Journal of Indonesian Social Sciences and Humanities
Vol. 4, 2011, pp. 49-66
URL: http://www.kitlv-journals.nl/index.php/jissh/index
URN:NBN:NL:UI:10-1-101743
Copyright: content is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 License
ISSN: 1979-8431

Is the Past Another Country? A Case Study of Rural–Urban Affinity on *Mudik Lebaran* in Central Java[1]

Vissia Ita Yulianto
Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology
University of Freiburg, Germany
E-mail: ita.yulianto@ethno.uni-freiburg.de

Abstract

This study is to explore the relations between the urban and rural in terms of their social as well as cultural significance. Referring to the idea of David Lowenthal—(1985:39-52) who has pointed out that the connection between the past and present rests on the fact that the past has been the source of familiarity, guidance, identity, enrichment and escape—the central idea of the paper is to suggest that this notion of a 'familiar past' is a fundamental aspect of the culture of contemporary urbanised Central Javanese, who, during the Lebaran holiday, revisit their ancestral roots to retain a degree of autonomy against modernity or to return to their 'disappearing past' as 'tourists', so to speak. The cultural practice of *mudik* becomes the interaction zone (Leaf, 2008) that provides opportunities for city dwellers to keep ties with their village of origin. Finally, the paper suggests that the continuing intimate interplay between the village and town proves that neither past–present nor rural–urban dichotomies are in categorically opposed realms; metaphorically speaking, they are not in different countries.

Introduction

Each year, millions of Indonesians return to their ancestral and family homes to celebrate *Lebaran*, the end of Ramadhan, the Muslim fasting month. Not only Muslims, but all Indonesians have adopted this as

1 This research was conducted in parallel with my PhD research project, titled 'Reframing modernity in contemporary Indonesia: an ethnographic study on ideas of 'centre' and 'periphery' in Sulawesi and Java'. The research has been supported by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research under grant no. 01UC0906. The expressed views in this paper are mine alone and must not be attributed to the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research. I wish to thank Prof. Dr. Judith Schlehe for her much valued mentoring, Dr. Joost **Coté** and the two reviewers of the earlier version of this text for their valuable comments, and Justin Weinstock for doing the proofreading. My special thanks and deep appreciation go to all my research informants without whom this study would not have been possible.

an annual ritual of reconnecting, remembering and recharging. This mass homecoming is known as *mudik Lebaran*. Typically, it involves travel from centres of employment or education, that is, cities and conurbations, where they aspire to make a life for themselves, back to rural villages or provincial towns where the family and friends that they left behind reside. The ritual typically manifests itself in chaotic traffic jams: buses, trains, motorbikes, ships and planes groan under the weight of those returning, each of whom carries presents for loved and revered ones as a proof of how much they have been missed and how much they are valued. The presents and gifts also go to show how successful the donors have been, which helps to justify their absence.

The significance of *mudik* points to how important the ties to one's village, region or province of origin continue to be, but *mudik* also clearly demonstrates that the rural–urban dichotomy remains an important fault-line dividing contemporary Indonesian society. The concern of this study is not to discuss this dichotomy but rather to explore the association of the two in terms of the social and cultural significance, and to call attention to how rurality challenges people's experience of modernity. By paying attention to these social and cultural aspects, the paper demonstrates how Indonesian people effectively engage with their rural and urban lives simultaneously. In this context, the paper is to make a contribution to studies of regional migration, as well as rural–urban interaction, which have not so far been widely studied by academics.[2],[3]

2 Regional migration is also known as *merantau.* In a case study of the Minangkabau ethnic group in West Sumatra, Mochtar Naim (1971: 3–4) pointed out that those who voluntarily had left their homeland for cities throughout Indonesia (*merantau*) were, by and large, the skilled, the educated, the intelligent and in the economically productive age-bracket. At my research sites, especially considering the recent trends in migrating in search of work, the term *merantau* is much less used. More typical is to refer to this as *mengadu nasib* (looking for good fortune). The lower middle class, which has lower economic security, seems to comprise most of those who migrate.

3 Some studies (Lu, 2010; Rukmana, 2007; Firman, 2004; and Dieleman, 2011) have suggested that the rural–urban relation is fundamental in Indonesia. Firman (2004), for example, points out that socio economic dualism pervades Indonesian urban society and Dieleman (2011) addresses rural–urban issues through the lens of new town development.

David Lowenthal (1985: 39–52) has pointed out that the relation between the past and present is that the past has been the source of familiarity, guidance, identity, enrichment and escape from the present. The central idea of this paper is to suggest that this notion of a 'familiar past' is important to contemporary, urbanised Central Javanese, who, during the *Lebaran* holiday, return to their ancestral roots to retain a degree of autonomy from modernity, or to return to their 'disappearing past' as tourists. These two objectives represent separate and apparently contradictory aims: the former seeks to find an authentic past as a source of spiritual nourishment; the latter exploits the past as an object for consumption by transforming it to a 'different country'. In this context, the past is clearly not limited to the geography of its physical setting or territory, but rather, refers more to a sense of cultural entity, lifestyle and identity.

This analysis of the relation between the urban and the rural in terms of its social and cultural significance to urban dwellers returning to Central Java during the *Lebaran* season is a report on an ethnographic study (emphasising a participant–observer approach) of two villages in Central Java; Tegaldowo and Gandurejo in the Gemolong sub-district. Field work was conducted throughout August and September 2010 during the *Lebaran* season.

I should be very clear here to mention that the field work during the August–September 2010 *Lebaran* season was essentially home-ground anthropology. However, with regard to data collection, there is often a question about the objectivity of insider researchers who study their own society, which might lead to an inquiry about whether the values and attitudes of the society in question are being taken for granted. Nevertheless, anthropological study on home ground has value (Jackson, 1987: 8–11; Peirano, 1998; Kahotea, 2011) because it provides a grass-roots perspective (Lithman, 2004: 17). I argue that in relation to this study, the fact that I am a member of the society being investigated affords me familiarity with the day-to-day life and the social context of the people at my research sites and this gives me an understanding

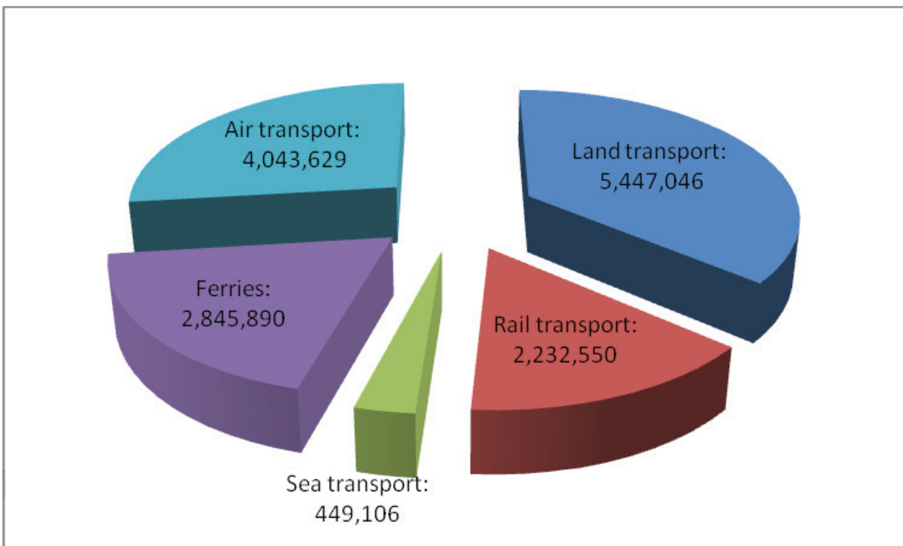
of the unrecorded emotional and cultural significance of the process under investigation, which in turn enables me to identify and examine a unique aspect of Javanese life. Hence, the danger of taking things for granted is something I must be aware of. This article opens by describing peculiarities of the *Lebaran* celebration in Indonesia. It then goes on to present empirical data and concludes with analysis of research findings.

Peculiarities of Indonesian *Lebaran*

Mudik Lebaran is the annual homecoming for most Indonesians, similar to the American tradition of Thanksgiving, the Western Christmas and *Imlek* (Chinese New Year), during which people maintain an ethos of returning to or visiting family. There are at least two peculiarities that make *mudik Lebaran* in Indonesia different from other returning-to-family traditions. The first is that for Muslims and for non-Muslim minorities in Indonesia, the celebration of *Lebaran* is the occasion for everyone to ask forgiveness (*maaf lahir batin*): children of their parents, neighbours of neighbours and, on this day, business people of their customers. This tradition of asking forgiveness; a mixture of Islamic values (Sairin, 2005: 193) and Javanese and other regional customs, has become an Indonesian national tradition. Although *Lebaran* is usually associated with Islam, non-Muslims in Indonesia are also deeply engaged in this tradition. Research suggests that central to its longevity is the key motivation of reunion with one's parents and family and the revitalisation of ties to one's family's place of origin.

The second prominent characteristic of *mudik Lebaran* is with respect to the exodus before and the return from *Lebaran* homecoming. The urban exodus during the last days of Ramadhan marks the Indonesian *Lebaran* as different from *Lebaran* celebrations elsewhere in Muslim Southeast Asia, such as in Malaysia, Brunei, the southern Philippines and southern Thailand and even in the Middle Eastern Islamic countries. From year to year, those who do *merantau* (Naim, 1971; Lindquist, 2009) (a term that refers to the widespread practice of a

circular migration in which Indonesians leave home and travel to work elsewhere for a better standard of living) will return home (*mudik* or *pulang kampung*). Tens of millions of Indonesians leave Jakarta and other urban centres and embark on journeys that might take them thousands of kilometres away to their home towns or villages, using all kinds of public transport, private cars and motorbikes. In 2010, as in previous years, the *Lebaran* season traffic was the heaviest of the year. The Ministry of Transportation reporting on the traffic during *Lebaran* season in year 2010 estimated the following figures, per category, as shown in Table 1.[4]



Source: Posko angkutan tingkat nasional angkutan Lebaran terpadu tahun 2011

Table 1 is indicative of the traffic congestion that this mass exodus must necessarily create with thousands of travellers departing from cosmopolitan Jakarta and other conurbations to their home villages, generally at the same time. Months before *Lebaran*, bus and train tickets to various destinations are sold out. All this evinces the depth of passion

4 Online: http://www.dephub.go.id/lebaran/?Id=1 Accessed 2 January 2011.

and excitement of migrating people, who are constrained only by the supply of tickets, the availability of transport, and the designation of public holidays. The number of travellers, the time of their departures and their destinations, are not controlled; everybody focuses on their personal plans to return to the land of their home village or to their place of origin (*kampung halaman*) (Murphy, 2010: 121).

In 2010, *Lebaran* fell on 10–11 September, which allowed an aggregated holiday period (*libur bersama*) from 9 to 13 September. In Indonesia, this became the longest holiday period of the year. During *Lebaran* holidays, businesses in Jakarta and other urban centres typically shut down or greatly reduce staff and the services they provide. Educational institutions and offices are closed, industrial activities stop and press releases are put on hold. Everything stops as everybody, including the non-Muslim minorities and Indonesians all around the world, celebrates *Lebaran* and the Indonesian diaspora feels oriented towards Indonesia.

Images of *mudik Lebaran*, an interaction of tradition and cosmopolitanism

If we are to understand properly this annual migratory behaviour, it is of course important to keep in mind the modern images that have become associated with *mudik Lebaran*, such as the national public holidays, congested traffic and the ritual of mass consumption that present-giving generates. There is also the increasing importance of electronic devices, such as landline and mobile telephones, that allow voice and written communications; and social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, which turn communication into an interactive dialogue to help keep people in touch.

However, despite the popularity and the power of such technologies in Indonesia at large, the tradition of *mudik Lebaran* is founded on the need to go home in person to ask forgiveness from relatives, friends and neighbours and meeting face-to-face remains obligatory. Sairin (2005) argues that this is because of the belief that asking forgiveness from

others may only be done by asking in person. People go from door to door around their neighbourhood and shake hands (*Halal bihalal*) with past or previous neighbours whom they might see only once a year. Particular to my research sites, Catholics also took part in this tradition of asking forgiveness. Five to eight Catholics who lived in the same neighbourhood lined up outside the door of the local mosque and waited for their Muslim neighbours to finish performing their Eid rituals. Afterwards, men and women, looking natural and sincere, shook hands with those waiting, some of the women kissed each other on the cheek, and although several men were seen not to shake hands with women (for reasons of religious belief), this tradition of asking forgiveness was conducted within a family setting.

A special element of this tradition, unique to Central Java, is the *sungkeman* tradition, which is usually held on the second day of the *Lebaran*. The word *sungkeman* (derived from *sungkem*) refers to the act or custom of showing respect to one's parents by getting down on one's knees and bowing one's head instead of shaking hands (Sudiarno, 2003). It derives from a tradition associated with Javanese royalty, and this undoubtedly is an influential source in establishing the popularity of the 'forgiving tradition' in Java. For instance, the family of Sunarto, who still carry Solonese royal blood, held the traditional *sungkeman* ceremony on the second day of the *Lebaran*.[5] When interviewed, he mentioned that for Javanese who still hold a royal family ethos, *tradisi sungkeman* is still well maintained.

Coming back to one's place of origin, however, is also a way of demonstrating success. Returning in cars, driven by one's chauffeur, for example, or by plane or an executive train is an expression of success, prestige and, demonstrably, of modernity. For lower classes of society, the overcrowded bus or train is a choice of necessity. Typical of their experiences is that of a 25-year-old woman who recounted her agonising experience of queuing for eleven hours in Jakarta's Jatinegara railway

5 To preserve the anonymity of my research participants and respect their confidences, the names mentioned in this paper are not real.

station to get an economy-fare train ticket home to Solo. When she finally got on board, she had to sit for fifteen hours in an overcrowded train to get to her village, Gemolong, which is 477 kilometres from Jakarta. Working as a housemaid in Bekasi, a modern suburb of Jakarta, where she earned Rp500,000 (US$55) per month, she was returning home to be with her two daughters whom she had left behind in the village, and for whose future she had gone to the city to work. In this case then, the home-coming tradition was reversed; the mother was returning to her children because economic imperatives had forced her to leave. To her, and to people like her in a similar economic position, whatever the rural village still represents, the city is a destination of hope.

Regardless of their economic circumstances, going home at present is obligatory for the persons who have left and is often expressed in extreme, even exaggerated form, as in the case of a motorbike traveller interviewed. To reduce the expense of travelling, he chose a motorbike as his transport. He travelled the 477 kilometres to his home with plastic bags stuffed with food and clothes and other *oleh-oleh* (gifts) tied to the motorbike, which had a wooden board extending from the bike's seat to fit extra luggage. For this young man, who works in Jakarta in a glue factory, it was his fifth *Lebaran* trip by motorbike. This time, however, he did not ride his own motorbike but borrowed one from his *sobat* (good friend). He did not directly admit to it but the reason for borrowing his friend's motorbike became clear when he mentioned that the Honda Tiger (a brand of Japanese motorbike) made him look more impressive.

> I prefer riding a motorbike. It is very inconvenient (*sek-sekan*) to take a bus or train. A motorbike is much more economical and of course practical. We also use it when we travel to visit our relatives in the village. We do not need to spend extra money for that. I went home alone, so it was no problem. I took a rest twice, in Cirebon and Pekalongan, for an hour or so at each stop. I rode the Tiger, so it was really fun and made me feel happy. (Interview, 14 September 2010)

Of equal importance for *mudik Lebaran* is appearance; it plays a key and immediate role by symbolising returnees' achievement of success and it also demonstrates the modernity achieved by leaving home. New clothing is worn, the use of electronic devices, such as mobile phones and iPods are openly displayed to demonstrate familiarity with 'global modernity'. When used spontaneously in the home village, it demonstrates their freedom from an identity attached to what was their former village home. In Indonesia the village is associated with informality, poverty, and the retention of rural traditions in an urban setting (Rukmana, 2007). They are considered places that are on the margin, backward and less developed. Thus, although coming home to confirm the values of family and tradition, the returnees are also concerned to demonstrate their distance, their separation from the past, their modernity and their capacity to break from tradition and bring about change in their lives.

The second dominant theme, which is closely intertwined with the display of clothing and gadgets, is a shift of language. Language is important here because in the vast mix of ethnic, linguistic and regional differences that makes up contemporary Indonesia, language or accent or word choice is the easiest way to identify a person's region of origin. In this context, the Indonesian language or *Bahasa Indonesia* represents cosmopolitanism and modernity, the language of trans-regional mobility. Javanese, in this context, becomes a regional language, and is seen as rural or backward, tied to place, to immobility and tradition. In the status stakes the most prestigious linguistic signals are those linked to the dialect of Jakarta, commonly referred to as *bahasa gaul* (Hanan, 2008: 54–69). This is illustrated in an interesting case of a young couple who proudly informed me that they have a five-year-old son who still retains his Jakarta dialect. They had migrated to Jakarta to make a living, but after experiencing the difficult commute from Bekasi (on the periphery of Jakarta) for several years, the mother finally decided to return to her village. From my informal interview (*ngobrol-ngobrol)* with this woman, Siti, it became obvious that she was upset that her son

was mixing village Javanese in his speech, showing signs that he was gradually adopting Javanese speech and loosing his Jakarta 'edge'.

> Hhhh, [sigh] we live in the village now. Our language has become mixed. It is sad. My son said *moh-moh* instead of *enggak mau* (I do not want it). What is that? His Indonesian is becoming uncool lately. Heheheh . . . [laughing]. (Interview, September 2010)

Siti's case reveals that in rural Central Java, using the Indonesian language is an expression of modernity, although for some it is a matter of practical necessity as well. From this perspective, speaking *Bahasa Indonesia* instead of Javanese is one expression of becoming modern. This observation applies equally to radio and television in Surakarta and Yogyakarta; as operators from the representative technologies of modernity, announcers try their very best to speak like Jakartans in order not to be considered *ndeso* (backward and village-like). This suggests that although *mudik Lebaran* demonstrates that in Java urban and rural life remain inseparable; there nevertheless, exists a distinct 'fault-line' dividing contemporary Indonesian society. Being able to demonstrate an association with the centre of Indonesian modernity, by speaking with a Jakartan accent, or being Jakartanised in terms of behaviour and dress is to demonstrate pride in the symbols of modernity, and by implication, distance from a rural, unmodernised past.

The Political Meanings of *Mudik Lebaran*

Besides functioning as an opportunity for family reunions, and for successful and less successful rural emigrants to show off, there are at least three more practical public functions served by *mudik Lebaran*. Most immediately, it serves to underpin the psychological and physical hardship that Indonesia's modern economy has imposed on a nation that statistically remains predominantly rural. Shirley Christie (2010) has reported that where more than 30 per cent of Indonesia's population is between 19 and 24 years old, the youth unemployment is between

7 and 8 per cent. As a consequence, migration for work has become increasingly significant in its intensity and its diversity over recent decades (Morawska, 2001; Okólski, in Wallace and Stola, 2002: 105). Jakarta becomes a perfect destination for these unemployed young villagers because it offers such an array of all possible kinds of formal and informal jobs catering to all levels of aspiration and skill to Indonesians from anywhere in the archipelago and of whatever social class. On the other hand, *Lebaran* homecomers open a way for their relatives who are also jobless in the villages. The pulling factors to them are the glamour and lure of malls, the taste of modern cuisines, the promise of work and income and the pleasure of modern recreation.[6] They hold out to their village relatives not simply the promise of material and economic gain, but also the hope of a different way of life (Warouw, 2008: 105; Hadiz, 1997: 124). For a young man I spoke to in the village of Tegaldowo, the 'urban' represents modernity which becomes an aspiration and a future (Warouw, 2008).

> It is better for me to go to Jakarta. I do not want to work (*macul*) in the paddy field (*sawah*) . . . There is no good income [in doing that]. It actually will make my skin black, heheh . . . I would accept any kind of job [in Jakarta]. First, I will help my aunt in the market (*pasar*). Later, I will see what I can do next. But to stay in the village and work in the paddy field is my last choice. (Interview statement, September 2010).

According to this, the idea of modernity is similar to the logic behind the proponents of modernisation theory, with its linear model of development (for example, Lerner, 1958; Rostow, 1960): leaving the agrarian life in favour of a modern industrialised and high-technology life.

Even though the core functions of *mudik* are to ask forgiveness and to enable family gatherings (*silaturohim*), as Fauzi (2010) states, *Lebaran*

6 Pizza, french fries, steak, burgers and chicken nuggets are foods that are widely noted as modern food for most of my research participants.

is also the perfect time to *unjuk gigi,* that is, to show off. In his view, returnees feel that they have a 'social responsibility' to demonstrate their success by showing their new found wealth, displaying their clothing and possessions, and looking good. One interviewee, a 57-year-old man, proudly informed me that his three children drove their own cars home for *Lebaran*. It is not difficult to see how owning a car becomes a contemporary symbol of wealth and modernity that serves to bolster social prestige, particularly in the Indonesian countryside. It reflects an urban lifestyle and the owner's success and, as anywhere else in the world, social status is confirmed, if not determined, by material possessions. Some returnees admitted that using rented cars for *mudik Lebaran* has become a common practice to achieve this recognition. Car ownership or even a superior brand of motorbike can significantly increase someone's social status in the village where status is usually measured by material possessions. Conversely, for many Indonesians who choose not to return home for various social and economic reasons, the idea of *mudik* often stirs feelings of *malu*, which roughly means shame or embarrassment (Boellstorff and Lindquist; 2006: 6). They then experience a sense of feeling *malu* in their urban neighbourhood for not doing *mudik* and will feel embarrassed in front of those of their co-workers who did return home. As many of my research participants mentioned; 'returning home for *Lebaran* is a moral and cultural obligation that one must carry out to the best of one's ability'.

Consumptive behaviour is also clearly seen during this homecoming. Some informants revealed that *Lebaran* is the most extravagant and expensive time of the year. Relating to this, there is one telling instance: an informant, who earns Rp1,000,000 (US$110) a month only, mentioned that she had spent Rp2,000,000 (US$220) on clothes and gifts for her family in the village. She admitted that *Lebaran* is the one month of the year when she spends the most money. This suggests that for many, managing the social cost of an ideal *mudik Lebaran* is an impossible goal. However, this informant looked happy enough to be able to achieve the amount she did and this seems to confirm Wolf's

findings in relation to rural Javanese, women factory workers, who saw their work as a way of increasing their buying power so they could conform to a modern style (Wolf, 1992, cited in Warouw, 2008: 193).

The third meaning *mudik* has is that of a touristic moment. After having been buried under the weight of routine jobs, the *Lebaran* homecoming takes on the semblance of tourism for those whose ancestors are from villages. The rich, in particular, described later as the ones who are being spiritually exhausted, are initially described as tourists seeking relaxation from the real world by visiting the unsophisticated, primitive past of their ancestors. They are like tourists in that they leave behind their air-conditioned lives, the inevitable annual flooding, urban crime, and the reality of making money. This return home might provide a reminder of their past, the nostalgia of a much slower, carefree and happier rural life. For example, Moel, a father of two children, told me how tired he was from the industrial, capitalist disciplines and the general hardship and pressure of work in Jakarta resulting from the very bad air pollution, high crime rate, daily traffic jams and high living costs. In Warouw's (2008) study of women factory workers in Tangerang, a leading manufacturing centre close to Jakarta, he describes the high stress experienced by such urban workers who have established a relatively permanent urban existence far from their rural homeland, as a feeling of being chased (*keteteran*). To use Warouw's words, the practice of *mudik Lebaran* has become a strategy for those urbanised people for managing their alienation in the urban centres. Romanticising the thought of *mudik* and maintaining a close connection with their village of origin provides feelings of emotional security. In his study, those urban migrant workers imagine the countryside, their place of origin, as a place of natural purity; of rice fields (*sawah*), clean rivers and peace of mind (Warouw, 2008: 108–109). He has further noted that the practice of *mudik* helps preserve the ideal of rural nature and a peaceful life, despite the fact that in the countryside, rural development has diminished people's experience of nature and replaced it with urban-centred themes of modernisation (Warouw, 2008: 109).

Returning home, however, does involve a degree of adjustment. I observed that at the very beginning of their stay in the village, returnees usually grumbled about food and the lack of the facilities they were used to in the cities, such as air-conditioning and modern entertainment. They also preferred to speak *Bahasa Indonesia* rather than to revert to the intricacies of Javanese. But after some time, homecomers began to enjoy the social integration and the genuine family life in the village. Here they had a higher degree of social respect, which they rarely find in cities and, as they reintegrated with village society, gradually reverted to modes of speaking in which this respect was given and received.

Conclusion

From the findings I have presented, I would argue that *Lebaran* homecomers' experiences of the different world of their present urban life, with its different frames of meaning, does not significantly suppress their longing for, and engagement, with their former village's frames of meaning. The Jakarta returnees who originate from the villages of Tegaldowo and Gandurejo, where most of my field work was conducted, experience this type of 'simultaneity' in their lives. Although they are embedded in the social life of their current homes in the city, they are still intimately connected to their ancestral villages through the annual practice of *mudik*. In this regard, the practice of *mudik Lebaran* inverts the common understanding that the line between urban and rural is delineated independently. As I have observed, migrants do not have feelings of displacement that strip away their rural identity or their past. In this regard, they could even negotiate double or multiple identities. These issues became important for their sense of who they are. During their short visit in the village, they become again members of the village community by participating in village festivals such as *Bakdo Ketupat* or *Bakdo Sawal,* a Javanese tradition held one week after *Lebaran*. These social and cultural practices become what Michael Leaf (cited in

Tirtosudarmo, 2010: 163) terms the 'interaction zone' where urban and rural activities are juxtaposed.

Thus, the picture of *mudik Lebaran* sketched above suggests that urban–rural affinity is well managed. The cultural tradition of *mudik Lebaran* provides those who return with regular contact with their mother village (Lundström-Burghoorn, 1981: 67), with their rural identity and with the place in which they continue to belong. These facts do not support the notion that social and cultural change follows a linear path from a traditional past towards a modernised present. Referring to Lowenthal's (1985) idea of the relations between the past and present, wherein the past has been the source of familiarity, guidance, identity, enrichment and escape from the present, *mudik Lebaran* becomes a useful lens that captures the way in which urban migrants zoom back and forth between their past and present country, in order to continue managing the intimate interaction between their rural and urban lives.

My argument here shares much common ground with that put forward by Schiller (2005) and Swazey (2008) who, in their study of transnational migration, have highlighted the concept of simultaneity. Schiller argues that it is important to understand that, in living as a migrant, it is possible to become incorporated in a locality, its economy, its institutions and its forms of cultural production, while at the same time living within social networks that are intimately tied elsewhere (Schiller, 2005: 159). Swazey, writing about an Indonesian immigrant population in the Seacoast Region of southern New Hampshire, suggests that those Indonesian international migrants or transmigrants also live within two systems and that transnational experiences facilitate a reconnection with aspects of home from afar. Although they are embedded in the institutional, political and social life of their current home in the United States, they are still intimately connected to Indonesia through kinship and other social relations (Swazey, 2008: 62). The new home of the present in an urban environment does not strip away their past or rural life.

This study shows how urbanised *Lebaran* returnees are in fact living simultaneously within dual cultural and social systems: the rural and the urban, the traditional and the modern, the past and the present. As suggested by Joseph Gusfield (1967: 351) in his study of modern India, the relations between the traditional and the modern do not necessarily involve displacement, conflict or mutual exclusivity. Tradition and modernity form the bases of ideologies and movement in which such polar opposites are converted into aspirations. In her study of urban city planning in Australia, Kate Murphy (2009) situates 'rurality' as a fundamental aspect of Australian modernity and argues that the rural is just as significant a reference point as the urban in discourses about modernity. She explains that 'rurality' operated as shorthand for past certainties, for static and solid truths among an elite who displayed an inclination to look backwards, an impulse which helped to define their modernity (Murphy, 2009: 125). The same is true in this particular study. Accordingly, it must be emphasised that the binaries of the rural and the urban, the traditional and the modern, the past and the present, are neutralised within this *mudik Lebaran* setting. More precisely, this cultural practice even represents and exemplifies intimate conversations between these categories, which are widely believed to be structurally opposed in the common linear theory of social change. For these homecomers, the village life—their past—is not then a bygone age. It continues to be associated with their urban lives and entangled with the present. As Lowenthal (1985: 224) put it, these migrants want to make the past present and to make the distant near. The paper finally suggests that the continual interplay between the village and town proves neither past and present nor rural and urban are in categorically opposed realms (in different countries).

Bibliography

Boulanger, Clare L. (2002). 'Inventing tradition, inventing modernity: Dayak identity in urban Sarawak'. *Asian ethnicity*, 3(2): 221–231.

Boellstorff, Tom and Johan Lindquist. (2004). 'Bodies of emotion: rethinking culture and emotion through Southeast Asia'. *Ethnos: journal of anthropology*, 69(4): 437–444.

Christie, Shirley. (2011). 'High rate of youth umemployment presents big challenge; World Bank'. *Jakarta globe*, 27 March 2011. Accessed online: http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/bisindonesia/high-rate-of-youth-unemployment-presents-big-challenge-world-bank/431663. Downloaded December 2011.

Dieleman, Marleen. (2011). 'New town development in Indonesia: renegotiating, shaping and replacing institutions'. Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land-en Volkenkunde, 167(1): 60–85.

Fauzi, Malik Ridwan. (2010, 3 September). 'Fenomena mudik Lebaran; (suatu kajian sosiologi ekonomi)' [Web article]. Retrieved from http://www.celotehmalik.co.cc/2010/09/fenomena-mudik-lebaran-suatu-kajian.html. Accessed 16/10/2010.

Firman, T. (2004). 'New town development in Jakarta Metropolitan Region: a perspective of spatial segregation'. *Habitat International,* 28 (3): 349-368. Accessed December 2011.

Guinness, Patrick. (2009). *Kampung, Islam and state in urban Java*. Singapore: Asian Association of Australia in association with National University of Singapore Press.

Gusfield, Joseph R. (1967). 'Tradition and modernity: misplaced polarities in the study of social change'. *American journal of sociology*, 72(4).

Hadiz, Vedi R. (1997). *Workers and the state in New Order Indonesia*. London: Routledge.

Hanan, David. (2008). 'Changing social formations in Indonesian and Thai teen movies'. In Ariel Heryanto (ed.). *Popular culture in Indonesia: fluid identities in post-authoritarian politics*. Oxford: Routledge.

Jackson, Anthony (ed.). (1987). *Anthropology at home*. ASA monograph 25. New York: Tavistock Publications.

Kahotea, Des Tatana. (2006). 'The 'native informant' anthropologist as kaupapa Māori research'. *MAI review*, 1, Article 1.

Leaf, Michael. (2008). 'New Urban Frontiers: Periurbanization and (re) territorialization in Southeast Asia.' In Tirtosudarmo, Riwanto. (2010). 'Social transformation in the northern coastal cities of Java: a comparative study in Cirebon and Gresik'. *Journal of Indonesian sciences and humanities*, 3: 161–170.

Lerner, Daniel. (1958), *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East,* New York: Free Press.

Lindquist, Johan. (2009). *The Anxieties of Mobility: Migration and Tourism in Indonesian Borderlands*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

Lithman, Yngve Georg. (2004). 'Anthropologists on home turf: how green is the grass?' *Anthropologica*, 46(1): 17–27.

Lowenthal, David. (1985). *The past is a foreign country*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lu Y. (2010). ‘Rural–urban migration and health: evidence from longitudinal data in Indonesia’. *Social science and medicine*, 70(1): 412–419.

Lundström-Burghoorn, Wil. (1981). *Minahasa civilisation: a tradition of change*. Goteberg: Acta Universitas Gothoburgensis.

Morowska, Eva. (2001). ‘The Handbook of International Migration: The American Experience’. *Journal of American Ethnic History* 20 (Winter 2001): 115-118.

Murphy, Kate. (2009). ‘“The modern idea is to bring the country into the city”: Australian urban reformers and the ideal of rurality, 1900–1918’. *Rural history*, 20(1).

Naim, Mochtar. (1971). *Merantau: causes and effects of Minangkabau voluntary migration*. Occasional paper 5. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Peirano, Mariza GS. (1998). ‘When anthropology is at home: the different contexts of a single discipline’. *Annual review of anthropology*, 27.

Rostow, W. W. (1960). ‘*The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto’*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rukmana, Deden. (2007, 1 March). ‘Urbanization and Suburbanization in Jakarta [Web forum article]. Retrieved from http://indonesiaurbanstudies.blogspot.com/2007/03/urbanization-and-suburbanization-in.html. Accessed 01/11/2010.

Sairin, Sjafri. (2010). *Riak-riak pembangunan; perspektif antropologi*. Yogyakarta: Media Wacana.

Saksvik, Per Øystein, Carla Dahl-Jørgensen, Sturle Danielsen Tvedt and Trine Elaine Eiken. (2010). ‘Identity, over-commitment, work environment, and health outcomes among immigrant workers’. *Journal of identity and migration studies*, 4(2).

Schiller, Nina Glick. (2005). ‘Lived simultaneity and discourses of diasporic difference’. In WW Anderson and Robert G Lee (eds). (2005). *Displacements and diasporas: Asians in the Americas*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.

Sudiarno, Tarko. (2003). *Jakarta post*, 29 November 2003.

Swazey, Kelli A. (2008). *Carrying culture and re(creating) nation through Christianity: Minahasan culture and identity in transnational Indonesian churches in New England.* (Master thesis). University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa.

Syahyuti. (2008, 25 March). ‘“Pembangunan desa” mesti didasarkan perspektif orang desa’ [Web log post]. Retrieved from http://syahyuti.multiply.com/journal/item/6/6. Accessed 02/11/2010.

Wallace, Claire and Dariusz Stola, (eds). (2001). *Patterns of migration in Central Europe*. , Palgrave: Basingstoke & New York.

Warouw, Nicolaas. (2008). ‘Industrial workers in transition; women’s experiences of factory work in Tangerang’. In Michele Ford and Lyn Parker. (2010). *Women and Work in Indonesia*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Wolf, DL. (1992). *Factory daughters: gender, household dynamics and rural industrialization in Java*. Berkeley: University of California Press.