tracing how the simulation technology simplifies their rigs, it foregrounds yet another domain of pragmatics where the attention to a production of nuance and differentiation is redundant. I investigate a culmination of years of these guitarists’ finest efforts to sustain “the complex and beautiful ways that human faculties are challenged in musical interaction” (Brinner 1995:168).

These guitarists are engaging in what I shall call “interactive grounding.” Driven by the terror and the tests of spontaneous clumping of tropical clouds more times than they can count, the guitarists spend a great deal of time experimenting with gear for various eventualities. As I ruminate on my encounters with this activity, I am struck by the fact that there is no concept that encompasses cases where musicians form habits for keeping a musical interaction going without having to abruptly end or delay it, or degrade its audio quality, due to unforeseen circumstances. I will refer to this as *interactive grounding*. For want of a better word, the focus is less on making qualitative analogies as to how significant this phenomenon could be, than on providing examples of performing music in adverse weather conditions. Giggling musicians around the world are welcome to add to this notion any habit that could minimize disruption in workflow. I will define interactive grounding at greater length after describing my field experiences in plain language.

The chapter proceeds in three steps. First, I will introduce a basic mechanism and early adopters of amp simulation technology. Next, I will quote their testimonials and purchase intentions. In tracing out the user assessments on product performance and reliability, I will explain why the simulation technology tends to attract people who do not believe in the power of rain shamans. In closing, my analysis will reveal that the communication work that these guitarists envision with their audiences through the help of appropriate technology is efficient. It will show how in this case communication is not exclusively based on linguistic means such as song lyrics and stage talk. Rather and to a much greater extent, it depends on a thermodynamic issue, that is, to be able to produce continuously the same amount of sound with less heat than would be produced by other means.

A Honeymoon with an Amp Simulation Technology

Germany, July 2019. “Over the last decades, the simulation of musical instruments by digital means has become an important part of modern music production and live performance. Since the first release of the Kemper Profiling Amplifier (KPA) in 2011, guitarists have been able to create and store a nearly unlimited number of “digital fingerprints [a series of the digits 0 and 1 that copy a tone that is supposedly unique to a specific rig]” of amplifier and cabinet setups for live performances” (Düvel et al. 2020:1).

Jakarta, July 2017. The guitarist with whom I detected a parasitic oscillation in front of a stage, as described at the beginning of this chapter and I are trying to take the “fingerprint” of his amplifier. I’ve known Ricky Siahaan (b. 1976) in his capacity as the guitarist and producer of one of Indonesia’s most revered metal bands Seringai.¹⁶² His achievements include but are not limited to opening for Metallica in what could be the archipelago’s highest-attended

¹⁶² Off-stage, Ricky has served Rolling Stone Indonesia as the managing editor during 2005-2018, and currently he manages martial arts master and Hollywood actor Iko Uwais.

concert,¹⁶³ and headlining the world's oldest and largest primate justice concert series, Sound For Orangutan.¹⁶⁴ Although a technician has given his rig a clean bill of health, Ricky has been fretting about the need for set ups that allow him to copy and paste the massive sonic obliteration of which his fire breathing, quadruple 6L6-equipped tube amplifier is capable. Boasting a crushing 150 watt at 8 ohms, the amp has been co-producing one of the most mammoth electric guitar tones out there.

Referring to the extraneous oscillation mentioned above, “it’s an Indonesian thing,” Ricky told me in his studio, while playing a slide guitar through his Mesa Boogie Triple Rectifier head and Carvin 4x12 speaker cabinet.

“What about the song lyrics? I thought *they* were Indonesian, eh?”

“It’s just vibe,” Ricky insists, “It [the song] sounds very good but there’s that, there is that issue, that oscillation. And I don’t know if people consider it a problem. But yeah, it just came to me. It’s just like why, why is [it that] the sustain distorted guitar sounds don’t sound as good as the ones in [some] other countries?”

During his illustrious career, Ricky has yet to experience that particular oscillation when touring abroad in Japan, Singapore, and Malaysia:

“[Even the] high-profile [Indonesian] bands like [anonym], let’s say, I always hear that [oscillation]. Whenever they finish their songs, like ‘*Jeeeeeng*’ and fading out. And then there’s a sustain of the distortion, you can still hear it, right? And then it sounds like... ‘*Ngeeeeeee — hof – hof - hof.*’ Before it fades out, ‘*Jeeeeeeeeng,*’ you can hear the ‘*hof-hof.*’ That’s not going to happen in the US. And they are using almost the same equipments as I do, [a tube amp] and the Furman power conditioner. But Furman... mainly for spike [which injects a ‘click’ sound onto signal, not ‘*hof*’], right?” (ibid.).

¹⁶³ “Up to 50,000 were in attendance [at Bung Karno Stadium in Jakarta]. They were full of enthusiasm for watching the [Metallica] concert, which was preceded by the national anthem [...], as well as the opening act from Indonesia, Seringai (*Sebanyak 50 ribu penonton memadati arena, penuh antusiasme menonton konser musik tersebut, yang diawali dengan lagu [...], serta penampilan band pembuka asal Indonesia, Seringai*)” (Waluyo, August 26, 2013).

¹⁶⁴ “A selection of bands from a variety of genres will perform for the Sound For Orangutan event. In addition to the headliner Seringai, the lineup included Down For Lift, FSTVLST, Sri Plecit, Broken Rose, and Miskin Porno. This event is presented at the Liquid Café on Magelang road in the city of Yogyakarta, and it was launched by the Center for Orangutan Protection (COP). This Sound For Orangutan is held every year, and this is the fourth year it happened (*Sederet band dari berbagai genre akan tampil untuk acara Sound for Orangutan (SFO). Selain Seringai yang menjadi line up pada malam itu ialah, Seringai, Down For Life, FSTVLST, Sri Plecit, Broken Rose, dan Misporn. Acara ini digelar di Liquid Cafe Jalan Magelang Yogyakarta ini diiniasi oleh Centre for Orangutan Protection (COP). Sound For Orangutan ini telah dilaksanakan setiap tahunnya, dan tahun ini merupakan tahun yang keempat*)” (Tribun Jogja, October 18, 2015).

To ensure *similar* sounds across any volume and venue, Ricky went on to purchase the amp profiling device I mentioned earlier. The purchase had been made a few months back in consultation with a band manager, whom I shall mention in the next section, and an electrical engineer. “Every country has their own AC frequency,” the engineer would tell me (Albert Prio, personal communication, June 9, 2019). “In USA, surely 60 Hz, in Indonesia... random,” and for the next ten seconds I would hear him laughing out loud. When the engineer was in Tokyo for Ricky’s Japan Tour (April 2019), he found it “weird” to see the Japanese having “no ground for electronic stuff, only using the 2-prong AC plugs but their audio is very clean” (ibid.). He remarked that AC frequency cycle must be either 50 Hz or 60 Hz to produce that guitar tone we typical hear on most records. Besides power surges, brownouts, spikes in AC, a cause of the oscillation could be radio frequency interference (RFI) and electromagnetic interference (EMI). Simply put, the guitar sustain tends to follow the electric frequency cycles, while spikes occur when there’s lightning or someone turns off and on the lights... then a ‘click’ goes into our guitar signal.¹⁶⁵ Although most sound crew in Indonesia tend to separate the AC outlet for amplifiers from the one used by the stage lighting system, and power conditioners are said to more or less help with this problem.

“Rain makes the soil ground act like a conductor. But if noise or any sort of interference enters electricity cycles, it will affect the guitar signal” (ibid.).¹⁶⁶

“And is that because of PLN [*Perusahaan Listrik Negara*, i.e., the Indonesian State Electricity Company] not doing their homework, or just tropical weather?” I asked, to see whether this would be a convoluted mess the institutional powers made.

“The mystery we should learn... I guess the moisture content in the soil in different locations also produces different noise” (ibid.).¹⁶⁷

Now, Ricky plugs his electric guitar into the Kemper Profiler before my eyes. He then plugs his tube amplifier in between the input and output stages of the simulator circuit. He did that without even blinking, since, as I will describe in more detail later, he had been investing “much, very much for many expensive stuffs, and after all, the expensive stuff I still have has the oscillation problem is kind of... I’m trying to make the problem go away” (Ricky Siahaan, personal communication, July 15, 2017). Next, Ricky checks his cables to make sure that the amp is placed in the signal loop of the Profiler. And once he hits a button on the front panel, the Profiler begins to send a test signal to the amp, which will subsequently be routed back into the simulator circuit through a speaker cabinet via a microphone. The machine is now learning everything that’s going on with the amp, speaker cabinet, and microphone, virtually, except

¹⁶⁵ “*Sustain, ngikutin cycles frequency listrik. Spikes itu kayak kalau kita lagi main gitar, tiba-tiba ada petir atau ada yang mati-nyalain lampu... Terus suaranya ‘click’nya masuk ke ampli gitar kita*” (Albert Prio, personal communication, June 9, 2019).

¹⁶⁶ *Tapi kalau noise, interference, masuk ke cycles listrik, dia jadi affected ke audio.*

¹⁶⁷ *Kadar air dalam tanah tiap lokasi juga menghasilkan noise yang berbeda, I guess.*

distilling away a bit of room reverberation that occurs typically when the microphone captures the real sound, not the test signal, bouncing around in a three-dimensional space. So we each poured ourselves a cup of Aceh Gayo coffee to sit through the profiling.

Minutes later, the sudden silence wakes us up from the bold, earthy aromas and flavors of the Acehnese beans... The Profiler has stopped sending the amp the test signal. It's ready to show us what it thinks we've got. Ricky jumps in and harnesses a series of palm-muted power chords (the root B and fifth F#) with all down strokes, noticing right away the absence of those bottom end frequencies we sometimes call "*Oomph*." So he's hitting another button on the Profiler's front panel to refine the tone three more times until he says:

The sound may not be as powerful as the [unmic'd] Mesa Boogie [amp tone coming out of its own 4x12-inch speaker cabinet]. But, the Profiler actually sounds like when this amp is mic'd up [with] this particular microphone [i.e., one we guitarists typically use; e.g., Shure SM57]. What people hear in the audience is exactly this sound. Whereas... when I use the [real] amp [on stage], when I listen to it, it sounds very good but that's not the sound that people hear... because it takes some microphone. And it takes many [other] things [e.g., wind, rain, temperature] to create a real sound of that amp (Ricky Siahaan, personal communication, July 15, 2017).

The Profiler actually came with all the factory presets that were reproduced by another guitarist who has access to a studio somewhere, where he can crank up the same 150W beast of an amp, and profile it with high-end studio equipment and a variety of speaker cabinets, microphones, and even boost pedals. So Ricky could just as well use one of the 259 factory presets right out of the box or tweak only a little bit of its equalizer settings. But since he could get lost in hundreds and thousands of different tone stacks per preset, he would rather profile his own thing and not download any additional presets that are just a few clicks away. Ricky holds his coffee cup again, sips, and shares his honeymoon impression of the digital fingerprint of his amp... "It's getting close."

Why Simulate?

Before figuring out whether a unit like Kemper comes close to copying the frequency response and dynamic behavior of tube amps, the present section delves deeper into factors influencing purchase intentions among early adopters of Kemper Profiler and the like (e.g., Line 6 Helix FX Processor). The factors, to summarize, include:

a) Growing demands for traveling light: Airlines, not just domestic but international, like to impose stricter consequences for overweight baggage. Tube amplifiers often exceed the limit, whereas simulators don't.

b) Inconsistency with tube amp rigs: Dirty electricity (*listrik kotor*) may interfere with or damage vacuum tube operation everywhere, while certain variables (wind, rain, and

temperature) affect any tube-saturated electric guitar tone, more so than they affect a digitally simulated one.

c) The kind of music that the early adopters play: Guitarists are likely to recognize the reasonableness of this technology typically when their musical communication necessitates drop tuning their instruments by a perfect fourth below the standard (E, A, D, G, B, e) with largely unintelligible vocal growling supporting it; in other words, metal.

My findings also reveal that a majority of Indonesians who popularized this technology share affinity with evidence-based, secularist approaches to things in the world. They include a naval engineer, band manager, and the founders of Indonesia's first known atheist community. Given the current Jihadist radicalization of Indonesia, a couple of these non-believers have requested that I use pseudonyms of their choice, Budi and Dewi, two common names that pop up in their elementary school textbooks. To offer additional protection from the archipelago's intense creationist indoctrination and blasphemy law, I may or may not swap *their* gender. Other individuals, including the ones I mention below, said they would really prefer I didn't change their names.

Growing Demands for Traveling Light from the Chinese through Atheists

“You Chinese JEW!” the guitarist Stevi Item shouts at his band manager.¹⁶⁸

“You know the point, right? The point [of using the simulation technology],” responds Jeff Adriano, the manager, as he bestows an avuncular smile on both Stevi and me. “From the start of touring, using the amps, that weigh a ton, I can know [whether] a musician is intellectual or not. With the equipment he uses, whether this guy has practicality” (Jeff Adriano and Stevi Item, personal communication, October 12, 2017).

Jeff is now belting out the most explosive laugh I've heard in years. Then he explained, “He [Stevi] said that [I'm a Chinese Jew]! Really. It's like an inside joke within some friends, because this is like what Facebook does. [Referring to the fact that this American social media company is run by a Jewish entrepreneur whose spouse is Chinese]. They gather all the data and...” I took this as one of those self-deprecating jokes I've heard Chinese Indonesians make with reference to their feeling of detachment from society, due in part to a stereotype that the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia are all rich, smart, and white (*putih*) despite being non-Muslim, second-class citizens. And their favorite example would be Mark Zuckerberg, the Facebook CEO who recently visited Indonesia to meet and greet a large community of users.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁸ This association between the ethnic Chinese and Judaism has nothing to do with the actual Jewish community in mainland China. Please continue reading the rest of the page.

¹⁶⁹ Notably, anti-Semitic stereotypes of Jews are common in Indonesia, where most people have never met a Jew, and where Judaism is not recognized by Indonesian law as a legitimate religion (despite Muhammad's acknowledgement of Jews as acceptable, albeit second-class citizens in a Muslim society).

When Jeff first came across a Kemper manual online, studied it, and suggested to some prominent Indonesian guitarists that they replace their tube amp stacks with a simulator, his idea confounded the skeptics with regards to the aforementioned stereotype. Ricky, the guitarist with whom I profiled his amplifier in the previous section, was amongst those who would affectionately yell at Jeff...

“*Loh! Yahudi Cina, Yahudi!* (You! Chinese Jew, Jew!)”

Jeff was right. The amp simulation rig had the potential to allow his guitarist friends to laugh all the way to the bank. Back when Stevi picked up the Mesa Boogie Rectifier amp, which we commonly see on stage nowadays, not many Indonesian bands were using it. Only the big names, such as Dewa 19, did. This goes back to 1997 when these musicians were touring, and event organizers would expect the band members to move these amplifier stacks around:

Transportations... these [amp stacks] had to be *dibagasi* [checked in]. Because they're heavy, right? Very heavy [approximately 48 lbs. without any protective case]. Too big for a carry-on, considering the exterior dimensions [65" W x 25.5" H x 25.5" D without any case]. And too heavy. Still, I'd carry them around [the archipelago]. Including the [speaker] cabinets! [101 lbs., 29.9 W x 30.25" H x 14.25" D]. Checked in, you know, using the flight case [which would then increase the total weight of an amplifier 'half' stack up to approximately 155 lbs.]. So, the cabinets are even bigger, heavier [than the amplifier head]. It could still be checked in. But, *habis itu, ada charge lagi untuk extra bagasi* [as a consequence I would be charged excess baggage fees]. In the past, you know, my set up varied...so there was a set up that uses rack system also [i.e., something approximating half the size of home refrigerator]. Man, that was...poor airline crews! Hahaha...

(Stevi Item, personal communication, November 2, 2017).

Before the dawn of the “Profiling” technology, many guitarists would claim to be “one of those analog fanatics,¹⁷⁰ [and] the main thing was that everything had to be real. So there had to be tube amplifiers” (ibid.).¹⁷¹ This aligns with what Ricky told me the other day:

The dual rectifier [tube amp] could not stand the road. It got ruined out of the... [In transit] it was wrecked. I'd bring it every time we go to places and whenever we go into the airport I see how they handle the amp. And sometimes the amp, when they go out of the [baggage] conveyor belt, the lid [of the amp case] gets opened because someone has just *banting-banting di dalam* [tossed things inside], you know. And [the airline goes], ‘Okay, that’s it.’ It was pretty heavy. 34 kilograms [75 lbs.], I think, the weight of the amp with a hard case. And sometimes we were going through trouble with the airport because the limit was 31 kilos. And we had to like lobby, “No, no. It was 31 kilos. Why is it 34 kilos now?” Stuff like that. And that’s why I

¹⁷⁰ *Salah satu yang fanatik sama sound analog.*

¹⁷¹ *Pokoknya semua itu harus real. Harus ada ampli, gitar, tube amplified and all that.*

bought it [the simulator]. Yeah, it [Kemper] delivers it with a lighter weight [approximately 12 lbs. without the case]

(Ricky Siahaan, personal communication, July 15, 2017).

I now see Jeff heaving a sigh of relief. At first, it was not an easy decision for him to procure two Kemper Profilers for his band, and one for himself. It cost him “a lot of money” (Jeff Adriano, personal communication, October 12, 2017). By that, he points to something approximating 33 million rupiah per single Profiler unit (2,200 US dollars), which, for easy reference, exceeds half of the monthly salary the manager at a major Indonesian bank says she makes (20 million rupiah). Jeff takes a pack of cigarettes from his pocket and lights one up, and his face gets lit up by the flame of his butane lighter. In this light, he says:

Every time we went outside Jakarta, I had to pay like 800,000 [extra] rupiah [one way per guitarist, and the band I manage has two guitarists]. So that’s 3.2 something [million rupiah round trip for their extra and overweight baggage; i.e., two tube amp stacks]. And then there’s a new regulation. Only 22 kilo per person are allowed. And we’ve got 24 and a half. So I had to take out the front and back [panels of the amp flight case], and wrap it up [using plastic], and put it in the cargo. Really scary [because the amp is now more prone to damage without the front and back case covers]. It’s really unsafe, ya. This is not cheap... and I bought him [Stevi] a Kemper first. And then, it works (ibid.).

Actually, Jeff turns out to be one of the active members of Kemper.ID, an online community of Profiler users who buy, sell, and exchange presets via mobile applications. Notable amongst them is Budi, a naval engineer who built four ships that helped Indonesia to rescue a ship that was hijacked by foreign pirates a decade ago. Although Budi is neither a Chinese nor a practicing Jew, he *is* one rich, smart, and powerful bloke. This is one of the instances where I noticed the leap in the stereotype that compares the pragmatics of Chinese Indonesians to that of American Jewish people. And when we first met, Budi’s avuncular smile really reminded me of Jeff’s. He seemed proud of his engineering skills. “So... this is some of my products,” Budi swipes up to unlock his phone to share with me some photos, “This is the first time I assembled a machine. This is a carbon fiber Kevlar that I created. And this is one of the first ships I made for the SAR (*Badan Nasional Pencarian dan Pertolongan*, the Indonesian National Search and Rescue Agency, formerly known as *Badan SAR Nasional*). And that, my first ship for the [Indonesian] Navy. I also designed the wind turbine, to equip the solar panel in case there’s... *mendung* [cloud]. We can use the current to store some power. This is used for missiles also, and rockets for satellites” (Budi, personal communication, November 1, 2017). Budi and I are chatting at his pool patio in his magnificent mansion, and we hear a knock at the front door.

Seconds later, Budi comes back to the patio with Dewi, another active member of the online Profiler user community. Dewi puts down her electric guitar case and takes off her sunglasses. Budi seems content how quickly Dewi got here despite Jakarta’s notorious traffic, when he showed me a systematic map he sent her this morning to create a short-cut:

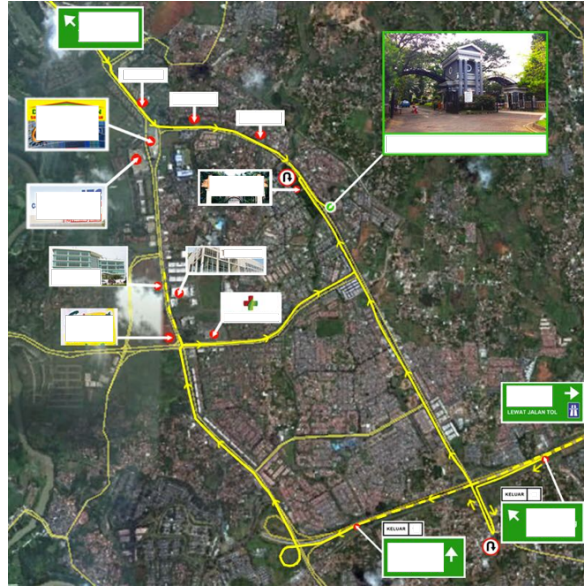


Fig. 1: A map Budi sent Dewi that morning to help her get to his mansion.¹⁷²

Dewi is smiling but silent, and Budi resumes his storytelling without much small talk, “Normally, this type of ship, [it takes] one and a half up to two years [to build]. I promised them [the Indonesian Navy] 10 months. But I finished it in 7 months. And it was 33% lighter, with the same engine. They can go up to 4 knots [faster than other ships of its type] and more. Speedier. And then, word got out to the other governmental departments, and I got more orders, which is why I could buy this mansion...”

“...and buy more guitars?” Dewi joins our chat, finally, casting a deep gaze upon us from her transparent eyes. And just when I felt how she was trying to look deep into my eyes and read something, Budi tells her...

“It’s okay, he’s cool.”

As it turns out, Dewi and Budi have something else in common: They co-founded the Indonesian Atheist Community back in 2005. And they were the first to do it. But they disbanded it in 2012 because Dewi was getting married within an imposed faith, and Budi’s business was rising. Although they were using pseudonyms in a series of articles they published online, they didn’t want people to find out who they are, since the Atheist Community “got more exposure because that year, in 2012, in March, an atheist in Central Java was arrested” (Budi, personal communication, November 1, 2017).

“For having no beliefs?” I asked.

“Yeah, for blasphemy,” answers Dewi, “And then CNN, Reuters, and Al Jazeera contacted us through email. They wanted to interview us asking about our opinion. And that’s

¹⁷² Budi no longer lives there, but I edited out the road signs to prevent further investigation.

when we started to think, ‘Okay, this is getting unhealthy. Not good for... our life. We live in *Indonesia*.’ So we disbanded it [the Community]. [An anonymous jazz guitarist], he was in that group, and we have written many articles about it [atheism], using science and reason approach” (Dewi, personal communication, November 1, 2017).

We spent the next several hours tweaking the Profiler knobs in Budi’s studio. Our goal was to see whether we could tell the difference between the simulated and the real amp sounds. This was made easy because Budi’s mansion had a stockpile of amps, a Profiler, and hundreds of guitars hooked into a wireless system. One thing I noticed was how low Budi and Dewi like to down-tune their guitars (C-F-B flat-E flat-G-C). “It feels good to come to this [range],”¹⁷³ said Budi while producing a richly saturated tube-like sound in the recording room, “for metal.”¹⁷⁴ And I was quite impressed from the control booth, “Is that, you know, the sound from the Profiler? It’s got that ‘punch’ also.”¹⁷⁵

“Oh!” suddenly Dewi stopped playing her guitar and goes:

You guys must be interested in... sorry to *dipotong* [interrupt]. This morning, Tom DeLonge [former guitarist of the American rock band Blink-182], just launched a tech company [To the Stars Academy of Arts and Science (TTSA)] based on the UFO technology. Just this morning. And, you know, the co-founders besides Tom, all US government guys. They have four, ex-CIA, ex-DoD, and ex-Skunk Works [Lockheed Advanced Development Projects]. All of that, you know. When he [DeLonge] was kicked [out] by Blink-182, he didn’t say he was fired. Blink-182 released a press conference that he does not have time for the band.

“Ha! So, Area 51 is true?” Budi responds, and adds:

I... I believe that, you know. I believe in the extraterrestrial aliens rather than a God being the perfect God. I want to know, ya, after this, whether there will be more news about the Indonesian giant pyramid. The pyramid in Cianjur, Gunung Padang [West Java]. It’s the biggest in the world. No match, you know. It’s the size of a mountain.

“How come I didn’t know about this?” I asked. And Budi answered:

“Because they [the Indonesian Air Force] keep it down. They buried the story somehow. Two years ago [2015], suddenly it [the news] came out to the Internet. And early last year [2016], it [the story] was quite popular. Then suddenly shut down again. There’s like about thirty YouTube videos from outside Indonesia who spoke about that. As of two months ago, the last time I checked. *Mulai gue baca itu, tapi beritanya cuma aneh wakil hoax* [I started following the news, but it became just weird, hoax]. *Terus udah gitu memang dari lubarkan* [“exhaust” in Sundanese]

¹⁷³ *Enak ke sini, sih.*

¹⁷⁴ *kalau buat metal.*

¹⁷⁵ *Ya, itu suara dari itu? Preset Soldano-nya, ponjok juga.*

sembayang dari batu yang dari bawanya aja [And then there came animists, used up the stone for the purpose of worship].¹⁷⁶

“We wouldn’t know for sure,” Dewi points out, and I hear Budi saying...

“We need some proof, man. I need to see it, with my OWN eyes” (personal communication, November 1, 2017).

What’s interesting is that the vast majority of live music audience would remain unaware of how a couple of atheists and a Chinese band manager are actually the ones behind the curtain when it comes to the popularization of amp simulation technology in Indonesia. Nevertheless, these individuals like to stay calm and rational:

Yeah, all of this, I try to keep, not expose because... I don’t mind Stevi or Ricky [the guitarists] taking many credits, you know, because I’m nobody. It makes more sense, if the public knows it [the new stuff] comes from them, because if it comes from me, people cannot relate. I didn’t come from the musical background. And I like it that way as well. I put the musicians in front. Let me stay beside them

(Jeff Adriano, personal communication, October 12, 2017).

To summarize: Airlines impose stricter consequences for tube amp rig being overweight. A simulator rig is lightweight and therefore cost-saving in the long run. Those who popularized this solution went underground, where they feel free to share secularist approaches to things in the world. Next, I will try to articulate how inconsistent a tube amp tone can be.

Non-Logistic Inconsistencies with Tube Amp Rigs

Interference in live tube amp operation is a commonly recognized complication of wind, rain, and temperature, on top of voltage fluctuation and aging machinery.¹⁷⁷ Although nothing beats the warm and saggy tube saturation we guitar players all know and have loved for decades, real tube amps tend to sound better some days than others. In this subsection, I trace recurring reliability issues guitarists have with tube circuits in touring situations, and how these problems can eventually turn them off enough to ditch their amps for simulators.

That parasitic oscillation Ricky and I detected off-stage in the beginning of this chapter turned out to be the tip of the iceberg:

Oscillation is just one of the problems. The problem with electricity, probably, you can only hear that by the sound that was created by the amp. But when it reaches the audience, the not-so-good sound is not just the amp but the lack of power amp that the

¹⁷⁶ As I said in the introduction, the sentences in which my interlocutors were code-switching are quoted alongside their English translations.

¹⁷⁷ I.e., the entropy of the thermodynamic system, by which to measure how ALL things, whenever there is something in some kind of order, like human physiology, tend to spontaneously fall apart and become less orderly over time.

vendor uses [i.e., the vendor uses a PA system that doesn't have enough power to amplify sounds without unwanted distortion]

(Ricky Siahaan, personal communication, July 15, 2017).

Guitarists like Ricky and Stevi typically run into many problems on stage, typically. Electricity may just be one of them, and when they hear other bands playing at festivals, oftentimes they say, "Wow, the sound is not very good," but their definition for a "not very good sound" may vary according to "very many, many, many things" (ibid.).

When they want to present live music on a football field, such as Central Jakarta's *Gelora Bung Karno* with a seating capacity of tens of thousands, sound system vendors will try and calculate how many watts they can use for the event. Suppose the PA system vendors wanted the venue to hold up to 1,000 people. They could just multiply that headcount by the wattage that they assume one person can handle. If they think an audience of one can handle 20 watts, 20,000 watts would do for that event. However, the vendors could still get in the way of mic'd up guitar amplification by not giving the audience what they are supposed to hear. And that should degrade the audio, given that the correct way for a sound system to operate on its maximal capacity is to exceed the calculation they just did, i.e., 20,000 watts for 1,000 people. If they need 20,000 watts, then their system watts must optimally surpass that number, say they prepare 25,000 watts but use only 20,000. This will certainly sound better than running the system at full power. And running a system at full power seems to be the problem many guitarists "encounter all the time" (Ricky Siahaan, personal communication, July 15, 2017).

Here, guitarists must rely on their own production team. First, the team will set up all the equipment on stage. Next, the stage manager is going to do a line check, where she goes through each and every channel listed in their technical rider. A 4-piece band typically uses some 20 channels on the main mixer. A drum kit, for example, requires one each for hi-hat, a tom, another tom, floor toms, and overhead (one over the drummer's head to catch all the cymbals) via two strips of mics. So there can be 10-12 mics for the drum kit, and then 4 channels for the guitar, i.e., 2 for the first mic'd up amp, and the rest for the second amp, with 2 additional channels for bass, and 3 for vocalists, i.e., 1 lead and 2 backing vocals. Next, the channel volumes are equalized by the front of house engineer, while the band is playing together to see whether each instrument's sound sits well in the mix:

This one time when I was sound checking for a show the power supply went off somehow. And I suspected it was because the electricity is not really stable. So it's a good thing that I had that gear [power conditioner] because in other cases I could have lost the [tube] amp

(Sammy Bramantyo, personal communication, July 25, 2017).

"It's not powerful enough. ...it's terrible" (ibid.). Back in 2013, when Ricky's band Seringai opened for Metallica at *Gelora Bung Karno* in front of the estimated 50,000 audience, the American front-of-house engineers gave Metallica 121 decibels. But they gave Seringai 80 decibels. So the opening act could only play up to 80, whereas Metallica would subsequently go

121 up to 140 decibels. As a result, many front-row audience members would later tell Ricky that Seringai's sound was very good, whereas those who were sitting all the way back said they didn't get too much. It could be that the American sound engineers wanted to make sure that their band sounds bigger than the local opening act. It could also be that the engineers didn't assume the presence of that many people during the opening act because that's not what they usually experience outside Indonesia. It could, nevertheless, be that the tube amplifiers on stage were reacting to...

...cold temperature, because hot temperature is actually better than that for sound. But excess heat is also not good. Just the right amount of heat. But excess cold is never good for the sound, because the sound cannot travel as much [because cold air is heavy due to its molecules conglomerating]

(Ricky Siahaan, personal communication, August 25, 2017).

Additionally, Indonesian bands commonly encounter wind that carries away sounds or blows them back to the stage. This is where a system engineer jumps in and bring the wind into their equation. Bands do not hire a system engineer because the vendors typically send one. System engineers are there to lay out the most perfect system by looking at today's wind direction and speed on the ground. They are the ones who make decisions regarding variable speaker configurations and layouts. Whether these bands are playing in Jakarta or in Lombok, for example, "sometimes the wind came and the sound was just like, the audience could not hear it. The sound got carried away by the wind" (Ricky Siahaan, personal communication, July 15, 2017). This is unpredictable, yet "happens all the time actually" (ibid.).

Further, it's the rain, again, that affects sound amplification. "Ideally, *kering* [dry] condition will do. Good for our *alat-alat* [equipment on stage; e.g., amplifiers], you know, certainly better" (Stevi Item, personal communication, November 2, 2017). Indeed, when the rain comes falling down heavily, musicians on stage will need to stop, even in the middle of a set...

The kind of rain we [Indonesians] have... I think it is kind of different, sometimes when Australians say 'It's raining,' it's not raining for me (laugh). Because the rain [in Australia] is like a steam of water going sideways... like a very small rain that is not too... when it comes down for a long period of time you get wet. But it's like a steam. For me, rain is when you have drops this big (pinching hand). As big as your finger. Really ruins your shit [live music], sometimes

(Ricky Siahaan, personal communication, July 15, 2017).

When that happens, musicians will usually finish the song that they were playing, and then go back inside the tent backstage. They will then wait for the stage manager to give them instructions on whether they should end their set or not. If not:

It's raining and then the band stopped. We wait [for] the rain to go away for probably for half an hour to two hours. And then we continue, there is a problem always.

Some kind of new problem coming up. Yeah, like a ground problem or there is a *humming* sound for the amp. This always happens after the rain (ibid., July 11, 2017).

And when the sound system starts to have a ground problem after the rain

We just get electrocuted. But it's not the 220-volt electrocution, you know. It's a smaller voltage but you can still feel it like 'Aw shit!' The 220 volts just leak into the system, [and] my amp was *oscillating*, yeah, in 2004, when we played in Malang [East Java] (ibid., August 19, 2017).

I have many times seen guitarists getting shocked from the mics, also. When they sing backing vocals while on their guitars, they sometimes touch the microphone, and scream 'Oh, shit!' One of the common problems is when the guitarists sing and their lips touch the mic and they end up getting electrocuted. Then I see the stage manager get busy running around, checking the power generator for grounds to solve the problem. And then guitar technicians start to "touch everything with a plastic bag, because whenever he [the technician] touches my amp knobs [made of metal] he'd go, 'Uushh!' [electrocuted]" (ibid., July 15, 2017).

In short: Tube amps work inconsistently. Voltage fluctuation, wind, rain, and temperature further interfere with sound amplification in live situations. As will become clear, these variables prompt guitarists to simplify their rigs via simulation. Next, I will explore why guitarists who play certain style of music began to make uses of amp simulation technology before anybody else did.

Amp Simulation Explored through Metal à la Jacques Cousteau

This subsection finds that band musicians are likely to recognize the utility of amp simulation when communicating certain physical properties of music. These include, but are not limited to: a) guitars drop-tuned by two steps or more lower than usual, whilst b) growling vocals become "part of the instrumentation" (Daniel Mardhany, personal communication, November 3, 2017),¹⁷⁸ often to such an extent that it renders unintelligible the poetics, from individual words to larger syntactic and semantic units.

These lowered guitar tuning systems should support "the many subtle workings of an ensemble, the ongoing micro-adjustments and negotiations of standards and authority necessary to coordination and blending" (Brinner 1995:169). A simple transcription below may sufficiently illustrate recent experiments in alternative tuning systems conducted by some heavy-hitters I've come across in Indonesia:

¹⁷⁸ *Bagian dari instrument.*

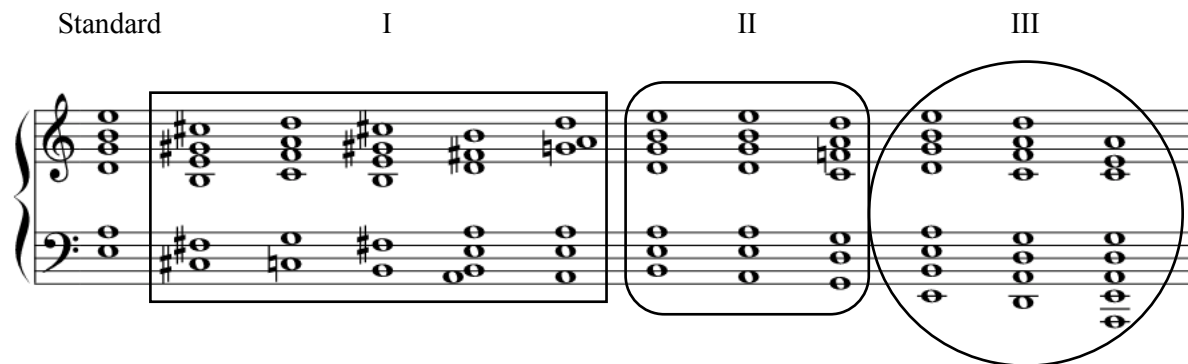


Fig. 2: Drop tuning systems I've heard across the archipelago during 2014-2019. Each pitch in a chord is assigned to an open string of a guitar. These pitches actually sound one octave lower.

Group I comprises bands that employ lower-than-standard tuning systems on 6-string guitars. From left to right: transposition down to C# of standard tuning as used by a band named Hellcrust (based in Jakarta), transposition to D, but drop lowest string to C used by Deadsquad (Jakarta), drop B by Down For Life (Solo), B standard and drop A used interchangeably by Seringai (Jakarta), and AK//47 (Semarang) created a custom A-E-A-G-A-D tuning that appears particular to the band (Garna Raditya, personal communication, February 3, 2018). Everyone in group I uses a Kemper Profiler, while AK//47 blend a real amp with simulation plug-ins.

Group II goes even lower by using 7-string guitars: Fadjar Ramadhan of Funeral Inception (Jakarta) adds a lower B string to the 6-string E standard, Baken Nainggolan of Kapital (Borneo) uses standard with added A in the bass, and the bands Human Autopsy (Bali) and Doomnation (Bandung) share affinity with standard lowered one step, with a low G added. Fadjar uses Line 6 amp modeling devices; Baken uses a Kemper Profiler.

Group III harnesses what could be the lowest perceptible pitches on 8-string guitars in extended, 30-inch baritone scale: Trojan (Bali) uses standard tuning with two lower strings added for B and E an octave below the 6th string, using another amp simulation device called Fractal Axe-Fx; Eternal Desolator (Puwerkerto) and Krack (Bogor) do what they call “double drop D,” that is, just taken down one step like Trojan’s; and last but not least, Makhlvk (Jakarta) goes all the way down to double-double A via amp simulation plug-ins, where it feels “recordable but ungiggable” because the strings are tuned “so ridiculously low” that they lose tension and become flabby (Anak Agung Gde Agung, personal communication, June 28, 2018). As a result, the bass guitar could sound higher than the lowest guitar tones. What this could do to how musicians play together remains an open question because Makhlvk is a one-man studio band that has yet to perform live.

“We just wanted to know how low it can go... and what it sounds like, when we made a song [*Lagu Lama (An Old Song)*] in [drop] A,” Ricky Siahaan told me after headlining a show in North Jakarta with his Seringai bandmates (personal communication, July 26, 2017).

“That’s the *Jacques Cousteau* part of him [Ricky],” comments Arian Arifin, Seringai’s lead vocalist and a major popular figure among the metalheads within and beyond Indonesia.¹⁷⁹ Arian is wittily suggesting an analogy between Ricky’s tendency to dig deep into his guitar’s lowest possible notes, and Jacques Cousteau, a French explorer known for his 300-foot deep-sea diving into the abyss.

I wanted to try it [drop A tuning] because that song has that part where I think will sound better with a lower tuning than B [standard], like ‘That’s the part!’ actually, the part [where] I want to ‘show off’ the tuning. And that’s the fastest song I think we’ve ever made, ever, and that’s the fastest Arian has ever growled. Everything is new and we never thought that we could achieve a bassy sound like that (ibid.).

Clearly, more aggressive music has a wider tonality insofar as one can muffle guitars and basses damp the strings to deaden the higher overtones. And what the musicians want in a more aggressive guitar tone is to have more of all the higher harmonics along with the lowest possible tone, so it’s got broader harmonic spread as is the case with 7/8-string guitar. The lower one gets, the wider one gets, the “girthier” [i.e., metalheads’ term that denotes “more brutal”] one gets, one is more likely to feel proud about their tone and their stature as a metal musician. Both these guitarists who sound low and dominant in the tonal hierarchy, while the younger generation axemen appear much more likely to want to go lower and be more dominant than each other and their predecessors. As their pitch range broadens, they say they are now “*Serius, yang benar-benar all out* [serious, and truly ‘all out,’ when] it’s getting low and low” (Stevi Item, personal communication, November 2, 2017).¹⁸⁰ Such pitch range expansion foregrounds what an Indonesian journalist famously remarked: “A successful metal song is one that does the listener proud... that he is a metalhead” (Soleh Solihun, *Rolling Stone Indonesia* 2011).¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁹ The life history of Arian Arifin Wardiman (1974) has been partially documented in Sam Dunn’s 2008 film *Global Metal*, Jeremy Wallach’s pioneering ethnography of Indonesian popular music, *Modern Noise, Fluid Genres: Popular Music in Indonesia, 1997-2001* (2008:85-6, 288), and Brent Luvaas’ *DIY Style: Fashion, Music, and Digital Cultures* (2012:42-62). Growing up internationally in the family of an MIT-trained rocket scientist, Arian is a descendant of S. Sudjojono (1913-86), “the father of modern Indonesian Painting” (S. Sudjojono Center 2019). Off-stage, Arian has served as editor for *Playboy* and *MTV Trax* Magazines in Indonesia, and the designer for Sepeda Curian Illustration & Design. Currently he runs the archipelago’s first metal and burger joint Lawless Burgerbar in South Jakarta.

¹⁸⁰ As I made clear in the introduction, the sentences in which my interlocutors were code-switching are quoted alongside their English translations, while others except proper nouns and buzzwords are footnoted.

¹⁸¹ *Lagu Metal yang sukses adalah lagu yang ketika didengar, bisa membuat pendengarnya bangga... kalau ia adalah penggemar metal.*

While the “struggles over national modernity are played out in Indonesian music and culture [through] lived experience in specific social settings” (Wallach 2008:264), these musicians take *at least as much* pride in making progress in “the sound department, not just lyrically but in [the physical manifestations of] sound” (Ricky Siahaan, personal communication, July 27, 2017). The classic Western heavy metal sound tends to be *in* E standard tuning (e.g., Metallica, early Black Sabbath). And when the Indonesian guitarists encounter foreign metal bands (e.g., Meshuggah, Periphery, Animals as Leaders), they seem quite pleased by how low the riffs played by foreign bands sound in C standard and below, but not necessarily by the riffs *per se* (i.e., melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic extensions; e.g., those palm-muted, heavily syncopated riffs people call “djent”). So, the guitarists are now raving about creating classic metal-sounding riffs but in lower tunings: “By sounding classic with a modern edge to it, we’re just trying to be us. I tried to play hardcore in E, and I dropped it down to C. And then it sounded heavy. But when I tried B, it sounded heavier.” (ibid., July 11, 2017).

This was made more apparent when I asked Ricky whether he decided to include a female guest vocalist in a song to *empower* women’s rights. He replied, “Well... I grew up with sisters, so yeah, I support women in general. But I don’t think, lyrically, it had anything to do with the decision to ask her to sing. It was purely an aesthetic decision, like, it just, I just thought it would be great with the female voice” (ibid. July 27, 2017). Arian, the lead vocalist with whom Ricky plays in his band Seringai, adds, “when we make a song I just like to... It’s not really words, sometimes humming or just saying like some words that I can think about. There’s not a topic... This is like growling gibberish. I do it and then I have the words coming into my mind and they stick [around]” (Arian Arifin, personal communication, July 10, 2017). Sammy, Seringai’s bassist, corroborates this: “Even if music has lyrics, a lot of them [the music] doesn’t really connect to the lyrics. I’m not saying all of them, but a lot of them are not really in sync with the... you know, the spirit, the ideology, the message, they’re *not really there*” (Sammy Bramantyo, personal communication, July 25, 2017; Italics mine).

What’s *there*, however, is the tuning system a band chooses in relation to the optimal pitch range of their vocalist.

I can change my guitar sound, but I cannot change his [natural] vocal [range]. Like, so I’m going to achieve the [heavy] sound I want, but I have to adapt a little bit to Arian’s voice. If Arian is a death metal growler and we play in B [standard], [then] everything is low and then he is a low growler, his voice... people are going to have a hard time [actually] hearing the voice, like its frequency is gonna clash with other instruments (Ricky Siahaan, personal communication, July 27, 2017).

If Ricky and I have to compare Arian to other growlers (who will be mentioned below), then Arian’s growl sounds low but he also has highs. If we compare Arian to Jill van Diest, the vocalist from Ricky’s other band Stepforward, they are like two different people. Jill’s female voice resonates in a higher register than Arian’s, which then triggers Ricky to compose faster riffs “like a lot more straight to the point and stuff” in C standard, that is half-step above B

standard, to which Ricky and Arian are tuned as part of the band Seringai (ibid.). While it seems like a very small adjustment for a female voice that is typically more than one half-step higher than Arian's, the adjustment, as Ricky explains, could bring about substantive change in music instrumentality. The feeling is mutual when Daniel Mardhany, the vocalist of Deadsquad whose instrumentalists are tuned to drop C (see fig. 2), says:

For sure, that thing we call music is emotional like this. I have to play emotion with music and my vocal characters. For example, closing parts, I might be more screaming. As for the part [where guitarists are chugging riffs], I'm more into growling. I adjust my tone to the nuance of the music in and of itself

(Daniel Mardhany, personal communication, November 3, 2017).¹⁸²

Adjie, the vocalist of Down For Life, which tunes to drop B (see fig. 2), confirms Daniel's take:

Vocals are dependent upon music, because, for me, all artwork, you know, emerges from feeling, doesn't it? From soul. From what can be felt. When a song, for me, certainly what was applied with the vocals, like whispering the lyrics, that's about how it *feels*. The 'soul of the song' feels more like that

(Stephanus Adjie, personal communication, September 15, 2017).¹⁸³

And, when I asked Adjie a variant of the question I've asked Ricky on the previous page, about whether his band decided to use a male choir in a song to *advocate for* something, he asked me back:

Why do many people ask, 'Why is the choir all male?' That's simply because this song sounds darker when it's all male. That's, you know, the drumbeat sounds darker also, '*Dengtangteng terett* [imitating drum sounds]' (ibid.).¹⁸⁴

It seems reasonable at this point to say that the songs of these down-tuned bands tend to emerge spontaneously. I like to understand these interactions in the sense that "spontaneity in ensemble performance goes hand in hand with the *foregrounding* of improvisation and interaction" (Brinner 1995:206; italics mine). Making decisions regarding which part to growl and which part to growl louder or lesser, the amount of growling, the quality and tone, "all those stuffs comes when we're about to record vocal part. I will tell you the truth that the whole songs

¹⁸² *Pasti, musiknya emosinya kayak gini. Saya harus yang main emosi itu musik sama karakter vokal saya. Kalau misalnya contohnya, part closing, saya mungkin lebih ke scream. Kalau partnya, zhi-zih-zhi-zih- [the sound of chugging riffs], saya lebih ke growl. Saya menyesuaikan dengan nuance musiknya itu sendiri*

¹⁸³ *Bisa tergantung itu, karena menurut saya semua karya seni ini kan dari rasa, kan? Dari soul, dari apa yang dirasakan gitu, ketika lagu ini menurut saya memang diaplikasi dengan vocal, tadi whisper, itu sesuai dengan menurut saya ini bagaimana Rasanya. Soulnya lagu ini lebih berasa gitu.*

¹⁸⁴ *Kenapa beberapa orang tanya juga, 'Kenapa paduan suaranya laki-laki semua? Karena lagu ini lebih dark itu ketika laki-laki semua. Karena, kan, beatnya lebih dark juga 'Dengtangteng terett.'*

on my albums are very spontaneous” (Ricky Siahaan, personal communication, August 19, 2017).¹⁸⁵

I have many times seen guitarists stepping into their rehearsals with a ‘riff bank,’ a collection of many short phrases captured with their phones. And they brief the drummer how to play the drums, then the bassist, before they go do their riffs. But they oftentimes do not make claims and propositions with the band just in language, like saying ‘The beat goes like this and that.’ Rather, they would use a “mode of communication [by which] I [the guitarist] always show [the band] what I have with sound from my mouth, imitating the drum sounds, *duh-duh-digi-du*, like we’re just primitive” (ibid., July 27, 2017).¹⁸⁶

That is where the vocalists come through and “adapt the lyrics to the music” (Stephanus Adjie, personal communication, September 15, 2017).¹⁸⁷ Although they tend to be “the one who adjusts to the music” (Stevi Item, personal communication, November 2, 2017),¹⁸⁸ their vocals become...

...more than just word-carriers, as part of the instrumentation in and of itself. I force them [the lyrics] with a scream, and if it doesn’t feel good, yeah, when the bandmates say, ‘That scream just doesn’t do it,’ maybe I might try growling. When the beat goes slower, I’m more likely to growl. When it gets faster, more screaming, to ‘blend in’ (ibid.).¹⁸⁹

“These decisions, many of which are spontaneous, are communicated musically rather than verbally” (Brinner 1995:171), in part because

Vocals are like instruments. In my opinion, vowels are part of the instrumentation. My instrument is here [pointing to vocal cords, although vowels are shaped by the vocal tract (throat, mouth, nasal cavity), not the vocal cords]. That’s my instrument, my instrument besides the microphone. When I’m on stage, sometimes I scream, sometimes growl, depending on the mood, so that the audience doesn’t get bored also, people get bored when they see no variation

(Daniel Mardhany, personal communication, November 3, 2017).¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁵ “Very jamming songs, like a song can start just like ‘Hey Khemod [the drummer], let’s do a song.’ And I just put any chord, any chord. It’s very spontaneous, you know” (ibid.).

¹⁸⁶ Here, the word “primitive” has a positive connotation in the sense that one *can* be primitive in order to create and enjoy ‘brutal’ metal songs.

¹⁸⁷ *Liriknya disesuaikan dengan music.*

¹⁸⁸ *Ketika musiknya udah jadi, dia yang adjust.*

¹⁸⁹ *Ini vokal itu tidak hanya menjadi pembawa pesan saja, tapi itu menjadi bagian dari alat musik itu sendiri Ketika saya paksakan dengan scream, kayaknya gak enak ini ya., dari teman-teman pun, ‘Iya, gak enak nih kalau scream,’ kayaknya mungkin coba growl. Kemudian sesuai beatnya juga ketika beatnya lebih pelan. Saya lebih groll, ketika lebih cepat itu kayanya lebih scream, lebih blend.*

¹⁹⁰ This is an exceptionally long instance of code-switching that I feel should be footnoted. Here is the original quote: *Vokal mirip instrument...menurut gue, kalau vokal itu bagian dari instrument sih. Kalau*

Some vocalists go so far as to find word meaning, words and syntactic relationships, and the relationship of meaning within sentences largely redundant: “Instrumental [pieces] like “Gaza (2012)” [by the band Seringai, tuned to B standard (see fig. 2)], we made the music first. And it was my idea to do an instrumental song [although I am a vocalist myself]. Straight to the point. I wanted to make some music that’s, the mood was like, like tragic or sad. And then it gets, *lebih semangat* [more spirited]. So, in the end, it’s more like something positive, a hope that the [Gaza-Israel] war will end. It’s a long war but we have [that] hope. We still have hope in it” (Arian Arifin, personal communication, July 10, 2017).

In sum: The utility of amp simulation became highly recognizable as guitarists drop-tuned their guitars through a range of pitches towards the bottom end of the human auditory range. Concurrently, vocalists growl and scream their lyrics often to the point where they become incomprehensible. Until recently, part of that huge wall of sound could only be produced by passing lethal high voltage through a tube guitar amp chassis. With today’s emphasis on high-quality amp simulation, the musicians in this study seem able to reproduce that sense of facing some sort of danger together in sound. That seems to be why, still to this day, people associate tubes and good simulators with the notion of “warmth.” In the warmth of these processes, a flow of feelings spontaneously outgrows linguistic sign vehicles.

This section – *Why Simulate?* – has examined factors influencing purchases intentions among early adopters of amp simulation. Those who brought this solution into vogue were not musicians, but Indonesia’s ethnic and religious minorities: a Chinese band manager, and a couple of pragmatic atheists. That part may have appeared irrelevant, but I pointed it out in part due to its relevance to the topic I will discuss in the next chapter, that is, how musical communication works beyond the significance of words, belief systems, Indonesian law, and indoctrination. Touring musicians find simulation devices lightweight and cost-saving. Beyond the aforementioned inconsistencies with tube amp rigs, the technology seems to offer quality audio across any volume and venue, generally for metal musicians who noticed its value before non-metal musicians did. The next section inspects user assessments that outline the contours and limits of an amp simulator’s use.

How do Simulators Compare to Real Amps?

The aim of the present section is to unpack how amp simulation is actually put to use on stage. When compared to real amps, the frequency response and dynamic behavior of simulators appear

menurut gue pribadi, instrumen. Instrumen gue disini (pointing at his throat). Ditenggorokan dia main. Ya itu gue instrumen, instrumen gue selain mic. Kadang sometime I scream, sometime I growl, but depend on mood, when I’m on stage. Karena kadang biar pun penonton nggak bosan juga, kalau gitu-gitu doang kan orang bosan.

to have generated three distinct yet related user responses: good, good enough, and questionable. Good: Simulators copy consistent tone across venues while maintaining some tube feel via a simplified rig that sends signals directly to the PA system with or without an amp speaker cabinet, thus minimizing signal loss/noise. Good enough: While the direct, simplified rig sounds great on the PA system to the audience's ears, guitarists on stage suffer from a shortage of punch and sub frequencies that they typically get when playing in front of the amp speakers. Questionable: Simulators sound all-too-consistent even when nickel guitar strings age, whereas real amps affect playability by bringing out the subtle nuances in string mileage.

I found myself one morning in a private lounge that professional musicians call Guitarium. Jeff Adriano, the band manager whose contribution to the popularization of amp simulation I mentioned earlier, owns the place. In Jeff's words, "Guitarium is an asylum for about 120 guitars [and counting] that I acquired. Some guitars were previously owned by local and international musicians, and I have no intention to sell those, because it's part of my passion to have guitars that contributed themselves as a part of the music history. [...] I am never focused to collect just one brand because every guitar has their own character, just like human [...]" (Jeff Adriano, *Republik Gitar*, September 8, 2017).¹⁹¹ I was there with Christopher "Coki" Bollemeyer, a metal/rock guitarist known for his tenures in Deadsquad (2008-2015), NTRL (2002-present), and *Sunyotok* (2014-present), his solo jazz project.

"Somewhat professional," says Coki after launching into a series of riffs through Jeff's Kemper Profiler, tweaking some knobs on the front panel.

"Ha! Somewhat!" Jeff agrees, slaps his knee, with Coki's first impression of that particular amp simulator.

"Because the 'sim' is from [a] really, really good mic [that captures the interactions between a speaker cabinet and the load the amp's power transformer puts out at variable volumes]," Coki replies, "I mean, back in the day, you'd have to mic it [the cabinet] on stage, and it's, every stage is the different sound [and such inconsistency, in turn, would typify guitarists' notion of 'professional' sound]."

"But now," Coki seems almost too impressed, "using the simulator, wow, it's really, really good. Surprisingly, really... surprisingly it's really consistent. *Gue pakai simulation juga. Di...itu, di Line 6. Eh! Helix* (I use an amp simulation device also. It's called Line 6 Helix)."

"Is it good?" Jeff asks Coki.¹⁹²

¹⁹¹ "I built Guitarium with the help of studio designer Andreas Laratsemi. Initially, Guitarium was designed as my private guitar lounge, my mancave, to meditate, and jam with a few close friends. After finding out that many guitarists are living in my area, I created a community" (ibid.).

¹⁹² *Enak?*

“Yeah, I get the tone, but... it’s just that, I wanna hear it ‘in my face,’” Coki put forward.¹⁹³

“Kemper gets you that [tone], seriously,” Jeff seems somewhat positive, “mostly when using it for recording purposes, that’s where it’s at. But if you plug it into an amp speaker cabinet, you still don’t get that tone and feel.”¹⁹⁴

“That simulator,” Coki responds, “it’s really good. But sometimes I just wanna go...”

“... amp head and cabinet, like that one,” Jeff is pointing to his monstrous Soldano SLO 100 half stack, that’s been sitting in a corner of the room.

“Hell yeah” (Coki Bollemeyer and Jeff Adriano, October 12, 2017).

Despite the consistency, the simulated ‘feels’ that come out from stage monitors generally lack those bottom end frequencies guitarists typically get from playing in front of a real, 4x12 guitar amp speaker cabinet. And that seems to be why Coki and Jeff, among many others, rarely plug in their simulators off-stage. In private settings (home noodling, rehearsals), they just go back to the real thing. What the simulator simulates is the mic’d up sound of the cabinet, which, if there is one on stage, could be left unused since the simulator feeds signals directly into a PA system.

It is for this reason that the signal path of the amp simulator entails a direct output to the PA system, typically, while also necessitating another line output from the simulator and going into a speaker cabinet via any power amp prepared on stage by sound system vendors. These so-called “backline” amps, although typically low-end and worn out, are placed behind the band on stage to create *good enough* audio that hammer on the guitarist’s back. How the emphasis on the body, embodiment, the senses, and the physicality of sound shapes the guitarists’ rigs is exemplified in the illustration below:

¹⁹³ *Iya dapat, cuman gue pengen.*

¹⁹⁴ *Itu Kemper dapat, serius. Kalau direkam, dapat. Kalau ke Kemper, colok ke Cabinet, masih belum dapat ‘sheer-nya’*

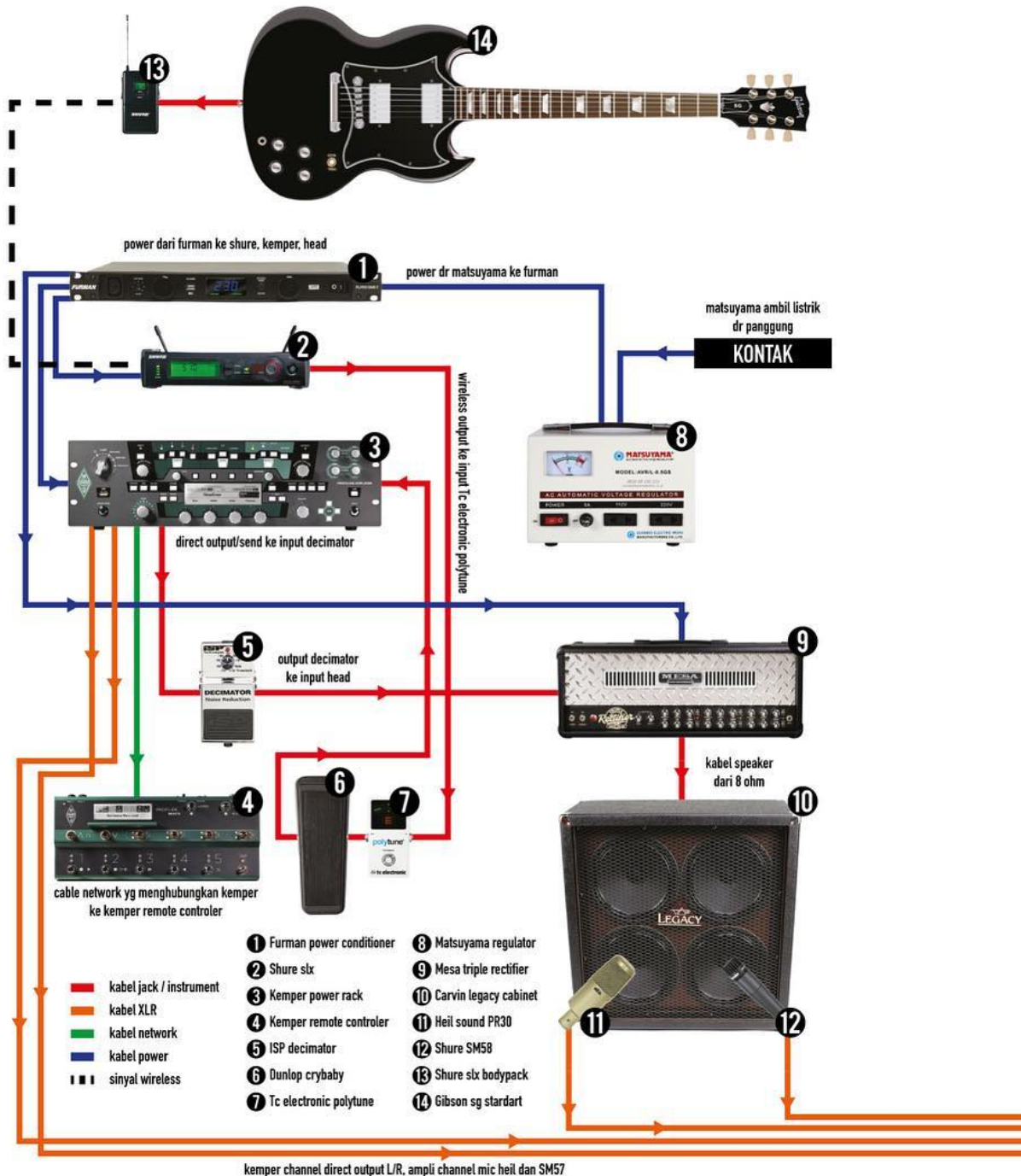


Fig. 3: Ricky Siahaan’s 4-channel live rig that combines a simulator and a real amp. When touring outside Jakarta, his home base, Ricky only brings the simulator to use in conjunction with variable amp/cabinet configurations local sound vendors provide (Image courtesy of Ricky’s guitar technician Osmar Reza, May 20, 2018).

The figure above points to years of Ricky’s finest efforts to keep a musical interaction going without having to degrade its audio quality, or spontaneously end or delay it, due to

unforeseen circumstances. It reveals that Ricky's Kemper has a transformer (item 3 in the fig. 3) that powers up his speaker cabinet (item 10). That's not for the audience but for himself to monitor some sound on stage.¹⁹⁵ There is the signal that's already been mic-simulated (items 11 and 12), but at the same time he can put it through a cabinet although then it will sound doubly mic'd; hence, *good enough*:

I grew tired of the search, you know? The search for an amp or device that can give me the best sound at the end of the day. Even if I have a very, very good sounding amp [like the one I use in Jakarta when a gig can be reached by ground transportation; see fig. 3], it's not just about a good sounding amp that makes you sound good. There are too many factors, a lot, like the mic you are using, the environment [i.e., wind, rain, temperature], the stage size, and the sounds from other instruments leaking into your mics, uh, many, many more. Like there's a lot of issue on stage to get the sound, whereas you've already spent like thousands of dollars to buy an amp that's not going to sound as good like it's supposed to, because of those many factors

(Ricky Siahaan, personal communication, July 15, 2017).

So the production crews seem generally happy because the simulation rig takes less time for soundcheck when its users plug

Guitar into Kemper. From there, I directly go to PA. Then I slave it [Kemper via its second line output] to whatever head, any amplifier available on stage. So I no longer need to bring another amplifier. Yeah, just to, to help [with] that, you know... *feeling*. It doesn't quite affect the sound heard by people in front of me. They get the direct, consistent sound from the PA

(Stevi Item, personal communication, November 2, 2017).

Simply put, guitarists like Ricky and Stevi use the Profiler rig not necessarily because they want to obtain a better sound. Its ultra-processed tone was going to be a "problem solver" (Ricky Siahaan, personal communication, July 15, 2017), which I think is "part of what happens with *good enough* tech: MP3s entered at the bottom of the market, were ignored, and then turned the music business upside down. But oddly, audio quality never really readjusted upward (Capps 2009; italics mine). That "the qualities we value have simply changed" (ibid.) becomes all the more apparent when I hear guitarists saying

So... maybe it [the Kemper Profiler] needs a little adjustment, you know, from the performer's standpoint. In order to... I used to need a big amplifier sound pounding my back from behind. That happens on stage. Not anymore. I changed my mindset. What matters is what's in front of me, the listeners. So when my sound technician is happy, that's it. I don't bother to think too much and agonize over it. I do my thing

¹⁹⁵ Although Ricky still technically sends signals through an amp/cabinet/mic configuration, its potential inconsistency (e.g., phase issues) is going to affect a small portion of the overall output.

on stage with or without that feel, so long as those listening in front of me are happy, I'm *good* (Stevi Item, personal communication, November 2, 2017).¹⁹⁶

What can be *good enough* can be *good* when “consistency is the most difficult thing to achieve in sound production. Consistency! Wherever we play, in various places, [with amp simulation], we sound [almost] exactly the same. Although the venue differs, we work to achieve the same tone” (ibid.).¹⁹⁷ And there is something about “10,000 watts of PA system resonating on stage when I downstroke my guitar with everything I've got [even when there's no real amp sound]. It's a party, like we're in this together, playing live. We're happy if everything runs smoothly like there's no trouble at all” (Ricky Siahaan, personal communication, August 19, 2017). In Peirce's terms, an ‘idea,’ such as the emphasis on the significance of the value of the consistency, is not the intrinsically meaningful terminus of interpretation, but merely an additional sign that's generated physically:

Anything which determines something else [...] to refer to an object to which itself refers (its object) in the same way, the interpretant becoming in turn a sign, and so on ad infinitum (C.P. 2.303, 1902).

It is therefore possible to invoke how

The object of representation can be nothing but a representation of which the first representation is [what Peirce calls] the interpretant [i.e., something produced in response to a sign vehicle]. But an endless series of representations, each representing the one behind it, may be conceived to have an absolute object at its limit. The meaning of a representation can be nothing but a representation. [...] There is an infinite regression here. Finally, the interpretant is nothing but another representation to which the torch of truth is handed along; and as representation, it has its interpretant again. Lo, another infinite series (Peirce, n.d. 1-339).

These references to Peirce are helpful to the extent that they corroborate my argument that words in general are not intrinsically meaningful. Simply put, Peirce is conceptually grounding my empirical focus on the body, embodiment, the senses, and the physicality of musical communication and sound amplification. In this way, the reader will see how it's not just me, but Peirce, who finds it logical to decenter the claims surrounding the value of the simulation technology (though they are interesting).¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁶ *Buat... aku terutama yang biasa ada, apa namanya, ampli besar di belakang aku. Big sound. On stage, gitu. Sekarang aku nggak. Aku mindsetnya, aku rubah. Yang penting itu di depan. Adalah PA sound. Ketika sound man aku happi, that's it! Aku nggak usah terlalu mikir terlalu banyak banyak pusing di panggung. Aku tinggal...I do my thing on stage. Jadi, buat aku, yang tinggal depan sudah happi, aku tenang.*

¹⁹⁷ *Dimana kita main di berbagai macam tempat, di mana caranya, kita soundnya exactly the same. Kita berusaha untuk itu. Walaupun beda venue, tapi kita berusaha untuk 'sama' (ibid.).*

¹⁹⁸ Although Peirce has hinted at this, postmodern philosophers like Jacques Derrida would later make a similar yet linguistically inclined claim that interpretation will go on forever and it's always indefinite

“To tell you the truth, the real amp feels better when you play it. It’s very responsive, I don’t know, it’s just alive. Very dynamic, like when you pick a string a bit softer then you know the difference in your ears. It’s a different kind of sensation” (Ricky Siahaan, personal communication, July 15, 2017). When guitarists use a real amp, they hear what they call “*twang*,” i.e., an icon that represents the sound of brand-new strings. When they use a simulator, however, they get a sound that is all-too-consistent even when the strings are quite old. One might have questions regarding whether a simulation like this can be good, about letting old string sounds homogenize into new string sounds, which makes it unclear when to restring a guitar. It could be a mild problem for guitarists like Ricky, who uses a fixed bridge that’s screwed into the guitar body. Anytime they break an old string, other strings are likely to stay in tune. It could be a big deal for someone like Stevi, who dislikes really new strings, but then also dislikes really old strings. He uses a floating bridge that allows the strings to represent wider pitch changes as he pushes and pulls the tremolo arm. Strings could break easily there, so they must be in a better condition at all times. It could pose a bigger threat to adventurers like an avant-garde guitarist who uses what he holds in the image below:



Fig. 4: Agam Hamzah and his signature guitar made by Pra Budi Dharma, the bassist of band Krakatau. Notice how frets are bent to play a microtonal scale (Photo courtesy of Jeff Adriano 2017).

(1974). Another postmodernist, Umberto Eco (1990), would likewise propose a notion of “unlimited semiosis,” which repeats Peirce’s claim that there is no end to interpretation. Interestingly enough, these two scholars insisted that semiotics should be limited to things that have to do with culture, convention, and difference. However, it should also be possible to acknowledge and clarify the spontaneous and regular sensation a guitarist feels within a body through “10,000 watts of PA system resonating on stage when I downstroke my guitar” (Ricky Siahaan, personal communication, August 19, 2017).

This guitarist, named Agam Hamzah,¹⁹⁹ does not restring his guitar for at least three years in order to shape his own tonality. I have many times heard other guitarists wondering whether the strings are not rusty. They are. And because of that, he likes to plug his guitar straight into the amp, given that no simulation has yet to capture the “dead tone” the old strings produce (Jeff Adriano and Agam Hamzah, personal communication, October 12, 2017).

Overall, simulation seems to generate a consistent listening experience for these players. In semiotic terms, it’s providing better mediating referential relationship based on formal similarity (iconism) than tube amp can. Since all simulators still do not fully amplify, but color, the input signal, part of the simulation’s iconism can be said to entail the arbitrary mapping between the simulated wave (signifier) and original sound wave (signified).

In a nutshell: Simulators may be *good* at taking a snapshot of the frequency response and dynamic behavior of tube guitar amplifiers. User assessments on product performance and reliability show that they copy *good enough* tones across venues. Although they are consistent, it remains *questionable* as to whether simulators will ever foreground subtle changes in tone and playability in response to changing conditions, ranging from physical setting to the condition of a guitar’s strings.

How to Keep Musical Interactions Going

Having stated my empirical data, I want here to offer a neologism that extends the scope of the theory of what musicians can know about how competently they interact (Brinner 1995, 2009) to the question of how their interactions are given stability, given footing, or linked to something in the world.

I will call a capacity of musicians for minimizing any disruption in their musical interactions in their otherwise unanalyzed habits *interactive grounding*. The term literally points to how, under spontaneous adverse conditions, musicians attempt to keep their interactions going by working on the things directly within their circle of influence rather than, as shown in the previous chapter, finding comfort in the act of propitiating to a supernatural “mind” of nature. For example, the guitarists whom I introduced in this chapter are developing a proclivity for experimenting with amp simulators, in order to guard against the long-term reliability concerns they’ve had whilst playing through tube amp circuits in the tropics. Electrical signals originating from power surges, brownouts, spikes in AC, and radio frequency interference are coupled into

¹⁹⁹ Agam Hamzah (b. 1973) is the lead guitarist of an avant-garde band *Ligro*, which reverses the order of the compound word “*orgil*,” which denotes “*orang gila*,” i.e. crazy person, and the Principal of Farabi Music Education Institute, where he sells the idea of having active professional musicians as teachers. Ridho, guitarist of a popular band *Slank*, teaches there also. It is said that most local musicians were once a student of his at Farabi.

the tube circuit, generally when the variable moisture content in the soil is assumed to inject a guitar signal with parasitic oscillations. The advantages of replicating consistent tone across venues via a simplified simulation rig, then, far outweighs the risk of distilling away subtle changes in tone and playability with amps. It goes without saying that the advantages of having smaller, lighter gear for touring are economic and physical. The simplified simulation rig allows music to generate an uninterrupted flow of consistent sounds that in turn, the metal musicians feel, will produce a spontaneous flow of connections with the audience with or without linguistic sign vehicles.

The notion I introduce as *interactive grounding* creates complementarities that should reinforce ethnomusicologist Benjamin Brinner's call for "common perspectives on a wide range of phenomena including types of roles and relationships, means of interchange, and the constraining of facilitating aspects of musical structure" (1995:169). I like to think of music's general and spontaneous properties through Brinner's proposed set of constellations: 1) *interactive network* comprises agents who regulate the generation of potential patterns of music, 2) *interactive system* is their orientation in which the ground of non/linguistic referents, such as cues, responses, prompts, signals, and markers, is their physicality that gives those referents representative power, 3) *interactive sound structure* reveals the hierarchy by which the form and level of differentiation of the acoustic possibilities can be shared, and 4) *interactive motivation* is about how musical purpose and design in any particular interaction and improvisation could be preferentially evaluated (ibid. 1995:167-207). Elliot Bates contributed to the interaction theory by extending it to include what he terms "interactive mirage" (2008). By "mirage," Bates refers to the sense of experiencing something that's not present when, for example, the audio engineer and the arranger synthesize discrete component parts for an ensemble that has never existed and cannot exist due, in part, to the different tuning systems of instruments. This chapter is my attempt to expand these horizons – how musicians know what they know, what it is that they know, and what they can know – to include *a broader constellation of variables that organizes the world so that there can be an interaction in the first place.*²⁰⁰

In both a literal and metaphorical sense, the ground, or what provides the base for communication with audiences, for touring musicians turns out to be a non-linguistic, physical ground: It's not the details, and it's not based upon having performed a lot of different sounds before. It's based upon this sort of ability to produce "somewhat professional" sound (Coki Bollemeyer, personal communication, October 12, 2017), i.e., a sound that's *similar enough* to take on the road.

²⁰⁰ It is possible to link my proposed perspective to Bate's case: the engineer's DAW, for example, enables the production and maintenance of particular types of interactive grounding, though the interaction is a mirage since the musicians are generally not co-present in the studio. Then, the engineers and arrangers are creating the world and organizing it.

That should answer a question readers might have about the relevance of my research to a recent model of linguistic anthropology (Kockelman 2005, 2016), whose primary unit of analysis rests on presuppositions that have to have been developed before one can use the metaphoric extension. Here I see “ground” as almost always denoting context, that is generally requiring a background knowledge about what would be a typical value, significance, or what people often call the “meaning” of something, whether it’s more or less, whether it’s deviant from the average in some way or another:

There is some evidence that, just as saying something is “big” means that it is bigger than the typical member of the class with which it is being compared, to say something is “very big” is to say it is bigger than the typically big members of that class. Phrased differently, and very tendentiously, to call something “big” is to say it is bigger than average; whereas to call something “very big” is to say that it is bigger than one standard deviation above average. While not equivalent, to be sure, grading and statistics are arguably linked to each other in weird and wily ways: each can radically influence our understandings of the other (Kockelman 2016:340).

And that average, that background, constitutes what linguist Paul Kockelman refers to as ground, i.e., that which varies by experience, culture, and by particular context. Kockelman is a linguist who likes to demarcate how different communications that use the same words for different grounds can mean radically different things. In other words, the background presupposed that all knowledge is different, arbitrary, and language-like, such that people can use the same terms and interpret them differently. While this example refers to a very language-based phenomenon,²⁰¹ my use of “grounding” has an indirect relationship to what Kockelman

²⁰¹ People like to have conversations by sharing some common background that can serve as a ground. Or even if they are talking about the same stuff in a slightly different context, they have enough shared information that, in that sense, grounds their conversation. That which grounds their communication is concrete, not always physically concrete, but certainly shared. For example, the presuppositions for a series of conversations I’ve had with the guitarists earlier, had to do both with a reasonably common understanding of a language or two, and with common understanding of that particular technology we were raving about. They served as the ground that is, in our interpretation, we had to, in a sociological sense, be “framing” the technology in that context (Goffman 1974). All those contextual features had to be there to limit the use of our words. Arbitrariness, however, could not be the basic process of our interpretation, since no interpretive support could intrinsically be provided in the linguistic sign vehicles. What my interlocutors and I were proposing could seem like a series of phonological mappings of letters to sounds, as though we were verbalizing a programming language of sorts. Although there was that code-like mapping, our language would not consist entirely of something analogous to proper names of things that can just yield lists. “Kemper Profiler” for one was named by its German engineers in 2011, and now when the guitarists and I refer to “Kemper,” or “Profiler,” we are, in a sense, pointing to Kemper. When we do, we are pointing to the label that we read on the front panel of the device via a series of physical causal links in time: We had to be in contact with some labels or mentions of Kemper, one way or another, and everybody else had to be in contact with a mention all the way back to that naming event in Germany (see, e.g., Kripke 1980). The problem, as detailed in the previous sections, is that we did not

mentioned above. *Interactive grounding* could, on the one hand, seem like the term “bigger.” Metal musicians prefer to replicate the same tone to avoid the production of uneven qualities of tube-amplifier sounds (*similarity versus difference* in sound quality). As noted earlier, they copy consistent sounds because the consistency, or, in semiotic terms, iconism (mediating referential relationship based on formal similarity) is what enables their musical interactions amongst themselves and with their audiences. In this perspective, the guitarists are trying to identify all the possible ways that a sound can vary ahead of time in order to maintain a *common* sound.

Thermodynamic Remarks on the Efficiency of Amp Simulation

Here I use basic thermodynamics to explain a spontaneous process by which things I mentioned in this chapter change over time. Specifically, what guitarists do mechanically with instruments is to minimize the thermodynamic effects in a restricted sense to their amplification rigs. They are trying to eliminate any kind of degradation of the sound, and simulation technology seems like an attempt to supplement, and eventually replace, a tube amplifier that behaves differently in different intensity. Tube amplifiers that are for very high wattage, like the 150-watt Mesa Boogie Rectifier that my interlocutors all know and love, will produce very different sounds at different amplitudes than a small amplifier will. When a small amp is turned up too high, it distorts, whereas a larger amplifier has a kind of ideal range of amplitude by having a wider range of output devices that can amplify frequency ranges without coloring the signal. The output signal is fed to speakers of various sizes (typically four twelve-inch speakers housed in one cabinet), which generally have small tweeters and large woofers that may differ in relative size and number. In the signal chain, too many variables are involved to permit the consistent amplification of guitar sound.

What happened at least in Indonesia was that for touring the guitarists needed a reliable device to copy the fire-breathing, tube amplified sound that they imagined. With a tube amplifier that’s got a tweeter, woofer, and a set of tubes that degrade over time, environmental variables like wind, rain, and temperature, have more chances to separate the sound into the different registers that are routed to tweeters and woofers. What the guitarist wanted their simulator to capture is how a high-wattage amplifier performs within its ideal range. They could then take that and send it directly through a bigger amplification system (10,000-watt House PA) and maintain the ideal range that they can achieve with a smaller system (150-watt tube amp). One powerful argument in favor of simulation is the ability to shift to a high-powered system without degrading quality.

Further, real amplifiers tend to amplify almost everything to the extent that the tonal specificity becomes less precise. A player gets more harmonics and noise blended in, as the

just have a pointing and an individual device or a thing. We were also pointing to its potential qualities, not just pointing to a particular device, and not even just to a particular type of device.

amplifier starts to produce its own distortions, whereas a simulator does not. A simulator simply generates a specific sound that sounds more ordered and less variable. Simply put, things that are of high entropy are more disordered, and as one increases the entropy of sound, one increases disorder to the extent that the sound parts become less correlated with each other. What happens with tubes, moreover, is they are generally more sensitive to bouncing, while also getting worn out via high-voltage power transmission.²⁰²

Basically, one gets an algorithm and puts it back into the simulator. The designers of the simulator wanted to make it as much like a simply amplified guitar as they could.²⁰³ When many guitarists with whom I worked heard the simulation as being similar to the real thing, they often said they are identifying what the two share in common, while ignoring things that are different; hence, their likeness, the iconicity (Kohn 2013:73; see also Deacon 1997, 2011). What they want for a good iconism, then, would just be critical features that are similar, *not* their differences. Future research could reframe the issue of preserving reference in terms of general semiotic concepts such as iconic and indexical relations. It would also be interesting to compare sound simulation to the way quoting text can copy reference.²⁰⁴

Concluding Remarks

This chapter presented how guitarists keep their interactions going with their audience beyond the metaphysics of words, via a reductionist technology that allows them to set aside subtle

²⁰² These tubes are large physical, fragile structures, into which filaments are built like in old-time electric lights. These filaments heat up and glow, unlike the LEDs (Light Emitting Diodes) now commonly used, which generate light from transistors with very little heat. Like tube amplifiers, the old-time filament lights produce a lot of heat but a lot of light as well, which means they are producing high entropy with their light. It wastes the heat, the energy. LEDs, on the other hand, use much energy in producing less entropy and the same amount of light.

²⁰³ Like LEDs, amp simulators seem highly efficient for producing low entropy at the electronics level. Although the ideas behind Kemper engineers' patent application are kept secret, it seems reasonable to presume that: a) it has a receptor that is getting the microphone input for sampling the frequency response of a particular amp/speaker/mic configuration, and then b) the simulator sends the signal to a frequency analyzer, which detects a microscopically variable frequency value, every few seconds or milliseconds, because the computer seems fast enough to pick up some slight changes, until c) it generates a wave form. In sum, it seeks to sample a sound, get a number, sending it to the sound generator for it to generate a wave form that corresponds to the input signal in real time. Meanwhile, it's probably getting an amplitude value, and feeding that information back to the waveform generator, and I suspect this could be done by sampling the harmonics of the input tone.

²⁰⁴ Thermodynamics is, in principle, one of the few UNIVERSAL laws of physical reality. Thus, it's worth taking the risk of concluding this discussion with something I could arrive at by armchair speculation because my entire thesis aims to capture some generalities without being fully subsumed into empiricism, cultural specificity and politics of representation.

differences between the real and simulated amp sounds. In the context of the whole dissertation, the chapter examined yet another case in which people recognize similarities in things without always looking for reasons to differentiate them. Simulation appears to provide a better mediating referential relationship based on formal similarity (i.e., sound iconism) than tube amplification despite not fully amplifying but coloring the original sound wave. Future research could investigate whether that iconism works like the arbitrary mapping of signifier-signified. To help conceptualize the topic, the chapter first introduced some early adopters of amp simulation technology in Indonesia. The chapter then investigated user assessments on product reliability, and as a result, discovered that the technology tends to attract people who do not buy into the power of rain shamanism or any other forms of mysticism. It then revealed how lowered guitar tunings and their attendant changes in the behavior of strings has increased the guitarists' proclivity to copy the same sound across venues and seasons, while ignoring difference between the real and simulated tones. These attempts to keep performances going exemplifies the concept I introduced as *interactive grounding*.

5. Ungoverning Words: How People Sing Duets After Words Tore Them Apart

“You won’t be able to marry her because she is Muslim,” a Catholic mother said to her son before his partner’s eyes (anonymous, personal communication, September 10, 2017).²⁰⁵ The two had begun dating four years ago and have since made music together on behalf of endangered species, and more specifically orangutans. They were in love but their parents did not want that. Still, they remain bandmates as dual vocalists after being “pulled out of relation [in one of the] many ways in which we cease being selves to ourselves and to each other” (Kohn 2013:18; see also Cavell 2005). On November 26, 2016, I began to follow their performance at a concert for the orangutan in the city of Yogyakarta. At first it was hard to wrap my head around how, off-stage, they would seem not to share a word, but nevertheless sing with each other on stage without seemingly leaving a bad taste in their mouth. Most of their communication happened non-linguistically. How they interacted with each other – by taking turns, using hands, tone of voice, sampling primate “calls” – would by no means be symbolic (Brinner 1995:3, 48-50). And yet, the lyrics that they vocalized to promote primate justice seemed nested within this larger semiotic field that has lots of iconic and indexical features to it (Deacon 1997:300). So they would sing at and over each other, while being chatty between songs with everyone in the band *except* with each other.

The story of these ex-lovers does not end here, for they tell us a) how performers on stage communicate not only with, but also without words at least in a benefit concert for primates, and b) how the synergy I described above could emerge through musical communication that bypasses the word entirely. While the cultural specificity of music to rally against the world’s fastest deforestation and the genocide of the orangutan in Indonesia is worth noting, it is just as crucial to have a nose for a very common fact: that there is no shortage of musical interactions that exceed semantics, generally when the word is prohibited as is evident in the story of these vocalists who no longer talk to each other anymore. That is why orangutan concerts provide a site par excellence to explore how musical communication can be potent enough to counter the effect of the larger textuality of ‘marrying within the faith.’

Such efforts at “non-discursivity” represent human emotions (Langer 1948:165-198) and align with what I have sought to identify in the preceding chapters. Chapter 1 showed why having either orangutan or non-orangutan “call” sampled in the same, orangutan-themed song, communicates the same politics, i.e., ‘stop deforestation,’ so long as the primates quoted co-inhabit the same geographical space. To prevent any change in ecology from affecting the different primates in a similar way, singer-songwriters eagerly exploit “indifference, confusion, and forgetting” (Kohn 2013:73) with their conflation of animal calls in their songs. Chapters 2 and 3 likewise explained why, at an overwhelming majority of festivals, shamans attempt to

²⁰⁵ *Kamu nggak akan bisa nikah sama si [dia] karena [dia] Muslim*

prevent the rain from constraining box office success without using words or without having to apprehend the precise semantics of the words in the prayers they recite. Chapter 4 provided yet another example of how guitarists ground their interactions with their audience far beyond the metaphysics of words, via a reductionist technology that allows them to ignore subtle physical differences between the real and simulated amp sounds. Thus, I have consistently returned to this theme of decentering language as *the* model for all kinds of reference, given that the referentiality of music is poorly served by a linguistic model (see, e.g., Merriam 1964:232-234). My aim has been to find a way out of what Charles Seeger once thought inescapable: “a linguocentric predicament [a growing body of us musicologists] find ourselves in” (1977:180). My cases indicate that arbitrary linguistic features, despite their being con-text-sensitive, cannot possibly capture all relationships, when “difference no longer sits so easily at the foundation of our conceptual framework” (Kohn 2013:16).

This chapter listens to both sides of the couple’s breakup in order to paint a richly suggestive picture of how music makes space for Putri (her) and Tomi (him), two common Indonesian pseudonyms they chose to preserve anonymity. First up is Putri’s story, which will guide the reader along the trajectories that drove Putri and her pals to primate justice advocacy, instead of succumbing to the rise of radical forces that target thousands and thousands of students of secular universities in the sole interest of “Islamizing Indonesia” (Machmudi 2008), regardless of how open-minded and creative Indonesian youth might be (Ibrahim 2018:8). While “one cannot simply say that the central message of [such a social group] is respect for women as the moral and political equals of men” (Harris 2015:71), I am struck by the fact that the concerts in support of the orangutan are all being organized by women.²⁰⁶ Year after year I could not help but notice the sheer tenacity with which they went at it like there’s nothing else to be proud of. This necessitates a focus on how these women or female-identifying individuals gave birth to Sound For Orangutan, an annual charity music event held in Jakarta and elsewhere since 2012.

Next up is Tomi’s side of the story. I trace how, in parallel with his decision to leave Putri so that he can live by the lights of a religious tribalism, Tomi’s lifelong dedication and sacrifice for wildlife conservation are conditioned by a creationist worldview. With the aim of “listening to them in stereo” (Feld 2012:131), I then study their on-stage interactions at the concert I mentioned earlier. I argue that the music within this frame of reference plays a convergence role *because* their interactions are not just linguistic, or not linguistic at all.

A conceptual framework is presented in the next section to argue that Putri and Tomi could still remain bandmates, by “governing,” enabling, and affording the sound of their music (Guilbault 2007). Additionally, and as the title of this chapter suggests, I will call this musical “governing” of linkages without necessitating any exchange of words.

²⁰⁶ The story of these women somewhat resonates with the birth of primatology through which the first group of scholars who went out and studied in the wild were all women: Jane Goodall, Dian Fossey, and Biruté Galdikas.

Conceptual Framework

In this study, I tried to come up with just a few very general concepts. I tried to minimize coining new terms in part because if we already had a good term for something, I didn't need to invent a new one. But if we didn't have a term to explain something, I felt compelled to coin a neologism for it (see, e.g., Chapter 4 for my conceptualization of "interactive grounding"). The term I'm about to introduce next is a case in point. As will become clear in the following pages, the music that Putri and Tomi are producing at the orangutan concert, has sounds. But the sounds aren't just in their songs but in people's daily pep talk. As musicologist Charles Seeger writes,

Music and speech do overlap in some respects. The compositional processes of both produce strings of sounds in times. The sounds and times of both — their "time spaces" — can be measured by the same units of measurement by the same instruments of the physical laboratory. [...] Mathematical logics may be found in the sounds, the times and forms; perhaps *as-similar-as-different* (Seeger 1977:184).

The real crux of Seeger's anxiety is that the term "sound" can be both too general and too specific to be used in general. Accordingly, I invite the reader to think about what I illustrate in this chapter *beyond* the process of governing in linguistic terms.

My take on the term "governing" draws inspiration from Jocelyne Guilbault's monograph *Governing Sound* (2007). Guilbault comes out guns blazing to show that, on the one hand, the colonial powers could use sound to govern people, that sound can govern and discipline people's behaviors and encourage certain values. On the other hand, Guilbault goes on to suggest that such "art of governing" à la Foucault (1991) paints a rather pessimistic picture of things going always top-down, whereas her theorization of "governing sound" in her study actually can go both ways, top-down and bottom-up. It involves, for example, slaves and former slaves using sound also to govern and voice their protest, whilst encouraging certain values and attitudes beyond the immediate realm of just interpreting what colonial powers do to them. In this way, Guilbault uses Foucault's expression, but at the same time problematizes his stance for only navigating a one-way street.

Like Guilbault's interlocutors who make an anti-establishment move against those in power, the elite, the administration, and the colonial belief systems, we shall see Putri and Tomi using sound to foreground their desires. So, in a sense, the notion of governing for this chapter should reveal a) how parents' intervention in their marriage takes place in a way that governs sound in terms of "the word," i.e., what Seeger termed as "linguocentric predicament" (1977:180), whereas b) Putri and Tomi on stage are actually using the sound of their music as governing, enabling, and affording communication whilst avoiding direct word exchange.

I argue that the value of Guilbault's notion of governing sound as going both top-down and bottom-up is tremendous. Further, I seek to supplement her elaboration on the significance

of the value of music, by taking up its reference without compressing what my interlocutors feel on stage into just how their linguistic knowledge and the world are arbitrarily connected. To be precise, the sound governed in the case of the parents would be word exchange, the same arbitrariness by which Putri and Tomi could have followed their heart, signed a marriage certificate and said, “I do.” The couple did not marry. But, as I detail in the remainder of this chapter, the parents got in the way of their affinity precisely by way of what marriage, law, and indoctrination have in common: the semantic rules that corner individuals to do certain things and believe certain things via submission to dominant thought.

Despite the fact that Putri and Tomi have given up the formal meaning of marriage, I am struck by how they STILL take advantage of non-semantic musical expression. Playing a music that has no particular proposition or claim that’s potentially conflicting with the belief of the parents *enables* the couple to grow beyond the words of the powers in place, namely, the family, the administration, and the belief systems. The parents could have used “the word,” that is, the way words connect up to each other in the general semiotic sense, to stop them from playing music together on stage. But that did not happen because Putri and Tomi would rather exchange their emotions by moving from tone to tone to tone, without necessarily breaking up the sound as the human voice does in speech (stops, affricates, and fricatives). It is the music that brings their emotions in sync beyond “the word,” because the word cannot handle this “broader problem of relating [in which] difference may not be the right starting point” (Kohn 2013:156). I use the term *ungoverning words* to denote this dynamic ‘feel’ of the more general modes of relating upon which human sentiment and its acoustic arbitrariness rely.

Putri and the Women at the Forefront of Primate Justice Festivals

The present section focuses on the description and analysis of women in the Indonesian Islamic milieu who gave birth to the world’s oldest and largest known primate justice concert series, Sound For Orangutan (2012-present). I write in awe of the fact that *all* of these events keyed me into women organizers with no exceptions whatsoever, in a place where women are expected, albeit not always required, to “dress modestly by covering themselves up in hijab” (Mohammed 2019:59).²⁰⁷ This experience compelled me to perform a meld of field observations, notes, archiving, and interviews, to roll with these individuals and get to know who they are, what they do, through the successes, failures, and challenges of their festivals in all their spontaneity.

Putri got into her band during her sophomore year of college. It was back in 2010 when she was volunteering at an animal rescue center in the Kulonprogo area. A lot of her voluntary activities crossed paths with a group of local youths, who would eventually become her

²⁰⁷ While many Indonesian women still do not wear a hijab, they live in one of the polities where women can be subjected to virginity test when applying to some universities (anonymous interlocutor from Yogyakarta, personal communication, December 10, 2017), and all police and military positions (Crosby et al. 2020).

bandmates: “Everyone in the band was there. So, one day I attended their show, and then after that they invited me to the next gig, saying ‘Can you sing or not?’ ‘No, I can’t.’ But, in the end, I became a backing vocalist, whose task was just screaming from behind” (Putri, personal communication, September 3, 2017).²⁰⁸

A touch of sadness belied her smile when she unfurled and opened her diary to the page she wrote on the day she first met Tomi:

On Wednesday, July 25, 2010, our team managed to move [zoo orangutans] to the island enclosure. Previously the place was home to ducks that lived on Lake Jurug. But it’s been left unoccupied since it’s full of garbage and tall grass. We cleaned the place and equipped it with play facilities for these orangutans. In this new home they will be safer from the annoyance of naughty visitors, so that [the orangutans] can recover from cancerous habits [i.e., smoking cigarettes handed over by zoo visitors]. The distance between the mainland and the island is quite far, so visitors cannot throw anything [like a lighted cigarette] into the cage. Not only that, [the orangutans] will also be able to express their natural behaviors in the wild, like swinging on a tree and building a nest of leaves. WOW, apparently after three days spent in the island, they dared to climb to the top of the tallest tree. Horaayyyyyy!!!

(Putri’s diary, July 25, 2010).²⁰⁹

On that night, Putri gathered with her future bandmates in a circle and just sang along their songs “because of him [Tomi] ... I like his band. I like to listen to punk rock, and metal music! And their music is similar to the songs I already listen to. So I thought it’d be cool to join them” (Putri, personal communication, September 10, 2017).²¹⁰

To protect their anonymity, I will hereafter not mention Putri’s band and its members, whose names, lyrics, and song titles I shall not disclose. What I can say, however, is that they hail from an archipelago-wide group of youths. This group, otherwise known as

²⁰⁸ “*Semuanya ada disitu. Jadi pada suatu ketika saya nonton konser mereka, terus setelah itu di konser berikutnya mereka ngajakin, “Kamu bisa nyanyi gak?” “Gak saya gak bisa nyanyi.” Tapi akhirnya saya menjadi backing vokal yang kerjanya cuma teriak-teriak di belakang.*”

²⁰⁹ *Pada hari Rabu (25/7/10), team telah berhasil memindahkan [orangutan2] ke kandang pulau. Sebelumnya tempat tersebut merupakan rumah bagi bebek-bebek yang tinggal di Danau Jurug. Namun sudah tidak terpakai karena penuh dengan sampah dan rumput ilalang yang meninggi. Tempat tersebut kemudian dibersihkan dan diberi pengkayaan sarana bermain untuk orangutan. Di rumah baru ini mereka akan lebih aman dari gangguan pengunjung yang nakal, sehingga [mereka] bisa sembuh dari kebiasaan buruknya. Jarak antara daratan dan pulau cukup jauh, jadi pengunjung tidak bisa melempar apapun ke dalam kandang. Tidak hanya itu, [mereka] juga akan lebih bisa mengekspresikan perilaku alamiahnya di alam liar. Seperti berayun-ayun di pohon dan membuat sarang dari dedaunan. WOW ternyata setelah tiga hari dipindahkan ke pulau, [mereka] sudah berani memanjat hingga pucuk pohon tertinggi. Horaayyyyyy!!!*

²¹⁰ *Karena dia... suka sama band-nya dia. Saya suka dengerin musik punk, dengerin musik metal! Dan musik [mereka] ini kaya apa ya — similar sama lagu-lagu yang saya dengerin, jadi wah asik juga.*

“Orangufriends” (a contraction of orangutan and friends), “supports orangutan protection in Indonesia. Established in 2010 with the aim of building community awareness about animal conservation in general and orangutans in particular, approximately 400 volunteers operate at the moment in major Indonesian cities, such as Jakarta, Yogyakarta, Malang, Aceh, Samarinda, Banjarmasin, with international networks in Australia and the U.K” (Tika Dwityastuti, Sound For Orangutan Event Proposal, August 4, 2015).²¹¹ I have spent large chunks of time over the years throughout the archipelago and bumped into a troop of Orangufriends originating from outside the abovementioned cities,²¹² with whom I’ve engaged in pastime activities that seem very common within and beyond Indonesia, like cooking and music listening.²¹³ A vast majority of them are college students²¹⁴ and working professionals.²¹⁵ These young people, mostly in their early twenties, are there in support of wildlife NGOs for the reason the Managing Director of the Centre For Orangutan Protection told me: “I must admit that younger generation are certainly bolder, more sadistic [a bizarre word choice that misrepresents what he could have said instead: “masochistic,” i.e., finding joy in animal rescue missions that entail putting oneself in danger], I mean, in every sense of the word. I used to be brave enough to infiltrate into a palm plantation. It takes a lot of guts to do that [one can get beaten or shot or jailed]. But now [in my late 30s], ‘may be’ I might think a little. To photograph illegal deforestation and bring back the evidence. So there’s this age factor also that influences [me]. And there has got to be a new

²¹¹ *Orangufriends adalah komunitas relawan yang mendukung orangutan protection dalam rangka upaya konservasi orangutan di Indonesia. Orangufriends didirikan dengan tujuan membangun kesadaran masyarakat akan konservasi satwa pada umumnya dan orangutan pada khususnya. Saat ini relawan Orangufriends berjumlah sekitar 400 orang dengan lokasi tersebar di kota-kota besar Indonesia seperti Jakarta, Yogyakarta, Malang, Aceh, Samarinda, Banjarmasin dan juga di luar negeri dengan jaringan di Australia dan Inggris.*

²¹² The ones I’ve run into are from, Pekalongan, Padang, Pontianak, Bandung Banjarnegara, Bekasi, Berau, Bogor, Bulungan, Cilacap, Cilegon, Jambu Batu, Karimun, Lampung, Madura, Medan, Merasa Village, Muara Enim, Ngawi, Palangkaraya, Palembang, Puworkerto, Salatiga, Sulawesi, Surabaya, Semarang, Tangerang, and Taluk Kuantan.

²¹³ Their hobbies seem very commonplace, like automobile maintenance, blogging, charity, coffee brewing, concerts, dance sports, fashion, futsal, hiking, horse riding, interior design, mountain climbing, photography, poetry, raising cat, reading novels, swimming, traveling, watching movies/TV, weight lifting, and wood working

²¹⁴ Student members of Orangufriends I’ve met study architectural engineering, communication studies, conservation psychology, environmental science, evolutionary biology, forestry, history, human resource development, informatics, Islamic studies, marine science, mechanical engineering, medicine, organic chemistry, philosophy, political science, public relations, sociology, and veterinary medicine.

²¹⁵ Working professionals work as animal rescuer, contractor, finance officer, investigative journalist, lawyer, physician, musician, NGO staff, property manager, social psychologist specializing natural disaster victims, sustainable ecosystem foundation specialist, TV producer, and young staff organization in the Ministry of Strategic Studies (*Kementrian Kajian Strategi*).

generation of us. We must keep on rotating” (Ramadhani, personal communication, December 4, 2016).²¹⁶

Putri and approximately twenty founding members of Orangufriends saw little indication of how big their enterprise would turn out to be when, or if, their journey were to proceed. “Not many of us could see the growth it has seen to date,”²¹⁷ Putri recalls, “so at that time we [the Orangufriends] were limited [in number]” (personal communication, September 10, 2019).²¹⁸ Despite — or as a result of — none of them being under an obligation to, for example, go face off against bulldozers on behalf of orangutans in the jungle, these founding members as well as those who later joined them ended up forming relationships that have lasted for a decade at the time of this writing. Wety, who now lives and works in the jungles of East Kalimantan bottle feeding infant orangutan refugees, was there also with Putri and the other women event organizers in Java in the very beginning. They started out doing a lot of activities in their own ways without direct orders from NGOs with whom they are affiliated. They believed that “every generation is believed to go their own ways” (Ramadhani, personal communication, May 10, 2017).²¹⁹

Every year around May, Orangufriends from all over the archipelago gather for a weeklong primate justice training for youth in Yogyakarta. There they train newcomers like me through a military-style boot camps, including information sessions on the plight of the orangutan. These individuals then form regional chapters to participate in “independent programs for the next six months or so, during which they are all back in their hometowns, working according to their own wishes, education and all kinds of things” (ibid.).²²⁰ The head organizer of the second annual Sound For Orangutan Lupita Anggraito details their activities:

We used to go to Ragunan Zoo [in South Jakarta]. Over there our activity was to educate the visitors about the orangutan [ecology], so that they can’t just carelessly give the primate any food, they can’t throw garbage, and be noisy in that area. Because basically. If you know take a look around the zoo, the space is too narrow compared to the forest where they’re supposed to be. So they’re stressed out. It turns out, certainly there’s a level of stress in them that you can see. It’s sad. And after

²¹⁶ *Saya harus akui teman-teman yang lebih muda memang lebih berani, lebih sadis, maksud dalam arti kata. dulu saya berani masuk kebun sawit, sampai masuk camp sawit itu berani. Tapi kalau sekarang mungkin mikir. Pulang bawa foto. Kalau saya mungkin agak sedikit mikir. Jadi faktor umur juga mempengaruhi. Dan kita harus bergenerasi. Harus berputar terus.*

²¹⁷ *Belum banyak orang yang tau kayak sekarang ini kan.*

²¹⁸ *Jadi waktu itu, orangnya terbatas.*

²¹⁹ *Jadi banyak kegiatan yang dilakukan Orangufriends itu. Dan kami dari staf tidak memaksa bagaimana. Setiap generasi kami percaya mereka punya caranya masing-masing.*

²²⁰ *Terus ada program mandiri, kurang lebih 6 bulan kan, jadi biasanya teman-teman kembali ke kota masing-masing, bekerja sesuai kemauannya masing-masing, edukasi dan segala macam, kembali lagi di bulan desember, bercerita presentasi dan segala macam, penghargaan dari cop itu hanya sebentar itu saja.*

that, we would hang out in a meeting for Sound For Orangutan, along with Bintang and Ocha [the two women founders of the concert series]

(Lupita Anggraito, personal communication, February 18, 2017).²²¹

In addition to the so-called “ex-situ” conservation work that can be done outside a forest situation (such as cage enrichment and feeding orangutans in Bali Zoo, Jakarta’s Ragunan Zoo, Banjarnegara’s Seruling Mas Wildlife Park, West Sumatra’s Bukit Tinggi and Sawah Lunto zoos), these women curate trips into the wild, street campaigns (typically wearing orangutan costumes and marching in silence through places such as Bundaran HI, Central Jakarta’s historic landmark), and culinary events (through a series of festivals they call “Cooking For Orangutan”). Further, they like to document and expose cases of primate injustice by landing a radio or TV appearance (Kharina Waty, personal communication, December 4, 2016; Shinta Ayu Permata Sari, personal communication, December 5, 2016; Adinda, personal communication, February 11, 2017).

One of the common ways that these Orangufriends from all over the archipelago ended up dedicating their time and energy to saving nonhuman primates involved searching online for information and kindred spirits. Before all of this, a lot of them were total strangers. They basically love animals, “whatever they are,”²²² and especially the orangutan because it’s “an animal that’s ‘similar’ [i.e., with a human-like appearance], who seems troubled (Lupita Anggraito, personal communication, February 18, 2017).²²³ So, just as this field researcher from Berkeley found out online about what’s going on with the primates in the jungle way back...

I [Cynthia, now an Orangufriend and liaison officer for one of the Sound For Orangutan series] opened websites and found Orangufriends. Google. *Of course*, Google. *Yes, there are some [other] website[s]*, but for some reason I just chose Orangufriends. It just happened. So I *randomly* chose them and *basically* their activities took place [near me] in Ragunan Zoo, in Jakarta. And when I began to *concern* myself with *environment*, it just so happens that a friend of mine would oftentimes tell me stories about how she’s interested in such a thing. So I’ve come to know more about orangutans. *That’s why I studied* [searched online for information] ... It just was already *matching* [my interest] like that. In my opinion, that’s one of

²²¹ *Dulu kalau awal ikut dulu saya di kebun binatang Ragunan. Di Ragunan itu kegiatannya untuk edukasi para pengunjung disana mengenai orangutan bahwa ‘Gak boleh lho kasih makan sembarangan orangutan, gak boleh lho buang-buang sampah, gak boleh lho kita berisik gitu di area itu’ gitu, karena kan memang basically kalau tahu keadaannya kebun binatang disana sempitlah dibandingkan hutan yang seharusnya mereka ada disana gitu, kan? Jadi stress, ternyata memang ada tingkat stress tersendiri untuk orangutan dan itu sedih sih melihatnya gitu. Kegiatannya dari situ baru habis itu kumpul-kumpul untuk Sound for Orangutan yang pertama, sempet ikut juga sama Bintang, sama Ocha juga.*

²²² *Apapun itu.*

²²³ *Dia adalah hewan yang similar, terlihat similar dengan manusia dan mereka juga terlihat manja gitu.*

the pathways for us to channel a sense of wanting to contribute to the protection of both the environment and animals

(Cynthia Devi, personal communication, February 18, 2017; italics indicate her switch to English).²²⁴

Not unlike Cynthia and me, Adinda, the head organizer for the third SFO event, joined Orangufriends in response to a news report she watched online about a wild orangutan “burnt alive by humans” (personal communication, February 11, 2017).²²⁵ The rest is history once a tiny, 4.5 feet girl like Adinda saw a footage like that happening in August 2012 as a consequence of the orangutan “getting in the way of a [human primate] resident’s [oil palm] plants” (ibid).²²⁶ Although years have passed, her eyes were watery, automatically tearing when we spoke about how she “started to pity the primate, and then to look for ways to help, to save as many orangutans as possible” (ibid.).²²⁷

Bintang Dian Pertiwi, the organizer-in-chief of the first-ever Sound For Orangutan event and one of the founding members of Orangufriends, gives a similar account. Little did she know when she set foot in the boot camp in Yogyakarta, that she’d end up meeting her future husband, along with friends for life, like Putri and Tomi. “At that time,” she recalls, “I’d Google some information and Orangufriends had just opened their registration process. So I joined them” (personal communication, March 3, 2017).²²⁸ A page in her diary reveals the story in more depth:

I was motivated to join Orangufriends because I got an offer [from my law school] to take part in a youth camp in Beijing. [...] I had fulfilled all the requirements except being active in environmental organizations. At that time, I was looking at online information about them. [...] Without much thinking, I immediately registered to

²²⁴ *Buka website Orangufriends. Google. Of course, Google. yes, there are some website, tapi entah kenapa saya milihnya Orangufriends aja. Ya kenapa, kenapa kok Orangufriends, kenapa saya milih mereka? Itu hanya terjadi begitu saja, jadi saya randomly milih mereka dan basically dulu itu di Ragunan Daerah Ragunan, Kebun Binatang, Jakarta. Kebetulan juga teman saya ini sering cerita tentang bagaimana dia sayang binatang, terutama orangutan yang dia mulai tertarik gitu kan? Maka itu saya pun kenal orangutan. That’s why I studied... kayak sudah matching aja gitu loh. Saat saya mulai concern about environment, teman saya ternyata concern tentang orangutan. Menurut saya itu salah satu cara atau jalur saya untuk menyalurkan rasa ingin kontribusi untuk perlindungan baik lingkungannya ataupun satwanya, gitu.*

²²⁵ *Dibakar oleh masyarakat.*

²²⁶ *Karena dia menggagu tanaman warga; see also an article, titled “Orangutan burnt alive in Kalimantan caught the world’s attention (Orangutan dibakar di Kalimantan jadi perhatian dunia)” published in Merdeka on August 29, 2012.*

²²⁷ *Dari situ saya mulai kasihankan. Terus saya cari cara gimana mau bantu untuk nyelamatin orangutan sebisanya gitu.*

²²⁸ *Waktu itu search di google, OU buka membership, so ikutan.*

participate in the activity just to meet the conditions to be sent to Beijing. But when I came in and saw in person how orangutans were locked up, behaving unnaturally in a narrow drum barrel, it changed my initial goal. On the same day I completely lost my desire to go to Beijing to take part in activities that's not unlike seminars, meetings, and matters of theory. At first, I wasn't sure I could do this because I was working on my final [juris doctor] thesis and it would be difficult to get permission to leave the city [alone as a woman] from my parents. Thanks to Orangufriends, I realized that direct action is more important than a long, full discussion without knowing what's actually happening in the field (Bintang Dian Pertiwi 2013).²²⁹

"It's *always* women, never a man!" the Managing Director of Centre For Orangutan Protection remarks, seemingly as much astonished as pleased, "Just like that. I'm not lying here, now am I? [All the boys in the room go silent] I'm confused also. Just take a look at this case of Sound For Orangutan. *All* led by women organizers-in-chief... although it's been years since they started curating the event, they can still talk about it like it was yesterday. First of all, these women love what they did, so they retain vivid memory. That's it. Ocha [a co-founder of SFO] can tell me what bands were there in 2012, how she has prepared for it. She can tell me [him] all about it with pleasure because she's proud of it" (Ramadhani, personal communication, May 15, 2017; italics mine).²³⁰

²²⁹ *Motivasi saya mengikuti kegiatan Orangufriends karena saya mendapatkan sebuah tawaran untuk mengikuti Youth Camp di Beijing yang akan diselenggarakan pertengahan tahun 2012, dengan semua persyaratan yang saya sudah penuhi kecuali aktif dalam organisasi lingkungan. Saat itu juga saya mencari informasi tentang organisasi yang berkaitan dengan lingkungan, dan tepat saat Orangufriends akan mengadakan enrichment pertama di Ragunan. Tanpa pikir panjang saya langsung mendaftarkan diri untuk berpartisipasi dalam kegiatan itu demi mendapatkan syarat terakhir untuk dikirim ke Beijing. Tapi saat saya datang dan melihat secara langsung bagaimana orangutan Anna, Ningsih, Gombloh dan Simon di dalam kandang sempit, tanpa fasilitas apapun dan penyimpangan perilaku mereka, itu merubah tujuan awal saya. Di hari yang sama saya benar-benar kehilangan keinginan untuk pergi ke Beijing mengikuti kegiatan yang tidak jauh dari kata seminar, meeting dan hal-hal yang sifatnya teoritis. Awalnya saya tidak yakin bisa ikut karena saat ini saya sedang mengerjakan tugas akhir dan akan sulit untuk mendapatkan ijin keluar kota dari orang tua. Berkat Orangufriends saya sadar betapa aksi langsung lebih penting daripada pembicaraan panjang penuh teori tanpa tahu apa yang terjadi di lapangan sebenarnya.*

²³⁰ *Selalu perempuan, belum pernah laki-laki! Seperti itu. Saya tidak bohong kan? Saya juga bingung, SFO aja diteliti. Saya bingung. Walaupun kejadiannya itu sudah sangat jauh, tapi teman-teman bisa menceritakan secara runtut. Mereka mencintai apa yang dia kerjakan dulu akhirnya dia punya ingatan yang sangat bagus. Itu dia, Ocha diwawancarai padahal 2012 ya. Tapi dia bisa menceritakan bandnya dulu yang main siapa, persiapannya bagaimana. Ocha bisa ceritakan karena dia punya kebanggaan itu akhirnya dia bisa ceritakan dengan enak.*



Fig. 1: Lupita Anggraito (left) and Cynthia Devi (right) volunteered as part of the inaugural Sound For Orangutan committee before they became organizers the following year. Both would later start wearing hijabs in public (Photo courtesy of Ramadhani, September 30, 2012).

When I asked Putri, who has been there both on-stage and off-stage since the beginning of it all, why it is that only women organize these concerts, she replied, “Actually, there are a LOT of male Orangufriends, too. But I don’t know why the vast majority of the event committee are always women. Like the organizer-in-chief and the vice chair, there must have always been women” (Putri, personal communication, September 10, 2019).²³¹ Chaira, one of the early members of Orangufriends, further articulates her friendship with these women:

“I won’t be able to forget these creatures [i.e., these other women] with whom I spent days of super-duper significance, usefulness, and fun. Like Ocha [a co-founder of SFO who was at that time a law student], told us of her struggle to convict those who abuse stray cats. I salute her. All this time, I had said I love animals. But if I were to face that situation, I guarantee that I could not have acted as bravely as Ocha. When she took the initiative to approach the abusers to remind them what they’ve done, I was just thinking about doing what they’ve done to the animals to them. And then there was Bintang [a co-founder of Sound For Orangutan and the organizer-in-chief of its inaugural event], who seemed very excited to see ducks [out in the wild], since all these years, she said, the only ducks she saw were on a plate!”

(Chaira Andhia in Centre For Orangutan Protection School, *Stories from the Field* 2013, n.p.).²³²

²³¹ *Sebenarnya ada banyak Orangufriends cowok juga sih, tapi gak tahu kenapa panitianya pasti sebagian besar selalu perempuan, gak tahu kenapa. He-eh, kayak ketua, wakil ketua pasti perempuan. Iya ya.*

²³² *Nggak akan bisa lupa deh sama makhluk yang bersama mereka ku lewatkan tiga hari super-duper bermakna, bermanfaat dan menyenangkan. Seperti Ocha, yang bercerita tentang perjuangannya menginsyafkan para pengoles balsam di pantat kucing. Aku salut banget sama dia. Selama ini aku*

Moreover, Tika explains:

We do this by giving thanks to God the omnipotent, we hereby intend to hold charity events for animals that are already becoming rare in Indonesia, namely orangutans. These events, we call Sound For Orangutan, are coming back this year with the theme of “Reject Extinction.” Our hope is that this proposal will be welcomed with open arms from a variety of parties who care about the orangutan conservation in Indonesia. We really hope that our caring can make the world a better place, because if we befriend nature, they [orangutans] will be more friendly with humans with all the benefits and goodness. Hopefully we could all become human beings with a sense care and love. Love for this, our only planet. Because there is only one earth to which we belong, just like all living creatures

(Tika Dwityastuti, Sound For Orangutan Event Proposal, August 4, 2015).²³³

That compassion is central to the message these women broadcast in the arena is obvious even to non-Indonesians like me. For example, when the President of the Australian Orangutan Project Leif Cocks goes out in the wild and communicates with Indonesian local villagers, his primary concern is delivering them some pragmatics that allows them to be the ones who make the call. “The key aspects to this,” he told me, “is *women* in the community. I’m a man, so I can be prejudiced against men. Men are not very good long-term thinkers. If we are in charge, we just want the short-term goal. We [men] don’t think too much about grandchildren. We might go buy a motorbike. That’s the way we think. But the women, they love their family, their community. Women are far more sensible. So empowering communities is about empowering their women” (Leif Cocks, personal communication, May 15, 2017). In accordance with this view, many foreign NGOs like the Orangutan Project and the Orang Utan Republik Foundation *only* give loans and invest in women in the local community. Women like Putri, Bintang, Ocha, Lupita, Cynthia, Adinda, and Shinta invest in the long-term future

mengaku penyayang binatang, tapi kalau menghadapi situasi seperti itu, aku jamin aku nggak bakal bertindak seberani Ocha. Di saat dia mengambil tindakan untuk melakukan pendekatan sama di para khilafers itu dan menyadarkan mereka, aku justru berpikir untuk melorotin celana mereka dan gentian ngolesian balsam dipantat mereka. Biar mereka tahu rasanya digituin. Hahaha. Terus ada juga Bintang, yang girang banget lihat bebek wara-wiri karena katanya, selama ini dia lihat bebek hanya di atas piring! Wahahaha.

²³³ Dengan mengucap syukur kepada tuhan yang maha esa dengan ini kami bermaksud ingin mengadakan kegiatan *charity* untuk satwa yang sudah masuk kategori langka di Indonesia yaitu Orangutan. Adapun kegiatan tersebut adalah “Sound For Orangutan” dengan tema “Menolak Punah.” Kami berharap proposal ini mendapat sambutan baik dengan tangan terbuka dari berbagai pihak yang turut peduli akan kelestarian orangutan di Indonesia. Kami sangat berharap kepedulian kita ini dapat membuat bumi lebih baik, karena jika kita bersahabat dengan alam, mereka akan lebih bersahabat dengan manusia dengan segala manfaat dan kebaikannya. Semoga kita semua dapat menjadi manusia yang mempunyai rasa kepedulian dan kasih sayang kepada bumi kita yang satu ini. Karena bumi hanya satu dan milik kita semua sebagai makhluk hidup.

“because they understand” (ibid.) what it’s like to give birth to the world’s largest and oldest known series of concerts for primate justice, Sound For Orangutan.

Sound For Orangutan, its Birth, Successes, and Challenges

Ten pages are hardly sufficient to do full justice to the significance of the women. But I suggest we move on to document a) their managerial accomplishments, against which b) some obstacles and challenges arise through the presence of dirty money and corrupt NGOs, in addition to c) some Islamizing forces that seek to radicalize the Indonesian youth in supposedly secular universities. Next, I show how a number of Orangufriends, like Putri and Tomi, are very likely to fall for each other as a result of their common efforts. Next, I examine their attempts to marry outside their ethno-religious communities at the nexus of culture and biology.

Upon completing the 2012 primate justice boot camp in Yogyakarta, Bintang and Ocha assigned themselves to an Orangufriends chapter in Jakarta, where they both were living and working on their law degrees. They then spent evenings after school sipping coffee in cafés and eating bagels at the very many magnificent malls of the nation’s capital. They were there to brainstorm the possibilities that might await them and their Jakartan pals. “Because there’s no such thing as the wild orangutan in Jakarta,” they wondered, “What’s the way for us to help them? How can we communicate the fact that orangutans nowadays need help?” (Bintang Dian Pertiwi, personal communication, March 3, 2017).²³⁴ With plenty of orangutan slaughter going on at the time at the palm plantations in Borneo and Sumatra, a thought occurred to both Ocha and Bintang... “OK, in this metropolis people really like to go watch concerts or music. Why not make one for the orangutan?” (ibid.).²³⁵

This aligned with the activities the Orangufriends in the other parts of the archipelago were doing, such as campus visits, school visits, “basically whatever they can do to disseminate information about the presence of orangutans and their needs right now” (ibid.).²³⁶ Following weeks of brainstorming, Bintang and Ocha would gather again with their pals at a series of local gigs. There they would not hesitate to go talk to a variety of musicians and their managers in person at the venue, saying “We want to do this event. What do you think? We won’t be able to pay musicians, so we just provide accommodations.”²³⁷ And, to their surprise, it wasn’t necessary to try that too hard because a good deal of high-profile bands, such as Seringai, Efek

²³⁴ *Apa nih caranya supaya anak jakarta bisa ikutan, karena orangutan tidak ada di Jakarta dan bagaimana caranya kita bisa menyampaikan pesan bahwa orangutan saat itu butuh bantuan?*

²³⁵ *Akhirnya kita berfikir, ‘OK, di Jakarta itu orang-orang suka banget nonton konser atau musik gitu, kenapa kita gak bikin sound for orangutan?’*

²³⁶ *Pokoknya hal-hal yang bisa memberi, apa ya, memberi informasi soal keberadaan orangutan dan kebutuhan mereka saat ini gitu.*

²³⁷ *Kita mau ada acara ini, mau gak? Dan kita sampai kan bahwa acara ini kami tidak akan bayar musisi, jadi kami hanya menyiapkan akomodasi aja.*

Rumah Kaca, and the Panturas, agreed without blinking. Ocha's pupils dilated with excitement when she told me, "they [the musicians] were really *cooperative!*" (Ocha Melinda, personal communication, July 12, 2014; italics indicate her switch to English).²³⁸



Fig.2: Late Made Indra (1982-2018) headlined the first-ever Sound For Orangutan event held on September 30, 2012 at Rolling Stone Café in South Jakarta (Photo courtesy of Ramadhani).

Although Sound For Orangutan (SFO) was born as one of the Orangufriends' extracurricular tasks, over time it became "perhaps more than just an assignment, whose aim is not only to educate, but also to help raise funds for orangutans, for which organizers are expected to be able to channel whatever they already have. More like that. So I've yet to hear people saying it's a requirement" (Lupita Anggraito, personal communication, February 18, 2017).²³⁹ Organizers stress the importance of fund raising right up front in their event proposals, so as to make that apparent to the reader. The first SFO event proposal states its mission in three indirect ways:

- 1) To educate the public by fostering an awareness for Indonesia's natural sustainability,
- 2) To create a green movement to imbue enthusiasm with regards to preserving orangutans, wildlife, and forests,

²³⁸ *Sangat cooperative sih Mereka.*

²³⁹ *Mungkin bukan tugas ya, tapi lebih tepatnya karena SFO diharapkan dapat menjadi annual event gitu, karena memang tujuannya adalah selain untuk edukasi juga ya, membantu untuk penggalangan dana untuk orangutan gitu. Jadi memang diharapkan untuk orang-orang Orangufriends, teman-teman yang sudah ikut itu diharapkan juga bisa menyalurkanlah apa yang sebenarnya sudah mereka dapatin. Lebih ke situ ya. Kalau misalnya diwajibkan saya juga belum dengar.*

- 3) To motivate people to bring about changes in preserving orangutans, wildlife, and the Indonesian forests
(Bintang Dian Pertiwi, Sound For Orangutan Proposal, July 6, 2012).²⁴⁰

As the SFO event met with success the first year, which will be described in more detail next, the second event proposal stated its goal in a more straightforward fashion:

100% of funds that are raised from Sound For Orangutan will be managed by the Centre for Orangutan Protection to benefit orangutans, who are victims of cruelty and crime. Today, orangutans are learning to become once again wild primates, so that they will be ready to be released to their homes. In addition, Sound For Orangutan funding has helped support other conservation work in East Kalimantan, in particular raising awareness about orangutans amongst local children. In 2012, Sound For Orangutan was held successfully. Rolling Stone Café donated its venue for this event. Musicians were also willing to not be paid. Thanks to the help from these various parties, the funds raised from ticket sales were 26,335,000 rupiah [approximately 1,880 US dollar at the time, which exceeds an Indonesian bank manager's monthly salary by 25%]. With this fund, Centre For Orangutan Protection could help an orangutan named Rocky who became an illegal pet. Everyone can and has the right to save orangutans from this. And your contribution is very significant for the survival of orangutans.²⁴¹

And the fifth SFO proposal started off like this:

First held in 2012, the annual charity concert Sound For Orangutan has been driven by a passion for fundraising besides raising awareness and educate the public [...]
(Tika Dwityastuti, Sound For Orangutan Event Proposal, August 4, 2015).²⁴²

²⁴⁰ Misi Kami: 1) Mengedukasi masyarakat untuk menumbuhkan kepedulian terhadap kelestarian alam Indonesia, 2) Menciptakan gerakan hijau untuk semakin semangat dalam hal pelestarian orangutan, satwa liar dan hutan, 3) Memotivasi masyarakat untuk melakukan perubahan untuk melestarikan orangutan, satwa liar dan hutan Indonesia.

²⁴¹ 100% dana yang dihasilkan dari Sound for Orangutan akan dikelola oleh COP untuk kepen8ngan orangutan yang menjadi korban kekejaman dan kejahatan. Saat ini orangutan sedang belajar untuk menjadi orangutan liar agar siap dilepasliarkan ke rumahnya. Selain itu, dana Sound for Orangutan telah membantu banyak pekerjaan COP lain di Kalimantan Timur, terutama dalam hal pendidikan dan penyadartahuan tentang orangutan di sekolah-sekolah. Tahun 2012, Sound for Orangutan sukses diselenggarakan. RSC Jakarta mendonasikan tempatnya untuk acara ini. Para musisi yang tampil juga rela tidak dibayar. Berkat bantuan dari berbagai pihak ini, dana yang berhasil terkumpul dari penjualan tiket di Sound For Orangutan adalah 26.335.000. Dari dana ini, COP bisa membantu orangutan Rocky yang menjadi peliharaan ilegal masyarakat di sebab semua orang bisa dan berhak menyelamatkan orangutan dari kepunahan. Dan sebab kontribusi sangat berarti bagi kelangsungan hidup orangutan.

²⁴² *Pertama kali diadakan pada tahun 2012, annual charity concert Sound For Orangutan dilandasi oleh semangat untuk fundraising bagi COP disamping selain itu untuk memperoleh awareness dan mengedukasi masyarakat mengenai konservasi orangutan.*

A lineup of musicians that people sometimes see in other major Indonesian music festivals,²⁴³ “enlivens” (*ramaikan*) the aim (Bintang Dian Pertiwi, SFO Proposal, July 6, 2012).²⁴⁴ Further, their music is “interspersed with conversations [between organizers] and musicians about the orangutan plight as a mode of *public outreach*” (Lupita Anggraito, SFO Proposal, July 26, 2013; italics indicate her switch to English).²⁴⁵ Organizers display the photo documentation taken directly from orangutan rescue scenes and the current state of the Bornean forests. Furthermore, educational film screenings are done before and in between sets, and immediately before the headliner because, as I will detail in a later section, the audience are likely to keep their attention on the stage screen precisely when they are expecting their favorite musicians to go on stage. Moreover, the event is also highlighted by media coverage, for its attempt at blending primate justice advocacy with music, fund raising, multimedia exhibition, and education.²⁴⁶

The organizers look for meanings when they want people to open their wallets through live music around a common purpose that’s not one of the usual ones. And it’s harder to get people committed to primate justice advocacy because it’s not quite so *person-al*. Put simply, the organizers want their audience to interpret their attendance and donation as significant. To accomplish this task, the organizers come up with catchy slogans about the relationship of music to something else that’s absent: things that are not at the venue (the orangutan), and things that have not yet happened (primate justice). The organizers have tried to define that level of uncertainty through a series of event themes deployed to date. For instance, the inaugural SFO was given with the theme of “One A.P.E.,” which means “Animal, People, Environment, whereby we [the organizers] will be voicing, educating, and raising awareness of visitors about

²⁴³ For example, I have many times seen several SFO musicians performing on the same day at Bandung Berisik, Hammersonic, Rock in Celebes, Rock in Solo, Sonic Fair, Soundrenaline, Synchronize, and We The Fest.

²⁴⁴ The list of Indonesian musicians who have played for SFO to date includes: Akar Pijar, Ballads of the Cliché, Banda Neira, Blow Off, Broken Rose, Dear Nancy, Dirty Glass, Down For Life, Dream Society, Dried Cassava, Earia, Efek Rumah Kaca, Eleventwelfth, FSTVLST, Gravi Tri, J-Flow, Jova, L’Alphâalpha, Later Just Find, Leonardo and His Impeccable Six, Marcell Siahaan, Monkey Boots, Monkey To Millionaire, Miskin Porno, Navicula, Not A Woy, Oppie Andaresta, Orkes Sehat Jiwa, Payung Teduh, Primata, Raygava et al., Rebellion Rose, Seringai, Sidepony, Sistem Rijek, Sri Plecit, Straight Answer, Tiger Paw, the Billy Sentris, the Pain Killers, the Panturas, and White Shoes and the Couples Company. Australian musicians, such as Smilk, Harry Blotter, Eukali, Bellatrixx, Illume, Redamon, Tekxture, Nikki Sig, DTMX, Lumen, Soulquench, have joined SFO as well.

²⁴⁵ *Konser musik yang diselingi dengan bincang-bincang dengan musisi tentang orangutan yang merupakan public outreach bagi para pengunjung.*

²⁴⁶ Media partners include, for example: Green Radio, Trax Magazine, Acara-Event.com, Rolling Stone Magazine, Gigsplay, C&R Digital, DAAITV, Kompas TV, Voice +, Sindo Weekly, Jaringnews.com, Stagenews, Epicentrum, and RTCUI FM.

the significance of wildlife conservation, and how to live harmoniously with animals, other humans, and the environment” (Bintang Dian Pertiwi, SFO Proposal, July 6, 2012).²⁴⁷

Such an event theme facilitates event sponsorship meetings. It’s actually the first thing the organizers say in their presentations to attract potential sponsors. Putri told me how “sponsorship has been the main obstacle in organizing SFO because this event is not-for-profit, meaning it’s not producing anything for some large companies. Because all the profits are donated [in one way or another] to orangutans [and not exactly to humans], many sponsors will not gain much from this [although corporate sponsorships of performances can create brand recognition and seek to link positive public sentiment to the brand]. So rarely we see somebody who’s up for it” (Putri, personal communication, September 10, 2017).²⁴⁸ This continually poses a challenge for someone like Putri, who now works in finance after graduation, to “get funds from the results of people’s own sweat, meaning they couldn’t get much sponsorship, so they had to rely on selling merchandise and that was pretty much it” (ibid.).²⁴⁹ A closer look at one of their budget proposals gives insight into some of the essential items for organizing an event like SFO: reams of paper, color and black printer ink, brown envelopes, stamps, mailing costs, event crew uniforms, artist accommodations, venue rental fee, stage, sound & lighting costs, licensing and safety (police and tourism industry permit), screen rental, snacks for the committee, food/snacks for the musicians, fees and batteries for videographers, event banners, posters, stickers, bracelets, pins, and unforeseen expenses (Bintang Dian Pertiwi, SFO Budget Report, March 3, 2017).²⁵⁰

Volunteers like Putri and Tomi could at times track down where some of the sponsorship money came from and how it was procured. The accuracy of their radar to avoid any corrupt or otherwise cash-intensive sources of illicit income seemed strong.²⁵¹ For example, as an interlocutor explained, a major Indonesian bank likes to sponsor all kinds of wildlife NGOs

²⁴⁷ *A.P.E sendiri bermakna Animal, People, Environment, dimana disini kami akan menyuarakan, mengedukasi, dan menyadartahukan para pengunjung betapa pentingnya menjaga kelestarian hidup, dan bagaimana hidup selaras dengan Satwa, Manusia, dan Lingkungan.*

²⁴⁸ *Itu [cari sponsorship] masih jadi kendala utama di SFO, karena acara ini bukan acara yang mencari profit, tidak menghasilkan bagi beberapa perusahaan besar. Jadi kita benar-benar, seluruh keuntungan didonasikan untuk orangutan, jadi banyak sponsor yang tidak diuntungkan untuk hal ini jadi jarang ada yang mau terima sponsorship.*

²⁴⁹ *Mereka benar-benar memperoleh dana dari hasil keringat mereka sendiri, artinya mereka gak dapat sponsorship banyak, jadi mereka mengandalkan penjualan merchandise, dan itu.*

²⁵⁰ For example, the budget for the 2012 SFO totaled 193,455,000 IDR, approximately 14,880 USD at the time. Generally speaking, in other circumstances this money would not even suffice to hire 3 reasonably well-known dangdut singers, or 5 top metal bands, whose names and pay scales I was told not to disclose (Jeff Adriano, personal communication, October 12, 2017). What I should say is that the SFO budget was possible because musicians played their sets free of charge.

²⁵¹ I have verified this with some anonymous Indonesian billionaires behind the music industry who asked to remain anonymous.

and grassroots volunteers. They help in the actual ticket sales, so that event organizers sell more. At times they provide an exhibition hall in their corporate headquarters, where the respective charities raise large chunks of revenue from what we now call “influencers” with strong social media presences, and high-net-worth bank customers who fancy animals. It’s a booby trap, actually, a set up that could discourage unwitting beneficiaries who would later find out after it was too late. This bank was actually found to turn the money from the key drivers of deforestation back into Sound For Orangutan. As a result, Putri and her pals went on to close their pre-existing accounts there for good (Putri, personal communication, February 7, 2017).

That primate injustice is closely related to power abuse and corruption is nothing new. For example, one of the former Governors of a province was under investigation for having issued a license to a transnational company to open an oil palm plantation in a legally protected orangutan habitat. As it turns out, “the governor’s office mysteriously burned down [during the investigation],” an NGO leader recounted poignantly, “Who did that? The people at the Governor’s office must be involved. [So there’s no evidence left in their archive]” (anonymous, personal communication, May 14, 2017).²⁵² Not unlike the rest of the world, the politicians in that area like to “contact industries to get help with the costs of their campaigns. Even if somebody loses, the company has also given money to another candidate, whether it be a regent, governor or some higher power (ibid.).²⁵³ Moreover, I have many times seen disparities between the academically published maps of orangutan-plantation conflict areas and the ones NGOs actually use in the jungle. I was told, “they [the research team] have been paid not to include problematic areas in their publication” (anonymous, personal communication, September 13, 2016).²⁵⁴

Additionally, my interlocutor remarked, “[What’s been known to happen is] money, here’s money. No need to make a fuss,” a board member of an oil palm company suggested, as he slid a white envelope across a table at the lobby of Four Seasons Hotel in Jakarta.²⁵⁵ Sitting across the table from the briber was an NGO leader, who reportedly put his hand on the envelope and pushed it back to the briber (anonymous, personal communication, February 23, 2017).²⁵⁶ He later told me that there’s “easy money trapped in this kind of business [wildlife

²⁵² *Kantor gubernur aja di bakar kok, yang bakar siapa? Ya, orang-orang kantor gubernur itu pastinya, kan mereka terlibat.*

²⁵³ *Dia akan menghubungi perusahaan-perusahaan ‘tolong saya dibantu dana, untuk biaya kampanye saya. Nanti kalau saya menang saya kasih konsesi baru. Itu yang terjadi, walaupun dia kalah. Perusahaan juga sudah ngasih uang ke calon yang lainnya lagi. Di pilkada seperti itu, apakah itu bupati? Apakah itu gubernur? Apakah itu [anonymous]?*

²⁵⁴ *Berarti ada yang salah dengan tim penelitiannya. Jangan-jangan tim penelitiannya sudah dibayar. Sudah lah. Gak usah dimasukkan dalam peta.*

²⁵⁵ *Money, ada duitnya. Gak usah ramai-ramai.*

²⁵⁶ I cannot corroborate this account as I was not there.

conservation]. So we're very much aware" (anonymous, personal communication, May 15, 2017).²⁵⁷

While preventing dirty money from being funneled into the festival, women organizers have yielded some positive results. During the fourth SFO concert held at a night club where "no woman is seen to wear hijab,"²⁵⁸ Shinta the chief organizer sold more than 100 t-shirts, which she had produced in collaboration with a local clothing store, that only charged her a quarter of the retail price.²⁵⁹ The merchandise was sold at the same time in front of the venue, where some women volunteers who are afraid of taking off their hijabs stayed and helped maximize profit (Shinta Ayu Permata Sari, personal communication, December 5, 2016).²⁶⁰ The earnings would subsequently be used in addition to ticket revenue to purchase motorized pirogues for transporting Bornean orangutan refugees from one island to another:

What can make you, the fourth Sound For Orangutan committee, proud? I [Managing Director of the Centre For Orangutan Protection] said, "Get a boat." I'll say [the boat for orangutan refugees in our rehabilitation facility is a] "*way back home* [i.e., release site]." And after that I [will] *share picture* [of the boat on social media and say this was bought] *from* [the] *money*, [We were able to] *buy boat*, [and named it] "Way Back Home" [along with the] *tagline* [#waybackhome] (Ramadhani, personal communication, February 7, 2017; italics indicate his switch to English).²⁶¹

So, women like Shinta have been inspired by the fact that Putri, Bintang, and Ocha were able to generate a profit that exceeds one half the amount of a bank manager's monthly salary,²⁶² which was "unimaginable at all"²⁶³ in their first attempt at organizing SFO back in 2012 (Bintang Dian Pertiwi, personal communication, March 3, 2017).

On the one hand, these Orangufriends are *there* as a result of drifting away from their university campuses — where "they are often challenged to spread the ideas [spoon-fed by radicalizing forces that infiltrate secular universities] to their fellow Muslims [and beyond]" (Machmudi 2008:111). "Most Islamic campus organizations" according to an Indonesian area studies scholar, "focus their activities on organizational and political advancements [for which] they are unable to fulfil students' interests. Insofar as their campus activities and lives had alienated them from religious practice, they felt themselves distanced from the benefits of religious guidance" (ibid.:111-2). This is taking place in the context of article 29, Section 1 of

²⁵⁷ *Karena mereka begitu mudah di kelabui tadi. Di jebak-jebak dengan urusan yang seperti ini. Jadi kita sangat aware.*

²⁵⁸ *Tidak ada orang yang menggunakan jilbab.*

²⁵⁹ 40,000 rupiah (2.8 USD) per piece to be sold at the venue for 150,000 rupiah (10 USD).

²⁶⁰ *Kita juga buka stand merchandise di depan liquid dan yang jaga menggunakan jilbab.*

²⁶¹ *Apa yang bisa buat bangga, bangga panitia SFO keempat, saya bilang beli boat. Saya akan bilang way back home, dan setelah itu saya share picture, from money, buy boat, tagline "Way Back Home."*

²⁶² 42 million IDR, approximately 3,000 USD.

²⁶³ *Hal yang tidak terbayangkan sama sekali.*

the 1945 Indonesian constitution (*Pancasila*) which stipulates that the state shall be based on “belief in the one and only God (*Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa*; *i.e.*, *Allah*)” (Mohammad Yamin, May 29, 1945). In this context, Sound For Orangutan seemed like an intimate hideaway from what’s going on at these campuses:

I’m grateful. My experience on that day was one that’s filled with happiness. Honestly, I felt bored when I returned to my home in Bandung [a capital city of West Java populated by the archipelago’s top universities and students]. Why? Because I won’t be able to find friends who care so much about nature, wildlife, and also *humans*. In Bandung, I cannot find an atmosphere like yesterday (Ricky in Centre For Orangutan Protection School, *Stories from the Field*, 2013, n.p.).²⁶⁴

Sound For Orangutan made space for these interlocutors to be excited. As Lupita recounts, “A lot of ideas sprung from there. We have also been very excited at the thought of ‘Why not this, why not that?’ So many ideas and so on. And we just tried that, hoping, that this [SFO] might become a culture” (Lupita Anggraito, personal communication, February 18, 2017).²⁶⁵ That’s actually what drove curious minds like Shaniya, who studies biological anthropology in Surabaya, to become an Orangufriend. She said, “I’m shy, really. Almost too shy to become a coordinator of sorts. Then a friend of mine said, ‘This might be a once in a lifetime opportunity. Just take it.’ This seemed like the first and last chance to be a coordinator in an event like this” (Shaniya Utamidata, personal communication, December 3, 2016).²⁶⁶

That ‘once-in-a-lifetime excitement’ these Orangufriends just mentioned could further explain why they are *there*. A vignette from the first day of my virgin experience of the Orangufriends boot camp is telling. When I was helping out some women participants set up their tents,²⁶⁷ an alumnus was all smiles. He came over and yelled at me, “*Ngapain?! [What the heck are you trying to do with these girls?!]*” (Ramadhani, personal communication, June 3, 2015). Actually, the yeller turned out to be one of the MANY Orangufriends who ended up marrying somebody from the camp (so he did suspect me of similar motivations). They are what Putri and Tomi could have been, if it had not been for the fact that their parents practice “in-group loyalty and out-group hostility” (Harris 2015:15). The first, fourth, and fifth SFO

²⁶⁴ *Saya bersyukur. Pengalaman saya kemarin adalah pengalaman yang penuh dengan kebahagiaan. Jujur, ada saat jenuh ketika saya akan kembali ke Bandung. Kenapa? Karena saya tidak akan menemukan teman-teman yang begitu care pada alam, satwa liar, dan juga manusia. Di Bandung saya tidak bisa menemukan suasana seperti kemarin.*

²⁶⁵ *Kita excited. There’s a lot of ideas. Kita juga sangat excited untuk ‘Kenapa gak ini, kenapa gak ini?’ Jadi kayak kok... banyak ide gitu terus ya udah gitu. Coba aja gitu. Diharapkannya mungkin dijadikan budaya gitu kan, gitu.*

²⁶⁶ *Saya penasaran shy. Sebenarnya penasaran banget pengen jadi koord. Terus ada teman saya yang bilang, ‘Ini kesempatan yang mungkin gak dua kali. Ambil aja.’ Bisa aja ini kesempatan pertama dan terakhir untuk jadi koord di acara kayak gini.*

²⁶⁷ I just felt I was good at setting up the tent poles solely because I was born considerably taller than most of them.

organizers, amongst many others, found their significant others through that process Indonesians call “*cinlok*,” an informal contraction of *cinta* (love) and *lokasi* (location) that means ‘to fall for somebody at work.’ Putri’s reminiscence of her own “*cinlok*” days went like this:

They say there are more couples amongst us than we know. The way I understood, it’s because of the intensity of our encounters. So they fall in *cinlok*, which I think results from sharing things together, like *music*, having interest in the same thing. So in my opinion it’s normal seeing people become like me like that... There are many that have married, right? Like Vian and Ketut...

(Putri, personal communication, September 10, 2019).²⁶⁸

A male Orangufriend interlocutor recounted,

OK! To the point. Many interesting things from the activities that are going to be carried out in Yogyakarta. One of them is *cinlok*! Wow, I really hope you can get a match there. Besides working, if you can get a mate, it’s pretty damn good, guys! Orangufriends is what will bring together volunteers from all walks of Indonesian life

(Yasman Sulaiman in Centre For Orangutan Protection School, *Stories from the Field*, 2013, n.p.).²⁶⁹

“Pretty damn good,” indeed, because this is a place where they feel relatively safe to mingle across ethno-religious cleavages. The struggle is real when, for example, the Chinese Indonesians are predominantly Christians or Buddhists whereas the vast majority of the archipelago belong to another religion (Harsono 2019). So there is not only the law but also a widely held bias amongst ethnic groups behind the religious segregation that forbids interfaith marriage.²⁷⁰ The fact that religions and belief systems are almost always passed on across generations is not physical in its origin, but one gets most of the information about one’s life and about the world from one’s childhood experience, which parents are controlling. From a social constructivist perspective, millions and millions of individuals throughout the archipelago are, in some sense, punished “in the play of the interests of others, of the family circle, of society, and so on, [through which sexuality] appears rather as an especially dense transfer point for relations of power, between men and women, young people and old people, parents and offspring” (Foucault 1988:46, 152). What happens when these people try and mingle with each other

²⁶⁸ *Katanya lebih... saya lihat, sih, karena intensitas pertemuan mereka yang banyak, jadi kaya cinta lokasi itu jadi apa ya, mereka sama-sama punya ketertarikan dengan hal sama, seperti musik, jadi ya menurut saya biasa, sih, ngelihat orang jadi cinlok kayak kami gitu. Ada banyak yang sudah nikah, kan? Kayak Vian sama Ketut, itu juga mereka nikah.*

²⁶⁹ *Oke, to the point deh. Banyak hal menarik dari kegiatan yang akan dilaksanakan di Jogja itu. Salah satunya CINLOK (cinta lokasi). Wah, berharap banget nih dapat jodoh disana. Selain menuntut, kalau bisa dapat jodoh kan lumayan, guys. OU yang akan mempertemukan volunteer orangutan dari latar belakang yang berbeda di Indonesia.*

²⁷⁰ Getting married to somebody as an atheist is not an option as atheism is illegal in Indonesia (see Chapter 4).

across a divide, then, is kind of phenomenological disjunction, their perception of ‘home’ and something else that is part of the shifting set of targets, such as “a family’s prosperity or reverse of fortune, an advantageous or disadvantageous undertaking, favorable marriages or ill-fated alliances” (Foucault 1988:47). If family is one of the fundamental units of the complex power play that drives a society, then it’s obvious to see people imposing all kinds of limits on each other in the name of protecting their values. Marrying one’s child to someone else whose family has something in common could have financial, legal ownership advantages.²⁷¹ The proposed marriage between Putri and Tomi became a battle because the parents went hard against their heirs cutting across their boundaries and against Catholic/Islamic traditions that are strict about ‘marrying within the faith.’²⁷²

What I find *more* interesting, however, is that the Orangufriends’ interests in coming together around the plight of primates can contradict that complexity. From the emergentist point of view, a tendency to reject bonding with one’s own group is not just true of humans, but of animals. At puberty, lots of primate species begin to distance themselves from their parents. One of the reasons that that happens in us and the rest of the primate world is that it promotes exogamy, which forms new groupings that can increase social and genetic diversity. One way for exogamy to be a regular feature is to go through a period during which members of one sex, at least, need to leave their immediate environment, feeling uncomfortable being around their close relatives. On the other hand, cultural interventions can actually promote endogamy as parents’ interests often diverge from children’s interests. For parents, this may be ideal, but it may have some negative consequences for the offspring who do not want to mate with their close relatives.²⁷³

Before the dawn of the twentieth century, Edvard Westermarck (1891) studied many of the cases that I just mentioned. Westermarck’s first finding was that endogamies were rare. In other words, a lot of infidelity could be observed in places where endogamy was enforced. Kibbutz members in Israel, which later researchers (see, e.g., Fox 1980) commonly used as an exemplary case for Westermarck’s hypothesis, were unrelated to each other, and yet they got

²⁷¹ This was actually one of the reasons that Putri and Tomi’s parents were opposed to their marriage. Putri and Tomi, of course, did not go into details about the subject. But I have many times heard people saying how, in this case, one family has become vastly richer than another in recent years.

²⁷² In fact, parents dictating their children’s choice of spouse has been very common in the Islamic/Hindu world. This used to be true in China, where marriages were mostly arranged by parents, oftentimes to align relationships between lineages. If a child did not marry the person whom their parents wanted them to marry, they would be disinherited, which was a serious consequence.

²⁷³ This seems common around the world. For example, the Pharaohs of ancient Egypt were oftentimes part of the lineage of brothers and sisters producing offspring, that then married to each other, who produce the next generation brothers and sisters who would marry to each other. The same thing happened in India, Japan, in addition to the case in China, where *shim-pua* (童养媳) marriages were set up by parents while their children were still very little.

together to form a communal kind of arrangement, in which parents shared everything including each other's children. That was a common child-bearing context as they each took care of each other's children. For the Kibbutz to persist, those children needed to stay in the Kibbutz, which means they best should marry somebody in the Kibbutz. Although they had come together and raised children together, they were not related. Even so, they almost never married somebody else in the Kibbutz. The biologically unrelated kids grew up treating each other like sisters and brothers, and felt uncomfortable with sexual intimacy as a result, even though their parents were strongly trying to make it happen. In the end, most of these people ended up leaving the Kibbutz (with economic reasons for leaving added in), because they were working against what amounts to biological predisposition. If one is raised with somebody of the opposite sex, one is less likely to develop sexual attraction toward them. This so-called "Westermarck effect" brings us back to the problem of Putri and Tomi. Very broadly speaking, who they choose to marry, and who their parents want them to marry, stem from a combination of biology and culture, which are oftentimes in conflict with each other.²⁷⁴

To summarize: Many Orangufriends like Putri and Tomi fall for each other after working together as a result of being a musician or concert organizer in a group. I traced how they increased their intimacy through participating in a series of primate justice music events. While detecting and bypassing sponsorship attempts from some of the key drivers of deforestation, they drifted away from university campuses, where Islamizing forces sought to radicalize them. In spite of their emergent tendency not to want to have any long-term intimacy with members of their own ethno-religious polity, their parents say otherwise, *in part* with the aim of consolidating power and resources. Such conflict between the culture (Foucault 1988) and the biology (Westermarck 1891) could appear in today's Indonesia at least.²⁷⁵

²⁷⁴ Freud (1910) had an opposite view that there is an interest with daughters and their fathers, and sons with their mothers. He called it "the Oedipus and the Electra complex" in reference to Oedipus from a 5th century B.C.E. Greek mythology to bolster his hunch that sons have sexual interest in their mothers. The story of Oedipus is interesting because Oedipus did not know his mother. When he comes back, he fell in love and became sexually involved with somebody who he has been raised apart from. Freud avoided acknowledging these details, even though the story then is not as surprising and makes better sense.

²⁷⁵ In line with what I said in the introduction, the primary goal of my thesis is to foreground, or at least hint at, some generalities that may rise above the culturally specific units of inquiry. In the gospel of postmodern relativism, it can seem that I am leaping back and forth between micro- and macrocosm with broad generalizations and isolated topics. I am, however, free to do so – from a general semiotic perspective (albeit without the jargon), all thought is in signs whether they are thought or spoken or physical. Something, anything, can be presented, and it brings to mind something else, which is different yet not more meaningful than the original sign (see Peirce 1902:238). To posit that there is an exception to every rule, on the other hand, would be internally contradictory: that rigid ideology people call relativism isn't itself relative, but totalitarian, as long as no one is permitted to disagree (see Hicks 2004:184-186).

Living a Biblical Lifestyle through the Jungle

Where would Tomi go – after having left a potential spouse whom he loved? This Javanese spotted a temporary destination in the jungles of Borneo. Getting over his breakup, Tomi learned, to his dismay, that it was faith that had led the parents to prevent the marriage. But it's not that his mother was particularly against the idea of having a daughter-in-law who's Muslim. It's just that not marrying within the faith could spark a cascade of political hardships, with *the word* of the law that blocks interfaith marriage being one of them (Law No. 1 of 1974). And, both their parents were territorial because neither of them wants some other family to convert their child, even just for *the wording* of registering marriage on a sheet of paper. Still, Tomi was willing to let go of the emotional baggage after the break-up by staying around his family and friends in Java... until he realized, that he was having trouble conversing with people because words in general just don't do justice to his feeling.

In this section, I investigate what happened to Tomi after the breakup. It's an extension of Tomi's lifelong dedication and sacrifice for wildlife conservation. I explain how he is conditioned by a combination of creationism and patriarchy, despite the fact that this is partly what stopped verbal communication between Putri and him.²⁷⁶ Slicing into the breakup from Tomi's perspective serves as a pretext for the final section, where through an analysis of their on-stage musical interactions I articulate how music brings them together nonetheless.

“Speaking of God... When was the last time you went to church?” asked a friend who helped Tomi through the breakup.²⁷⁷

“Ha! If THAT's really what you're asking,” Tomi replied, “the most important thing is to do good things. So, yeah. I've been, well... there, but quite rarely.”²⁷⁸

“But why? Why quite rarely?” the friend continued to rub salt in the wound, knowing Tomi's been through a lot but he's going to suck it up.²⁷⁹ Despite hearing the constant edge in Tomi's voice, the friend's aim, as we shall see below, was to help his pal move on with his life by opening up the cut a little...

“...Yup,” Tomi's response pierced the silence, “actually, perhaps because, you know, I have yet to receive my call, but it's got to be, it's good to pray according to the belief we profess, you see what I'm saying?”²⁸⁰

²⁷⁶ As I said in the beginning of the chapter, they no longer talk to each other anymore.

²⁷⁷ *Ngomongnya tuhan... Terakhir ke gereja kapan?*

²⁷⁸ *Ha! Kalau pesan bapak say aitu, yang penting berbuat kebaikan, jadi, ya ada lah ke gereja, tapi ya cukup jarang.*

²⁷⁹ *Kenapa? Kenapa cukup jarang?!*

²⁸⁰ *Iya. Sebenarnya karena mungkin – apa ya, belum panggilan aja, tapi harus, bagus untuk sembahyang sesuai dengan kepercayaan yang kita anut, gitu loh.*

“Well, isn’t that because no one wants to accompany you?”²⁸¹ The friend is on point, “I wonder when exactly somebody will follow you into the church. Many girls are making the first move on you, pal. Just ask them ‘when.’”²⁸²

“When WHAT?”²⁸³

“To walk down the aisle.”²⁸⁴

“You gotta be kidding me. Nobody wants *the* problem.”²⁸⁵

“Because no one wants it or because you don’t open up?”²⁸⁶

“Yeah you make me sound like a man who’s afraid of women,” Tomi states something about preserving manhood, “The point God gives us is that we’ve got to accept things no matter what, because everything happens for a reason. We will get married just when we have to accept [this good] fortune.”²⁸⁷

“But you do still like women, right?” the friend stirs up Tomi according to the patriarchal standard of his own [a different deity than Tomi’s], but also with the aim of talking Tomi out of his comfort zone, “Tell me you’re not turning to others... yeah?”²⁸⁸

“Still, I’m *still* into women, bruh.”²⁸⁹

“You haven’t gone too far, have you?”²⁹⁰

“We must cherish our manhood, because it’s what God created. Yeah, I’m still living by the lights of God’s *words*” (Tomi and his anonymous pal, personal communication, January 17, 2017; italics mine).²⁹¹

Tomi seemed like he’d told himself he’d never go down that trail to marriage again.²⁹² After the break up, he left his Yogyakarta home in a heartbeat. He said he was on a mission, a

²⁸¹ *Nah, apa karena nggak ada yang menemani?*

²⁸² *Kira-kira kapan akan ada yang menemani, karena banyak request itu, tolong tanyakan kapan.*

²⁸³ *Kapan apanya?*

²⁸⁴ *Naik pelaminan.*

²⁸⁵ *Waduh! Apalah daya kita, he, nggak ada yang mau soalnya.*

²⁸⁶ *Soalnya nggak ada yang mau atau kamunya yang tidak membuka?*

²⁸⁷ *Wah karena ya saya termasuk pria yang takut dengan wanita hehehe... pokoknya yang Tuhan berikan adalah yang harus kita terima karena semuanya sudah dibikin jalur – jalur kehidupan, tinggal nanti menikah kapan, pacarana kapan ya harus kita terima karena itu namanya rejeki.*

²⁸⁸ *Tapi masih suka perempuan, kan? Maksudnya tidak berpaling ke sesama...?*

²⁸⁹ *Masih lah.*

²⁹⁰ *Tidak sampai ke situ?*

²⁹¹ *Karena lanangan [a Javanese term for “male”] itu harus kita sayangi juga, karena itu sebagai makhluk Tuhan juga, tapi ya masih sesuai kodrat saya-lah.*

²⁹² As Foucault notes, “these two ensembles of obligation — those regarding the faith, the book, the dogma and those regarding the self, the soul and the heart — are linked together. A Christian needs the

temporary outing of sorts, to fight against wildlife traders in the rainforests of Borneo. In the past, he had been out there in the fields of Sumatra and Java on a number of occasions. But, this was the first time he actually went out in the Bornean wild. He went out there as part of a local NGO's orangutan rescue team, that had just sent an orangutan back to the wild after rehabilitation. Tomi went completely off-line and disconnected himself from the outside world for a few months, during which he volunteered for the task of tailing the released orangutan and monitoring its post-translocation livelihood. That's why Tomi and I didn't cross paths until we both flew back to Java, although I was in Borneo at the same time with a singer-songwriter (see Chapter 1). So we had ourselves a few cans of beer and did a little catching up.

"The words" of a deity wouldn't seem to bother Tomi much, when Putri was not around. He said he's been doing new things, like eating veggies and exercise a lot to "drain a lot of energy" (Tomi, personal communication, September 17, 2017).²⁹³ And he eventually turned into a vegan because the animals are "God's creatures that needs to be treated with heart rather than with violence, because humans nowadays rarely do things with their hearts. They just do things on the basis of money, not on the basis of heart" (ibid.).²⁹⁴

Many field agents told me that orangutans used to exist all the way up to Southern China and they also used to exist in Java, but people slowly killed them off. Today, orangutans exist in Aceh, North Sumatra, but they don't exist in South Sumatra because they reportedly went extinct in 1830s for two reasons. First, the population in Aceh was predominantly Muslim, while in the south, maybe more Christian and animist. At that time, guns were introduced by Christian or Christian-led colonial forces. But the Indonesians who had already come into contact with Islam didn't shoot orangutan because they don't eat non-halal meat, e.g., primates, pork. However, where there were some non-Muslims (not necessarily Christians), they shot the orangutans and ate them. So all the orangutans were gone very quickly by 1830. Similarly in Kalimantan, where there's more people converted to Islam, the orangutan survived but where some non-Muslims lived, they were exterminated.²⁹⁵

Tomi took up tasks ranging from fighting against wildlife trade to orangutan rehabilitation. Throughout the archipelago animals are caught in nature, using nets, trip-wires

light of faith when he wants to explore himself. Conversely, his access to truth cannot be conceived of without the purification of the soul" (Foucault 1981:3-4).

²⁹³ *Banyak mengurus tenaga.*

²⁹⁴ *Saya diajarkan bagaimana cara memperlakukan makhluk ciptaan Tuhan dengan hati bukan dengan kekerasan. Karena jaman sekarang manusia sangat jarang melakukan segala tindakan dengan hati. Jaman sekarang manusia lebih banyak melakukan segala tindakannya atas dasar uang, bukan atas dasar hati.*

²⁹⁵ I want to make clear that I am just translating respectable interlocutors' words. Relatedly, the Founder of the Orangutan Project Leif Cocks told me that the story I summarized above is a common knowledge amongst field agents, which hasn't been published academically "because... you talk about religion, no one wants to publish because it's sensitive" (personal communication, May 15, 2017).

(traditional method), snares, and traps. In East Borneo, I have many times seen a small steel sling put on many spots by which, for example, the orangutan is passing. And when the orangutan gets hit, it gets speared or shot, or captured and shipped in 1x1 meter container boxes to the very many shelters in East Indonesia. Some traders keep wildlife in their homes until they distribute them to retailers. Before the transaction takes place, many animals die from mistreatment. Once a buyer joins the club, they will usually try to buy again. Things went online, “so one item can be shown simultaneously up to 10 to 15 buyers, who are actually brokers who claim to resell. So it’s very difficult to trace who the real owner is. When we [Tomi and his team] make arrests, we catch A. And the owner turns out to be B. And the sellers typically get paid using a joint account service, to make it difficult to trace to whom exactly the money goes” (Tomi, personal communication, September 17, 2017).²⁹⁶

Tomi doesn’t have second thoughts about “going through wars, intimidation, and death threats” by thugs, for example, when he refuses to leave a local wildlife market. He and his colleagues were “beaten down by hundreds of thugs the merchants sent out. The traders were protected by local mafia, including the backup troop sent by an official institution, which is an open secret” (ibid.).²⁹⁷ Kertaning Tyas, the Director of Indonesian Social Circle (*Lingkar Sosial Indonesia*), corroborates this: “When I began writing about this [oil palm plantation] issue, taking photographs and publishing them through the mass media, the government people were quick to contact me. They seemed uncomfortable with my articles. They then offered me money and assistance, and moreover, danger and threats. Our trips were hampered by a group of security forces, and thugs, and we were prohibited from entering a local village. Security guards interrogated us. This always happens in our field activities” (Tyas in Centre For Orangutan Protection School, *Stories from the Field* 2013, n.p.).²⁹⁸

²⁹⁶ *Jadi 1 barang itu yang mengiklan itu bisa sampai 10 bisa sampai 15 orang. Di sini ada yang bermain makelar ada yang dalih menjualkan. Jadi sangat sulit untuk ditanyai siapa pemilik sesungguhnya. Dan ini banyak kasus seperti ini. Jadi ketika kita melakukan penangkapan misalnya dengan pedagang si A ya. Kita tangkap si A. Ternyata A ngakunya milik si B. Dapatnya dimana. Ngambil dari si B. Jadi berputar terus barangnya seperti itu. Dan kalau jual-beli di online ini biasanya dia akan menggunakan jasa rekening bersama. Siapa yang tahu jasa rekening bersama? Sebenarnya kita tinggal transfer ke rekening itu aja sih. Tapi kita gak tahu itu rekening siapa.*

²⁹⁷ *Yang untuk mencapainya mesti melewati peperangan-peperangan, intimidasi hingga ancaman pembunuhan. Pernah memimpin operasi di [an anonymous local market]. Waktu itu preman-premannya ngadang. Akhirnya polisinya kabur. Mas Hardi sempat digebukin sama ratusan preman-preman pedagang [market], karena di sana itu kan pedagang akan berlindung dibawa preman-preman dan termasuk aparat yang membackingin. Dan ini menjadi rahasia umum.*

²⁹⁸ *Kemudian aku mulai menulis persoalan ini, memotret mereka dan mempublikasinya melalui media massa. Dampaknya, orang-orang pemerintah pun segera menghubungiku, mereka tampak risih dengan pemberitaan yang kubuat. Mereka segera menawarkan uang dan bantuan-bantuan, bahkan lebih dari itu, belakangan mereka (oknum) juga menawarkan bahaya dan ancaman untukku. Perjalanan kami sempat dihambat oleh serombongan orang, mereka adalah oknum aparat keamanan serta preman. Kami*

Tomi just wants to have a go at any violence against orangutans and to do so assiduously. “These orangutans,” he said, showing me a photo, “all have head wounds. His face is swollen, right? Because it was ripped out, beaten up. It happens almost always, 100%, whenever orangutans get caught by the plantation people” (Tomi, personal communication, May 14, 2018).²⁹⁹ “This one,” he continued, “has a metal blade [hoe] in the head. Why should somebody do this to the head? Because an adult orangutan can have the power of six good athletes. But there are [anesthetic] drugs. Aren’t there? But people just want to chop the head off, using a hoe, using iron, just about anything. And after that its hands are tied with wire rope, typically” (ibid.).³⁰⁰ In Kalimantan, Tomi has many times seen the orangutan bodies that got shot by two types of guns: a rifle we know, and a local rifle called “*dum-duman*,” which is “strong enough to take a primate’s life” (ibid.).³⁰¹

At a macroscopic level, the forest is being degraded to create agricultural land. As this is happening, animals like orangutans are not allowed to live in it. The state of degradation in these cases may seem like the increase of disorder, i.e., entropy, somewhat metaphorically. But the interesting thing about agriculture is that it degrades the forests by eliminating the complexity of the forest, by making it simpler. In other words, simpler is lower entropy, and this is why it is perspectival: a) from the point of view of the forest, farming degrades the ecosystem; from the point of view of the ecosystem, farming is degrading the forest. But, b) from the point of view of the farmer, who thinks he can take the head off of a primate body, the ecosystem is too complicated and there’s just too much going on. They are all about simplifying and destroying the complexity of the forest, regardless of how complex it gets. And most of the things that grow wild in the forests are weeds that they have to get rid of. Although each species is trying to maintain itself, the ecosystem is in a balance where all these various parts are interacting with and supporting each other. The trees are producing fruits, while the birds and the primates eat and disperse their seeds, and help the plants grow again. The forests maintain the environment, so that the temperature, the humidity, the rains, are in a sense, partly controlled by the amount of forest in the area. On the one hand, the whole thing — including the hydrodynamic system and temperature — is all part of this complex system, that is, that forest (Kohn 2013). On the other hand, farms are not forests, but rather an unbalanced space where

dilarang masuk desa. Dengan dalih keamanan mereka mendata dan menginterogasi kami. Ini selalu terjadi dalam kegiatan kunjungan kami.

²⁹⁹ *Pasti orang-utan punya luka di tangan dan di kepala. Mukanya bengkak kan? Karena habis digebukin. Karena dianggap mencuri. Mukanya di pukuli. Jadi hampir 100%. 100% hampir semuanya kan? Kalau orang-utan sudah kutangkap sama orang kebun kelapa sawit itu. Itu pasti itu.*

³⁰⁰ *Nah, seperti ini. Ini di cangkul kepalanya ini. Kenapa harus dipukul kepalanya? Karena orang-utan memiliki kekuatan 6 kali atlet yang berlatih dengan baik. Memang mereka punya obat bius. Kan, enggak kan? Ya dipukul aja kepalanya. Pakai cangkul. Pakai besi. Apa saja. Dan setelah itu tangannya diikat dengan tali kawat biasanya.*

³⁰¹ *Kena tubuh itu, bisa mati juga.*

some people are keeping out the predators, such as orangutans out as though they are “pests” (Parreñas 2018). In brief, there is a kind of natural order with the forest, whereas there is an unnatural process with farming that destroys the ecosystem.

At a microcosmic level, Tomi sees the orangutans as an underrepresented minority. Although people wouldn’t necessarily consider the orangutans a human minority, Tomi wants to take groups of them that are underrepresented in the primate world and give them aid, to sort of fight the inequality of the right to survival between the orangutan and human in general that’s just simply the result of the history of things. He’s also doing work to empower local people, like hiring as part of his crew some Dayaks of Borneo, whose ancestors have lived there since before Islam, the West, and their colonial enterprises moved in. In some sense, Tomi and his team *doubly* support minority causes.

In sum: this section sought to summarize what happened to Tomi post-breakup. It narrated his attempts to mend his broken heart through sacrificing for wild animals. In the next section, I will show HOW, after all, musical communication could bring Tomi, Putri, and a bunch of strangers together, by going beyond the word of power assumed by the family, the elite, the administration, and the colonial belief systems through a concept I introduce as *ungoverning words*.

Ungoverning Words

This section amplifies a notion that musical reference may link people up to an interactive field in which language is not the central means of communication. It’s about how music-as-such would allow them to overcome the worst nightmare they’ve experienced. Indeed, why would each member of this erstwhile couple want to make arbitrary claims to the other about what it’s like to be around each other feeling sad and broken, when duet singing could simulate what’s in between?

The following pages aim to explain how, to some extent, musical communication sets them free of the prison in which millions and millions of Indonesians serve time every day in the fear of what a radicalizing society could do to them. In *semiotic* terms, language must always be conventionalized to be shared, and thus it is so dependent upon growing up in any society that it can take autonomy away from noncompliant individuals.³⁰²

³⁰² I use the term “language” in Peircean terms, in particular, “in the following very generic sense: a mode of communication based upon symbolic reference (the way words refer to things) and involving combinatorial rules that comprise a system for representing synthetic logical relationships among these symbols. Under this definition, manual *signing*, [...] religious ceremonies, systems of etiquette, and many *rule-governed* games might qualify as having *the core attributes of language* (Deacon 1997:41; italics mine). Skepticists/relativists are welcome to think this notion through Foucault’s instances where, for example, “one must learn by skillful questioning in what way they behave at home. Whether there is

I use the expression *ungoverning words* to describe how people's relationship can continue through music without necessitating direct word exchange. I use this expression to invite the reader to calibrate musical communication in a broader semiotic field in which language is a part (Deacon 1997). I want us to start thinking in these terms, whilst acknowledging that the term "sound" can be both too broad and too narrow to be applied transparently to "the music" of not just Putri and Tomi but of many musicians who interactively express emotions despite sounding little or no words (Langer 1948:65-198; see also Seeger 1977:183-184; Brinner 1995:48-50, 171). Even if some belief systems tear them apart, musical communications can have a convergence role among people.

In an influential reworking of Michel Foucault's notion of governmentality (1991), Jocelyne Guilbault revealed how the term "governmentality" is actually an English translation that did not convey what Foucault presented in a verb: in French, "*les arts de gouverner*." "Governing" for Guilbault involves navigating not just the noun-like staticity, but a flow state. Her argument is that, while colonial powers may have used sound to govern people, the slaves and the formerly enslaved used musical communication not only to get back at them, but also to voice their sentiments and claim their rights. As described in the preceding sections, the parents' ways of governing sound in terms of the word unfolded in a top-down hierarchical flow (Foucault 1991), but as we shall see next, the couple created a bottom-up flow by performing music that enabled and afforded direct communication (Guilbault 2007).

One way to supplement Guilbault's underscoring of the significance (or the value) of music, any music for that matter, is to take up how its reference may not always be linguistic, or not linguistic at all, while, as Seeger noted earlier (1977), recognizing how the term "sound" may be both too general and too specific to articulate music's non-meaningful semiotic. As we shall see below, Putri and Tomi did not make any propositions and claims about how their emotions conflict with the word of the power, whether it be the family, the law, or indoctrination regarding group identity/belonging. While it seemed obvious to many that they still had feelings for each other, they would move from tone to tone while lip synching each other without describing their feelings as X, Y, and Z. Therefore, my unit of analysis cannot just broadly be the "sounds" of their music, or specifically "musical" sounds in a particular con-"text." It could also be the ways they sound *like* each other (e.g., singing the same melody, both screaming), while *pointing* to

peace between them and their neighbours, whether they are careful to bring up their children in the fear of God... whether they *do not have* their older children of different sexes sleeping together and with them, whether they *do not allow* licentiousness and cajolery in their families, especially with their older daughters. If one has any doubts as to whether they are married, one *must ask to see* [the words in] their *marriage certificate*" (Foucault 1975:212; italics mine). Not only that, Foucault confirms elsewhere "the way words refer to things" (Deacon 1997:41), through "an institutional *reference*, since moderation was *imposed* on them [i.e., women, Foucault's unit of analysis in this part of the text] by their condition of *dependence* in relation to their families, their husbands, and their procreative function, which ensured the perpetuation of the family *name* [hence, language] (Foucault 1984:83; italics mine).

each of their song parts (e.g., eye contact attempts, stepping back and forth when taking turns) that permit their sentiments to be expressed. This ‘feel’ of the more *direct* – in the technical semiotic sense of communicating without arbitrariness, without saying X means Y — modes of iconic and indexical, on-stage interactions instantiates what I am calling *ungoverning words*.

When I think back to that night I first saw Putri and Tomi on stage, one scene stands out: one of their songs — whose title will not be mentioned as I said earlier in this chapter — begins with a sampled orangutan “call.” Its ascending fundamental frequencies sound *like* a tense, frightened animal. Then, Putri and Tomi show up as vocalists on opposite side of the stage, as the band launches into an instrumental introduction. I hear the couple used to talk to each other all the time but not anymore. But when Tomi starts singing the first verse, Putri starts *lip-syncing him*. On rare occasions, she tries to make eye contact with him but without staring. Tomi seems hesitant. And when it’s Putri’s turn to sing, he steps backwards towards the rear end of the stage. He too cannot help but *lip-sync* her. When they are about to turn to each other and *sing in unison*, an audience member wearing an orangutan mask jumps on stage and blocks their path. So they ended up shying away from each other while screaming garbled lyrics. While that made it difficult to understand the precise words that they were singing, obviously they sang the *same* melody. The masked individual jumps back into crowd swinging arms in the air, *like* an orangutan brachiating away from one tree to another. The roar of the crowd drowns out the semantics of the lyrics, which nonetheless seemed too limiting to do justice to the emotional ties between Putri and Tomi, which would rather be musicalized than be said.

“When I was on stage, I felt like I was different from my usual self,” Putri told me after the show (personal communication, November 26, 2016).³⁰³ “I’m actually a shy person.” She added, “I don’t like standing up in front of a crowd, like it’s been a challenge for me to overcome this trait. So seeing other people moshing in front of me like they’re into the song Tomi and I were playing on stage made me feel proud and super happy. [It got me thinking,] ‘Oh! As it turns out there are people who support our movement through music like that’” (ibid.).³⁰⁴ Then, a friend of hers barged into us backstage saying, “Ha! I had no idea you could sing like that!”³⁰⁵ “So, you’re telling me I can be like this on any given day,” Putri answered her friend, “although there’s a lot of discrimination?”³⁰⁶ She was alluding here to the ongoing discrimination about women who do not wear the veil, sexual minorities, the non-Muslim Chinese Indonesians, and

³⁰³ *Ketika saya ada dipanggung saya merasa menemukan diri saya sendiri yang berbeda dari saya biasanya.*

³⁰⁴ *Saya itu Sebenarnya orangnya pemalu, nggak suka tampil di depan umum, kayak tantangan besar saya mengalahkan sifat ini. Jadi ngelihat orang lain moshing di depan kayak mereka menikmati lagu [band saya] yang kita lagi main dipanggung itu rasanya senang banget kayak bangga. Oh, ternyata ada orang yang support sama pergerakan kita melalui musik di [band saya], gitu.*

³⁰⁵ *Nah, Aku nggak nyangka ternyata kamu bias nyanyi kayak gitu!*

³⁰⁶ *Maksudmu ternyata aku bisa kayak gitu ya... ya kalau di hari-hari biasa kayak gini, meskipun banyak diskriminasi juga sih.*

people like herself and Tomi who fell in love across religious divides. After taking some time to greet her friends and audience members, Putri got back to our chat:

Since the first day of my school, I'd always wear a headscarf, because my friends were wearing it there. It seemed like it's obligatory for women once they're born Muslim. Up until college I'd still put it on. And then I started covering up myself only when I go to recitation. That's because... you know, of the dress *code*. Perhaps — and this is my personal opinion, [Hong-]June. Many people nowadays like to show off what their religion is, what their attributes are. But for me, religion is for myself and even though I came out not wearing a veil [on stage today], people never know that every Saturday, I go to recitation to pray, to study religion. So, in my opinion, that kind of thing [my use of hijab] need not be shown to the outside world, like on social media or wherever. Even if the law gives us no choice but to select [*the name of*] a religion to be put on the national ID card, the kind of religion I'm talking about here is a personal matter for each person. Things that are now really sensitive in Indonesia have *no meaning* here [on stage]. I think, Indonesia is currently in dire straits regarding the problem of tolerance. It's up to you how you want to pray. And that's where it's at
(Putri, personal communication, November 26, 2016; italics mine).³⁰⁷

When all was sung and done, Putri took the initiative to actually go talk to Tomi. But a friend of his came out of a male dressing room instead and told her, “Tomi’s very drunk. He doesn’t dare to meet you. I don’t know what’s wrong, but uh... he wouldn’t stop drinking” (personal communication, November 26, 2016).³⁰⁸ “So,” turning to me, Putri opened her mouth after few minutes and said, “looks like he still can’t move on after all, I mean he’s rather

³⁰⁷ *Saya itu sejak sekolah ketika pergi ke sekolah saya itu selalu pakai kerudung... karena teman-teman saya pakai kerudung dan di sekolah itu seperti kaya mewajibkan perempuan memakai kerudung kalau beragama Islam. Sampai kuliah saya masih pakai keurudung. Lalu saya berkerudung ketika saya pergi ke pengajian. Itu karena apa ya, ya memang dress codenya kayak gitu kalau ke pengajian pakai kerudung. Kalau saya beribadah saya juga pakai kerudung atau pakai mukena. Mungkin ini menurut pribadi saya aja ya, June. Kalau banyak orang kalau di Indonesia itu, mereka selalu menunjuk-nunjukkan apa agamanya, apa atributnya. Tapi bagi saya sendiri agama itu untuk diri saya sendiri dan meskipun saya keluar gak pakai kerudung tapi orang kan gak pernah tahu kalau setiap hari Sabtu saya pergi ke pengajian untuk berdoa, untuk belajar agama. Jadi menurut saya hal kaya gitu itu gak harus dipertunjukkan ke dunia luar gitu loh, di sosial media atau dimana. Kalau di Indonesia di kartu national ID card itu kan ada agamanya apa. Kalau di sini agama itu urusan pribadi masing-masing. Hal yang kalau di Indonesia sensitif banget di sini nggak ada artinya. menurut saya di Indonesia saat ini lagi sedang gawat-gawatnya tentang masalah toleransi. Ya terserah kamu mau gimana mau berdoa. Iya gitu sih.*

³⁰⁸ *Mas [Tomi, pseudonym] mabuk berat, nggak berani ketemu sama kamu. Gak tahu sih, minum banyak sekali, he-eh.*

awkward, still awkward after the stage. Oh well, the main reason is because we are from different religions. So we can't."³⁰⁹

"You can't?"

"I didn't get to marry... [Hong-]June, did you know he's my ex? So, the story is that we had been dating for 4 years or so. But we were still struggling with religious issues. At that time, his mother was a very strong influence and, in the end, he decided to leave me" (Putri, personal communication, November 26, 2016).³¹⁰

When I came across Tomi sitting on a bench a few hours later, he didn't quite seem wasted. He did seem broken, however. So I just sat around with him and his pals saying nothing. And he eventually left the city for the next few months to work for orangutans in the jungles of Borneo, as detailed in the previous section.

At that time, organizers were backstage hugging and thanking each other for making the event a success. Positive feelings arose, on the one hand, after selling out the show before it opened and afterward, exposing people to audiovisual data on primate injustice for the first time. Just when the crowd all gathered to get on with the show, the organizers played a short yet informative video clip on the stage screen so the audience would stay fixated on the video like never before. "The concert is really aimed at educating people," an organizer would later tell me, "not just the people in college and high school, but those who are seemingly — I'm sorry, naughty — who come to this place where the music is loud [e.g., metalheads]. To my surprise, they seemed to actually care about this. They watched the video [in silence] while waiting for the headliner" (Shinta Ayu Permata Sari, personal communication, December 5, 2016).³¹¹

"Not everyone likes to read, right? Poetry is even rarer in Indonesia for the younger generation," another organizer adds, "That [music facilitating the dissemination of audiovisual data] was beyond expectations. I mean, isn't music very much universal? It's more effective [than asking people to just watch the video]. So we packaged all the material in a musical format to accomplish our goal" (Lupita Anggraito, personal communication, February 18, 2017).³¹²

³⁰⁹ *Jadi ya, kayanya dia masih belum bisa sih setelah itu, maksudnya agak canggung. Masih agak canggung sih setelah manggung. Oh well, karena alasan utamanya karena kita berbeda agama, jadi gak bisa.*

³¹⁰ *Saya gak jadi nikah sama... June, tahu nggak mantan saya siapa ini? Jadi ceritanya itu saya sudah pacaran hampir 4 tahun lebih, tapi kita masih struggling dengan permasalahan agama waktu itu. Ibunya itu kuat banget mempengaruhi dan pada akhirnya dia memutuskan untuk meninggalkan saya.*

³¹¹ *Acara itu tujuannya emang untuk mengedukasi orang-orang, kita tidak hanya melulu untuk mengedukasi orang-orang yang kuliah, orang-orang yang sekolah tinggi, tapi orang-orang seperti mereka yang, I'm sorry tapi, nakal, yang milih tempat dan musiknya keras. Dan ternyata mereka itu sangat peduli. Sambil menunggu bandnya, mereka menonton video.*

³¹² *Gak semua orang suka baca kali ya. Poetry juga lebih jarang lagi kali di Indonesia. Yang di luar ekspektasi gitu maksudnya. Musik itu kan yang universal banget kan menurutnya. Siapa sih yang gak*

“Whatever it is that we call music,” another organizer corroborates, “whatever’s being conveyed by the music will be easy and well communicated. That’s what we thought at the time [when we organized the first-ever concert series for the orangutan]. To make this issue easy to access, like there are small children singing English songs who have no idea what they mean [to begin with]. Sometimes people don’t really pay attention to lyrics but still like the song” (Bintang Dian Pertiwi, personal communication, March 3, 2017).³¹³

The demand for *similarity* and *commonality*, not the articulation of differences, is what circumscribes such interactions. “The participants who take part in Orangufriends *basically* have *the same* interests,” an organizer is emphatic, “so when they have *the same* goals, I think they can certainly establish a good collaboration on whatever wherever” (Cynthia Devi, personal communication, February 18, 2017; italics mine).³¹⁴ As another organizer put it: “How we who come from different regions, ethnic groups, and backgrounds meet up and become *one family*, all of this is based on *one true emotion* that could remind us that we’re *the same*. Love. Our love for orangutans, for others, for the environment, and for the country” (Chaira Andhia in Centre For Orangutan Protection School, *Stories from the Field*, 2013, n.p.; italics mine).³¹⁵ “We’re solid, I mean, we rarely meet people like that. Many of us come from different religion, gender, economy, hometown, ethnicity. But we work together” (Lupita Anggraito, personal communication, February 18, 2017; italics mine).³¹⁶

To date, Putri and Tomi are STILL, in a sense, enabling and affording communication through music, whilst avoiding direct word exchange. On such a deeply personal level, they can govern and express their connections through tonal movements, lip-synching, screaming and singing in unison, breathing, taking turns, moving their bodies in a coordinated manner, making eye contact and shying away, along with sampled primate “calls.” That similar (iconic) and contiguous (indexical) process exemplifies what I termed *ungoverning words*: “At the beginning,

dengarin musik gitu loh? Lebih efektif. Jadi makanya kita mem-package teman-teman itu mem-package edukasi dalam bentuk musik gitu, jadi supaya penyampaiannya juga dapat, tujuannya juga dapat.

³¹³ *Apa yang namanya music, segala sesuatu yang disampaikan oleh musik itu akan menjadi mudah dan tersampaikan dengan baik, itu yang kami pikirkan waktu itu. Kita mencari, gimana caranya supaya isu ini mudah disampaikan. Ada anak-anak kecil menyanyikan lagu-lagu bahasa inggris yang mereka gak tahu itu artinya apa. Kadang orang tidak mengerti apa yang dikatakan oleh penyanyi itu tapi bisa suka.*

³¹⁴ *Kan memang sebenarnya para peserta yang ikut Orangufriends gitu kan basically-nya punya interest atau punya ketertarikan yang sama, jadi saat mereka punya tujuan yang sama menurut saya apapun dan dimanapun pasti bisa menjalin suatu kerja sama yang baik.*

³¹⁵ *Bagaimana kami yang berasal dari daerah, suku agama, dan latar belakang yang berbeda bertemu dan lantas menjadi keluarga. Betapa semua ini berlandaskan one true emotion that reminds me we’re the same. Love. Cinta. Cinta kami kepada Orangutan, kepada sesama, kepada lingkungan dan kepada negara.*

³¹⁶ *Solid, maksudnya kita jarang ketemu gitu. Ada banyak yang berbeda agama, jenis kelamin, ekonomi, kampung halaman, etnis, kognitif tapi semua orang kerja bersama, kamu pikir kenapa itu bisa, kita bisa bekerja sama, walaupun kita berbeda*

people didn't know about our split-up. So yeah, we went through some strange phase [by pretending to talk to each other a little]. Fortunately, friends in the band have been very supportive of us. We still sit together as a band at the [Orangufriends] camp [despite me and Tomi not talking to each other anymore]. The music is really heavy, [Hong-]June. And everyone contributes to the process of song composition, filling in for each other. Some of us go in and out of the jungle, keep moving around the archipelago. So sometimes it's hard to put together this band. But even when I'm away, I contact a local music studio and record vocal tracks, send it back home so the band can start mixing. No need to think about that sort of thing [i.e., the breakup/difference]. That wasn't easy at first. But few months after that, we finally began to pick up where we left off" (Putri, personal communication, September 10, 2019).³¹⁷

Concluding Remarks

The story of Putri and Tomi is indicative of how music bypasses the word. The textuality of power, the family, the elite, the administration, and their belief systems reminds us of how language is not something that one individual generates. Rather, it's something that's shared to the extent that all users have to ideally agree on the same semantics. To postulate that that process of interpretation is *never* the case would epitomize "a common pattern" in today's dominant discourse: "Subjectivism and relativism in one breath, dogmatic absolutism in the next. [...] If subjectivity and relativism were primary, then postmodernists would be adopting political positions [all] across the spectrum, and that simply is not happening" (Hicks 2004:184; see, e.g., Merriam 1964:233; Derrida 1994:115). So, the primary goal of my work has been to stop turning all facts into something relative yet ideologically rigid that can *never* be disputed. The fact is that Putri and Tomi *had to* give up some autonomy — that is, the tendency to reject bonding with their own ethnoreligious group (Westermarck 1891) — because they were given no choice but to be part of *a* culture, whose vast majority of population speaks *a* language that maintains *the* con-text-ual rigidity of 'marrying within the faith' (Foucault 1991). Despite that, the music not only of Putri and Tomi but of many other musicians seems to have this ability to potentiate relationships among people (cf. Guilbault 2007). The couple could *undo some of the linguistic governance of their respective societies*, by being able to know each other in a fairly

³¹⁷ *Di awal orang-orang gak tahu kan, jadi ya kita sempat ada aneh-aneh. Tapi karena untungnya teman-teman di [band] itu mereka sangat supportive. Kita duduk bersama terus nentuin musiknya di camp. Musiknya diakan [cadas] banget kan June. Jadi ya semua orang pada akhirnya komposisinya mengisi satu sama lain, ngasih ide gitu. Misal ada temen main kesini, main kesana, keluar kota. tapi karena orang-orangnya itu kan gak ada di Jogja, maksudnya selalu berpindah-pindah. Jadi kadang susah untuk menyatukan band-nya ini, gitu. Meskipun saya di [anonymous town], saya mengontak salah satu-apa ya-studio music di sini, dia membantu merekam suara saya di studio musiknya lalu saya kirim lagi ke Jogja, sama mereka terus di, apa, di mixing. Kita gak perlu mikirin yang gitu-gitu, gitu ya. Awalnya memang masih kaya susah. Tapi akhirnya beberapa bulan setelah itu ya jadi dibikin normal lagi.*

deep emotional sense. To be a musician and/or concert organizer in a group, Putri and Tomi had to *iconically* follow each other's emotions despite not talking to each other anymore. It's a really good concert where a group of people like them are *indicating* their emotions by playing music together and getting to know each other without having to just describe differences in things (cf. Langer 1948). Taking advantage of the non-meaningful musical does not yield any particular meaning that's potentially conflicting. Rather, playing music brings emotions along with it in such a way that's better than just telling people something in words.

I refer to this as *ungoverning words*.

Conclusion | Why Music and Shamanism for Orangutans are Similar

The primary motivation for this dissertation stemmed from observing why the cases of shamanism and music I encountered are not propositional in the semiotic sense. Clearly, the individuals who perform in these two categories were not linking propositional claims linguistically to what was going on. Chapters 1 through 4 explored the observable implication of how these people were not exactly making claims about orangutans and rain clouds and the significance of their absence or presence. Verbally expressed thought did not often escape their lips in such work. One could argue that the words in the music might be doing that (Merriam 1964:187-190). YES, one nice thing about music with words is that in many ways it seems analogous to people's own experience of words (Feld and Fox 1994) in such a way that their own experience of the sound of words appears almost directly associated with a sentiment about them (Feld 1982). That is, the orangutan songs can be both making an explicit, meaningful, referential, and propositional claim and, at the same time, providing emotional resonance.

However, interventions for seeing music with words as one of the fundamental reasons why music is so effortless to take in emerge from recent research on the neural layers of mental representation (Deacon 1997; see also, Thaut and Hodges. 2019; van der Schyff and Krueger forthcoming). Simply put, the words almost never emerge without some feeling associated with them. Even some trivial words could have a little bit of feeling that comes with them inasmuch as they draw people's attention, if nothing else. So, my goal has been to empirically demonstrate how musical and shamanic communications are *helping* interlocutors resonate with an emotion by simulating it (e.g., imitating an animal call that will sound like the emotion) and then by indicating non-semantically (e.g., the loud distortion, screams, and very fast pulse and solos of the metal bands) what emotional state to be in (Langer 1942, 1953). That stream of information appeared indeed in the last chapter to underlie people's perceptions, actions, and attention. Organizers, the compassionate women, musicians, and even a broken couple find it easy to take advantage of what exceeds the linguistic communication to produce a sense of relating.

The focus on the non-semantic basis of emotion is an enormous interdisciplinary issue that cannot be fully grasped from any single perspective alone. Wherever I brought up "emotion," for example, many authors would rather have delved into what they term "affect." While "there is no single, generalizable theory of affect: not yet, and (thankfully) there never will be" (Seigworth and Gregg 2010:3), I *did* share with affect theorists the fundamental assumption that boiling down agency to cause and effect may help elucidate what can hardly be put into words. I apologize to my many colleagues whose work has shed light on how "there is no ideal speaker-listener, any more than there is a homogeneous linguistic community" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:7). As I admitted from the outset of the thesis, I have only discussed emotion in a joint semiotic and emergentist sense that does not necessitate primary attention to "the difference between bodies necessary to the expression of meaning" (Diprose 2003:36). This study's focus

has instead been centered on the topic of communicating emotions despite lacking shared language, culture, or religion.

I was able to paint a fairly comprehensive picture of how it's not so much that cultural specificity is something that one wants to set aside. What my interlocutors said they do is how, in communicating their emotions, it's easy to miss this non-semantic part if they just focus on contextual differences. It's not so much that they want to set aside words and give up their speech acts (except in the extreme case where Putri and Tomi no longer talk to each other). But they want to go beyond meaning, which for them is too little and too limiting. My interlocutors almost automatically see how things work by inductive inference, that is, a widely endorsed mode of reasoning that proceeds without assuming everything to be different, meaningful, indeterminant, heterogeneous, relative and contextual. Generalizing from specific cases, for these people, is not quite as taboo as a majority of Western scholars in the social sciences and humanities nowadays might assume, but a common mode of relating at least on behalf of nature or deities.³¹⁸ Their proclivity for induction emancipated me from what I thought until recently was the gospel truth: the concept of skepticism in Western philosophy that I summarize below...

My dissertation may help reappraise the already existing trend of skepticism about language, i.e., the post-modern turn that's happened in the social sciences and humanities some time ago. An exhaustive review of the argument against the arbitrary linguistic basis of knowledge would require another lengthy chapter. For now, I can refer, albeit superficially, to one of the first Western thinkers who argued that knowledge learned from induction cannot be justified. Skeptic philosopher David Hume (1739, 1748) was anxious to see any attempt to infer something general about two facts (e.g., Jimi Hendrix is mortal; Jimi is a man) because the attempt itself can be viewed as yet another inductive reasoning (e.g., All men are mortal). Hume had an idealist view that the chaotic splendor of our lived experiences of the world was a construction of our felt sense of intentionality that was *not physical*.

In the West, works of literature on what is referred to as “social constructivism” have explored this logic in their *free will* debate. This debate is interesting, but as a consequence, there is an amazing proliferation of a tenet that linguistic knowledge — what Hume (1748) Cartesianly demarcated as “relation of ideas” — and the world are just arbitrarily connected and therefore *anything goes*, just like words map to the world relatively differently in different languages. But what about the fact that every language has something like a sentence, words, nouns, about body parts and parents, verbs, future and past, modifiers, and negation, albeit slightly differently? There is an ongoing argument between the people that take side with the

³¹⁸ See, for example, Chapter 2 where a concert promoter said a particular shaman *must* be hired because it rained a lot when he didn't hire the shaman last year. See also Chapter 3, where shamans generally deal with the fear of failure when they forget to bring an object for a ritual, simply because it rained the last couple of times they didn't have that specific object ready at hand.

complete arbitrariness argument (e.g., Evans and Levinson 2009) and those who take the complete universality argument (e.g., Greenberg 1963).

It remains to be seen whether they should keep going against each other for another eon when, to take the view that knowledge is completely arbitrary such that meanings are always relative to a culture (e.g., Herskovits 1948; Merriam 1964), is to take the extreme language view (Saussure 1916; see also Descartes 1641). My empirical data showed that may not always be the case. I have little doubt that both musicians and shamans had to, before all else, recognize similarities, while pointing to two things and indicating them though they are more or less different. Evidence to test my recognition that their “meaning” in the semantics sense could be far overloaded comes from the cases where...

1) The musicians homogenize different primate “calls” as indicative of the same geopolitical location in which the callers co-inhabit and evolve,

2) The rain shamans hold that creating smoke that looks like moving cloud resembles what they want to accomplish,

3) The electric guitar players ignore any subtle differences between the real and the simulated sounds for touring purposes,

4) The broken couple are sync-singing each other at the same place at the same time although their marriage was ruptured by the cultural arbitrariness and social differences through words.

It is too far a stretch to say that language is the model for these cases, which could regularly be communicated by virtue of an index — be it a primate “call” melody or blowing smoke — that had to be physically linked to what it refers to in some way. This correlation in time or space, or in a part-whole relationship, could be communicated by virtue of formal likeness with or without words. Such redundancy of language in these cases astonishes me, since they do not ever influence my interlocutors and me to accept the relativity of what people call the epistemological turn in Western philosophy, a belief that the world is only as we know it and knowledge is what determines everything (see Carter et al. 2017). This view that one cannot directly be in tune with the world but can only reflect it through a mirror, which, according to Hume (1739) and Herskovits (1948), could be distorted, does not apply to my cases. Throughout the cases runs an intuition that what’s real could exceed what one says, so that not all kinds of reference are driven by a focus on language as the unquestionable basis for all knowledge.

Empirically, I ran into a lot of important research problems in Indonesia often when I wasn’t speaking any language, by following the way my interlocutors change their breathing. As they breath past their larynx, tensing their larynx in certain ways and making sound as they breath, they provided social information about their emotional state without saying a word. I tended to respond to how their emotional state was affecting their breathing and the tension, so that their non-meaningful vocalization became a good modality for me to interpret emotions wherever I was (Deacon 1997:429). Actually, I’m applying the same knowledge to the way I

interact with people outside Indonesia, in Berkeley and Seoul, because I find breathing so well associated with emotional state. The same is true for sobbing and laughter, which may be the sound preexisting its production associated with sorrow and humor, maybe, although that is not the ‘definition’ of either sobbing or laughter. When I don’t have to describe my feeling as X, Y, and Z, I see how laughter, sobbing, and breathing do not have a meaning in semantic terms. This lived experience gets deep into the weeds of my project’s argument that linguistics is one corner of semiotics, where pictorial and auditory forms of iconic and indexical communications cannot be so palpably analyzed only through difference in linguistic knowledge alone.

Further, I knew, “without knowing” (Kohn 2013:86-9), when the musicians I studied dropped to a fundamental or made tonal changes, that they had completed a thought. That is clearly part of what music is doing in the cases I have studied, at least. It is causing a kind of convergence of emotions among people. I think it’s an important part of the story to recognize that, when the musicians perform, singing or playing their instruments, they didn’t oftentimes do what the human voice does in speech. They were moving from tone to tone to tone, without articulating what linguists call stops, continuants, and fricatives. And yet, they would at times complicate the stream of sound as they add those breaks, clicking, clapping, tapping, less often fricative sounds on top. The strength of all of these features, I suggest, could be one foundation for the ways in which music appears effectively linked to emotion.³¹⁹

As a result, a large proportion of this study has been dedicated to empirically validating why not a lot of semantics could be detected in a set of musical and shamanic communications. Beyond that hotbed of mysticism and metal music we call Indonesia runs a related and telling thread: a century ago in the West, when composer Gustav Holst made music about planets (1916), “planets” was a semantic gloss on his music. Holst was going to say he wants to create a piece of music about the planet Mars. But if the listener didn’t know that linguistic gloss, they couldn’t possibly guess that it was about “Mars”?! But once somebody tells them about Mars and the fact that the concept of Mars had to do with the god of war as a red planet being desolate, there might well be the connection. However, Holst’s “Mars” is as much about mythology as are his pieces about the other planets, with Venus being about the goddess of love, and Jupiter, the king of gods, and Saturn is about the underworld. While the piece was based upon the mythology that led to the naming of planets, it was just following the semantics of its title. The words that were actually attached to music could not always be associated with the music... Now, let us go back to the topic of how my interlocuters knocked the words out of consideration, made them irrelevant:

a) The musicians were not interested in telling long-winded stories about their emotions during the set, while

³¹⁹ At the beginning of this conclusion chapter, I specified why, in this study, the term “emotion” would be more appropriate than affect.

b) The shamans did not convince deities of something by articulating their smoke, deeds, and celibacy in words, and

c) The guitarists did not want their amplifiers to sound different season after season across venues, during which

d) The broken couple obviously still had feelings for each other in the way they synchronized their vocalizations on stage.

Words don't seem to have much use in their primary communication work. Indeed, words can actually be performative (Butler 1993) as they can communicate and transform social relations and statuses. But let us not forget that words at best "refer to their object *indirectly* by virtue of the ways in which they relate systematically to other such symbols" (Kohn 2013:32; italics mine).

While I contribute to emergentist theorizing in this dissertation by foregrounding reference, my argument provides no innovation on locating my units of analyses in *this* musical and shamanic community. To be blunt, I tried not to sound too passionate about how my interlocutors are morally bound to uplift themselves to help change the world for the better. It may appear as though I found joy instead in a perspective that focuses on the dynamics of abstract patterns, and that my proclivity tends to level a neutral gaze at some of the good-hearted and well-meaning people of Indonesia. I chose not to argue for a focus on how unique or specific their musical milieu would be in some ways. But that's not entirely because I don't fancy historical cultures. While my deprioritizing of language may have provoked some relativists, I did take great pride in quoting what a lot of my interlocutors brilliantly said about their lives and times. It was an absolute pleasure to meet them. But, it just occurred to me that overt epistemic support and advocacy oftentimes impede a focus on things that deserve attention in their own right.

What my argument does not offer is a precise causal mechanism that explains why people get involved in primate justice advocacy despite the very strong probability that they will not derive any direct benefit from it. They are primarily doing it not for the sake of human beings, but for the sake of rainforests and another primate species. Developing friendship and often finding a partner in the midst of doing this work was an unexpected bonus. Apart from organizing concerts, they seemed to really struggle through this because it's harder to get people involved when they go for a kind of movement that's not humanistic. Thus, part of what may be the power of music in this could be observed in these interlocutors' involvement in altruism alone, without ancillary activities such as music. Music does a work of helping to create a bridge to cut across the cleavage between enthusiasm and apathy. Music gets people to think about things that are just sort of generally good, not good for you and me, the humans, not social, not economic, but good for the ecosystem, which is fragile and important, and orangutans, that are endangered and remarkable. One direction for future research is to determine why these interlocutors act altruistically towards interspecies caretaking and friendships, given that altruism is typically a within-species discussion. What my argument does offer is how music might

facilitate empathy and altruistic behavior, and not only that, but that music that incorporates natural sounds could better potentiate the strengths of the enterprise.

The findings of this dissertation should lead the reader to reconsider a predominant, unchallenged assumption that interlocutors can be involved in different kinds of communication among different people that occupy different positionalities. My study should make clear that commonality can be more apparent than differences. Any attempt to compress emotions into words may lead to a severe loss of information. The danger is in the way people who write and speak analytically about music transfer data back and forth with each other while applying a language model to music when it's not exactly saying anything. Meaning could be a colloquial term for semantics, but what appears linguistic may be bizarrely not so. I could not find night and day differences in the way musicians and shamans convince somebody by the nonmeaningful semiotic. They communicate primarily by virtue of likeness, similarity, contiguity, correlation, feeling, while giving little or no attention to difference. It is within this contour of reference that music and shamanism on behalf of orangutans are similar.

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