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**Mecca or Mexico City?  
Social Media, Empathy, and Movement in Contemporary Indonesia**

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**Mecca or Mexico City?**  
**Social Media, Empathy, and Movement in Contemporary Indonesia**

**by**  
**Jeffrey Flynn Gan**

**Thesis**

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this thesis to the memory of my grandparents. Pop Pop and Grandmom; Opa and Oma; I love you, I honor you, I miss you.

## **HT: Acknowledgements**

I would like to acknowledge the many people who have supported me in this process. Without parents like Ron and Judy Gan; without mentors like Charlotte Canning, Rebecca Rossen, Laura Gutiérrez, Amelia Liwe, and Martina Li; or without friends like Sagatom Saha, Cassidy Lamminack, Amanda Hancock, and Josh Kopin; or without the love and support of chosen family in Austin and DC; or my blood family in the mid-Atlantic, Sacramento, Maastricht, and Jakarta – this work would not have been possible.

## **Abstract**

### **Mecca or Mexico City?**

#### **Social Media, Empathy, and Movement in Contemporary Indonesia**

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Contemporary Indonesia is at a critical juncture. The intense forces of globalization are shaping how Indonesians position themselves in relationship with the intensifying, transnational movement of bodies wrought by state violence and neoliberal economics. This thesis examines how certain Indonesians perform empathetic responses to these global motions via social media. The first case study looks at Indonesian Islam and Twitter through the lens of the #saverohingya movement. It examines a protest action performed by fans of the Persib Bandung soccer club and the attendant discourse it elicited on Twitter. The second case study examines the Instagram presence of Komunitas Salihara, a cosmopolitan private arts venue in South Jakarta which presented a variety of Latin American themed programming contemporaneously to the #saverohingya movement. I posit that social media not only serves as an archive of performance but that it also accretes performative context, allowing users to enact their identification with transnational Islamic identities or cosmopolitan neoliberal logics through their engagement with the media in a way that troubles extant performance studies and dance studies literature on archive, repertoire, and empathy.

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## Introduction

In late December of 2016, a brief video took Indonesia by storm. In the heavily edited clip, Ahok, the governor general of Jakarta, addresses a crowd in the Thousand Islands district of the city. This scenario was Ahok's governorship in a microcosm. Ahok himself carried a cosmopolitan promise; he was a "double minority;" as the first Chinese and Christian politician to occupy this enormously powerful position – particularly under a Chinese name – Ahok symbolized a dramatic leap deeper into multi-religious, multi-ethnic politics for a country that has historically aspired to both and achieved neither. In electing this man, Jakartans appeared to affirm the opening of Indonesia to liberal democratic norms that had been established by a succession of increasingly cosmopolitan national politicians since the collapse of the dictatorship in 1998, culminating in the election of Jokowi, Jakarta's previous governor and Ahok's close political ally, as president of Indonesia in 2014, on a platform of reform, civil rights, and democracy.

The setting, similarly, sits at a juncture. Thousand Islands – *Kepulauan Seribu* – occupies a liminal space within the sprawling metropolis of Jakarta. Whereas the density of the city extends south from the coast into the heart of Java, the islands in Jakarta bay are picturesque and largely wild. About 10% of these islands are fully developed, and real estate developers are hungry. Taxation upon further, private development of this small archipelago potentially offered Ahok's government a source of revenue for funding an enormous dike which would hold back the rising Java sea from its slow assault on the sinking city. In this way *Kepulauan Seribu* is a mise-en-abyme; like the larger

archipelago that contains it, it is sinking into a place of mobility – mobility of carbon, bodies, and capital in an increasingly globalized world.

The video in question is, above all, short. It is grainy, perhaps shot by a cellphone. In it, Ahok addresses a crowd during a campaign stop on one of the inhabited islands. His reelection campaign has encountered stiff opposition from Islamist groups. He tells the crowd not to be “deceived” by politicians quoting surah Al-Maidah 51, which some believe to forbid Muslims from electing a non-Muslim leader. The backlash was immediate and intense. As the video circulated online, hundreds of demonstrators descended upon government offices in the city, demanding Ahok’s imprisonment or execution. Ahok was charged under Indonesia’s blasphemy law, lost his reelection bid, and was sentenced to two years in prison.

As a Chinese-Indonesia Catholic living in the diaspora, I was horrified. As I scrolled through my newsfeeds and media digests, I had a deeply corporeal reaction to the conviction. Ahok is a prolific Instagram user and I encounter his activity on the platform throughout his trail, conviction, and subsequent imprisonment on a nearly daily basis. Each time, it feels like the blood is being drawn out of my forehead and down into my body, pooling in the back of my skull, in the bottom of my stomach. I feel betrayed, I feel deeply saddened. Above all I feel nausea. This feeling is not totally novel. I’ve felt it before – it’s the feeling of watching Mother Courage pick up her wagon once more. It’s the feeling you get watching the jaws of tragedy closing around a person, an idea, on stage. And yet, I feel daily it at my kitchen table in Austin, TX, on almost precisely the opposite side of the planet.

This project is an attempt to untangle that somatic feeling and others like it. How is it that a literally virtual arrangement of data can affect the body of another in such an intense way? If we immerse our own bodies into the internet platforms used by Indonesians, we can glean some insights. Through Twitter and Instagram specifically, many Indonesians receive images of bodily motion beyond the archipelago and arrange their bodies in response. I argue that in this way social media functions as both a record of performance – protest, dance, theatre – and a site of embodied performance. Not only do many Indonesians circulate images of their bodies reconfigured in response to global circulation, but they furthermore embody their responses through their engagement with the platforms themselves. In this way, a Twitter thread accretes performance as it circulates and is responded to by other users.

In this thesis, I will examine two complementary cases in which Indonesian social media users perform in a globalized context. The first case will examine an Indonesian protest in response to the ethnic cleansing and expulsion of the largely Muslim Rohingya population of northern Myanmar. Images of this protest and rumors of institutional retribution gave rise to a rich, nuanced Twitter environment in September of 2017 as users discussed the friction between Indonesians as members of a global community of Muslims and the Eurocentrism of multilateral institutions.

The second case will examine programming at Komunitas Salihara, an independent arts venue in South Jakarta, over a roughly contemporaneous period. The classes and productions offered by the venue construct Komunitas Salihara as a space where Indonesians can ally themselves with the circulation of capital and bodies in the

globalized era, particularly in consuming programming that positions Indonesians as subject and Latin America and Latin Americans as object. This relationship is evidenced in Komunitas Salihara's Instagram page which promotes its programming and serves a place for individuals attracted to its content to engage with both the venue and each other.

The purpose of this examination is twofold. First, it will seek to describe the unique dynamics of performance as it moves through social media, destabilizing extant performance studies and dance studies literature. Second, it will illuminate two modes of responses to globalization currently being pursued by Indonesians; a renewed commitment to a particular form of Islamic identity which challenges extant multi-religious discourse in the archipelago, and an identification with cosmopolitan aesthetics, norms, and practices which similarly destabilizes *keindonesiaan* (Indonesianness) through the co-opting of neoliberal and Orientalist logics. These cases will demonstrate that the Indonesians who generate such performative engagements on Twitter and Instagram are looking to circulatory currents beyond their shores. By performing with, on, and through these platforms the Indonesians I examine engage with a kinesthetic empathetic response to the turbulence of our intensely globalized times.

Phones in hand, they ask themselves which currents they choose to swim in – currents flowing to and from Mecca, currents flowing to and from Mexico City.

My methodology consists of close reading of a variety of web materials, specifically tweets and Twitter profiles, Instagram posts and comments, and promotional materials from the Komunitas Salihara website. My dramaturgical practice is centered on aligning form and content; in this spirit, I restrict the scope of this project solely to

primary sources readily available online. This will force me as a to perform my research in parallel to the performances I examine.

Though a close reading of images – pictures, gifs, videos, as well as text – is the foundation of my method in this project, my approach to each case will respond to the peculiarities of each format. For the Rohingya protest movement, I am exploring Twitter; I used the language sorting function to find Indonesian posts tagged #saverohingya. I am primarily interested in a series of interactions spawned by a pro-Rohingya, *koreo* demonstration by Bobotoh, a fan organization supporting Persib Bandung, a Javanese soccer club. I am inspired by a snowball sampling methodology, chasing materials through the complex web of tweets, retweets, favorites and replies.

Twitter's format and culture encourages users to interact in great depth, generating, circulating, and editing content for one another. The motion of performance through this web of interaction is key to my project. First, I examine the initial burst of activity around the bodily arrangement inherent in the *koreo*. Next, I explore #koinuntukPSSI, a protest movement that arose in response to rumors of an institutional crackdown on the demonstrators.

For my exploration of Komunitas Salihara, I will rely on Instagram posts available through the KS account. Instagram has emerged as a lively forum for many Indonesians – its thoroughly manicured imagery and the controlled, dialogic engagement between poster and responders make the format easily analyzed through close reading.

I will focus on two posts advertising programming roughly contemporary to the #saverohingya movement. The first is an advertisement for a Bachata class as part of a

larger suite of Latin dance classes. The second post promotes a touring production of “+51 Aviación San Borja,” a contemporary theatre piece by a Japanese company, Okazai Art Theatre, exploring the experiences of Japanese emigrants in Latin America. I will use my close readings of these texts to unspool the cosmopolitan dynamics in play when Indonesians seek to consume *Latinidad*. These chapters will be followed by a synthesis in which I compare and contrast these cases, drawing out both commonalities which may speak to the dynamics of performance and the body on social media and differences which might demonstrate the profusion of Indonesian responses to the intense circulations wrought by globalization. Additionally, I will propose alternative explanatory frameworks that may be worth exploring more fully in future projects.

I draw most heavily upon three scholars – Susan Leigh Foster, Diana Taylor, and Arjun Appadurai – to explore the phenomena evident in these cases. From Foster, I am specifically interested in understanding kinesthetic empathy. I use this concept to explore the connection between Indonesians and the bodies they might access through these social media platforms. From Taylor, I grapple with her notions of archive and repertoire. The deployment of social media in these cases upsets a tidy dyad and suggests that performance on these platforms moves in ways unforeseen by Taylor’s scholarly work. Finally, I take up Appadurai’s notion of “scapes.” He asserts that the meeting of deterritorialized images and deterritorialized populations is a crucial feature of globalization, and one that has generated unique topographies. I adopt these to articulate the particular nature of the examined cases; the phenomena I describe are kinesthetic empathetic responses, freed to exhibit in both archival and repertory modes through the possibilities opened by mediation on their respective platforms.

## Literature Review

I am deeply indebted to performance studies scholar Diana Taylor's work on repertoire. My project is in discussion with *The Archive and the Repertoire; Performance of Cultural Memory in the Americas* (2004). Taylor sets forward the repertoire as a body of transmitted knowledge, existing in parallel relationship to the texts and writings collected in the archive. She demonstrates this relationship through a series of relatively short case studies on performance in the Americas. Taylor's fundamental goal as I perceive it is twofold – to elevate the repertoire as a repository of authoritative knowledge and to argue for a hemispheric perspective on performance. If fully realized, Taylor argues, these goals would reconfigure not only the field of performance studies (“what performance studies allows us to do”) but also relationships of power in the Western hemisphere (16). Or perhaps, Taylor sees herself as pulling back the curtain more than building an alternative future. By arguing that performance escapes ephemerality through the reproduction of the repertoire, Taylor asserts that resistance to hegemony survives in the bodies of the oppressed, even if not the archives of the oppressors.

I find Taylor's work frustrating and intriguing. It seems to me to grapple with an almost impossibly large subject – history and lineages encoded on the bodies of half the globe – but it does so with confidence and empathy for the reader. Taylor's assertion that scenario puts the body of the spectator in the frame will be a crucial link between her work, the other literature that I draw upon, and my project. Furthermore, Taylor's

ambition in structuring a hemispheric vision of performance is inspiring to me, and motivates me to conceive of the Pacific as similar arena of repertory performance, or stage for scenarios of globalization.

Like Taylor, dance studies scholar Susan Leigh Foster's *Choreographing Empathy* (2011) explores the relationship between bodies in motion, though her focus is less on the explicit transmission of knowledges and more on the affective connection between bodies at a sometimes neuromuscular-level. To do so, Foster braids together choreography, kinesthesia and empathy. Foster draws out historical, epistemological analysis of all three elements. First, she historicizes choreography, defined here as the systematized writing of dance and movement. Foster places in parallel the evolution of the written systematization of bodily movement, the notion of authorship in movement, the widening sense of which bodies are allowed to author what movement, and the geometric division of land in the pursuit of European nationalism and colonialism. Foster shows that the control of movement authorship is splintering, moving from the hands of the (White) (often male) Hegemon and into a diffuse space beyond. She begins to move towards a vision of the body groomed for "global presentation," trained in multiple traditions sampled from across cultural movement vocabulary (71).

Foster, like Taylor, argues that the body of the viewer is fundamentally implicated in viewing movement. The mechanism for this, according to Foster, is kinesthesia; the neuromuscular sense of the body. She also draws on emergent neurological understandings of kinesthesia to argue that a viewer "dances along" with viewed movement, that perception and movement are indivisible. Second, she begins to discuss



the “networked body,” a kinesthesia fundamentally deterritorialized by access to GPS technology. (123)

She ties these two – micro level neurons and macro level satellites – to a potentially new, post-modern kinesthesia. Making reference to the social posturing of individuals on Facebook she argues that “this body draws upon cyber-kinesthesia to rehearse options for making its way in the world.” If we accept that the internet may be an archive, then this emergent sense expands upon the troubled archive/repertoire dyad proposed by Taylor. The archive becomes the source and the site of the performing, mediated body.

This implication is fundamentally augmented by deterritorializing technologies – Foster spends much of the final chapter discussing two immersive dance works where audience members are directed by cell phone (187-196). I will draw this out – this body-to-body implication disrupts the European project of the nation state. Thus, Foster’s performance analysis strengthens my project, providing me with the tools to analyze how the transnational movement of bodies in Southeast Asia broadly can compel the movement of bodies in Indonesia specifically.

In *Modernity at Large* (1996), anthropologist Arjun Appadurai attempts to graph the contours of an increasingly complex and transnational imaginary. In this book, he discusses the emergent phenomenon of deterritorialized images meeting deterritorialized populations (1996). This is the credo that a generation of anthropologists and fellow travelers (including myself) have taken up in studying the cultural flows and eddies produced by globalization. *Modernity at Large* is a work about electronic mediation

meeting mass migration, which together form new landscapes of imagination. The relevance for my project is clear. I argue that the transnational movement of bodies, interacting with mediated images, produce landscapes of affiliation and imagery evident in the globalized proliferation of certain choreographies.

Beyond this central lens, Appadurai makes several important and contentious claims about globalization. He is adamant that globalization is not synonymous with global homogenization – an assertion that sets him apart from anthropologists like George Ritzer (2004). Rather, Appadurai envisions a world of many emergent imaginaries, connected along five axes that constitute novel global cultural flows. These flows, which Appadurai terms “*scapes*,” function along specific pathways carved by the global proliferation of certain technologies (33). This is both literal – he illustrates *technoscapes* with the then-novel movement of international technology and expertise into Libyan oilfields – and figurative – *ideoscapes* seems to primarily refer to the global spread of Western human rights discourse; “images and terms” like *sovereignty* and *welfare* (34-36).

Writing in the early 1990s, Appadurai could not have accounted for what would happen to these flows under the collapse of global socialism, the triumph of neoliberal economics, the proliferation of satellite television and then, of course, the internet. These developments accelerated these cultural flows and complicated them immensely. I will expand on some of Appadurai’s concepts in light of recent advancements in communication technology. In initially describing mediation meeting mass migration, Appadurai describes a scene of South Asian cab drivers in Chicago listening to cassette

tapes of religious sermons recorded in Pakistan (4). He does this to illustrate the receding importance of the nation state in the face of globalization.

Appadurai repeatedly identifies imagination as a primary vector of the cultural experience of globalization. He expands on Benedict Anderson's identification of print culture as a primary means by which nations constitute themselves as communities; limited, sovereign, and *imagined* (28-31, emphasis added). Appadurai argues that these communities are dislodged from limitation and sovereignty through the intervention of mass media, and that such communities exist in the deterritorialized imagery and imaginations. This is sensible given the context in which he was writing – the Pakistani cab driver, experiencing recorded sermon, cannot impact the moment-to-moment performance encoded on the tape, in effect rendering him a deterritorialized receiver of a transnational signal. This is no longer the case. Through streaming services like Facebook Live or Twitch or even through the engagement offered by Twitter, Snapchat, or Instagram, this diasporic community might now be able to have a nearly synchronous, mediated participation with such a sermon. This collapse of distance and time intensely heightens communal identification through performance.

The promise of participation inherent in contemporary mediated performances challenges Appadurai's formulation of imagination and community. When an Indonesian woman tweets a selfie of her own body holding a sign saying #saverohingya, she is not engaging in an imagined community – she is participating, actively affirming her place in a transnational, mediated, Islamic community through her bodily performance. The mediated archive of performance becomes the real site of communal identification.

I am heavily indebted to Appadurai's decentering of the state, both in his interest in the porousness of state borders when confronted with global cultural flows and his prescient rejection of the United States as the core of the global system. "The United States," he writes, "is no longer the puppeteer of a world system of images but is only one node of a complex transnational construction of imaginary landscapes" (31). Writing on the eve of the so-called unipolar moment, this is a quietly revolutionary sentence. Though I cannot shrug off my position as an American scholar writing about Indonesia, I feel that Appadurai's scape framework partly frees me from the America-centric stance of much of performance studies and dance studies research. In this way, I see Arjun Appadurai as a friend of Diana Taylor – though his project seeks to formulate general principles of the inconsistent application of globalization at a macro scale, he elevates the daily, lived experience of non-Westerners and decenters the significance of US American imagery, much in the same way that Taylor seeks to constitute a Hemispheric understanding of performed life.

With the help of these allies, my project will explore other nodes, other pathways of connection, and thus hopefully grant those of us reading in this hemisphere a greater and more accurate sense of the vastness of the world as it currently is.

*@konteks*

It is tempting to speak of globalization as if it is a unique feature of our contemporary moment. Indeed, the first usage of the word in English occurred in 1930 (OED). Anxieties about the globalization seem locate us strictly in the present. Popular usage conjures images of pristine cultures falling victim to a universal homogenization of Western norms through the caprices of global capital. Perhaps this is only possible in a unique moment at the confluence of digital media and the post-Soviet global order – a sentiment seemingly aligned with Ritzer’s *McDonaldization* (2004). However, if by globalization we mean the intense circulation of bodies, capital, images and the like between geographically distant groups of people, as in Appadurai’s formulation of moving images meeting moving bodies, then globalization is not a new phenomenon.

Island Southeast Asia – an area spanning from contemporary Malaysia, across all of Indonesia, Brunei Darussalam and into the Philippines, has been intensely, globally linked for a very long time. People living in this region of the world have accessed an enacted complex, virtual understandings of their bodies in relationship to global circulations through engagement with material objects for literally thousands of years. People have utilized the regular change in weather patterns to migrate, trade, and evangelize between contemporary Indonesia, around Indian subcontinent and across the ocean to the East coast of Africa for much of recorded history.

One need only look to the history of Islam in this area to understand the long history of globalization. Muslims in Island Southeast Asia have enacted a complex

understanding of their relationship to a global circulatory network since the earliest days of Islamic proselytization in Java during the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Many Muslims of the archipelago, even of elite status, found that the pull of faith and power towards Mecca was countered by the logistical and financial near impossibility of embodied travel. Thus, some saw fit to turn to psychic travel instead – projecting the global circulation of the *ummah* back onto the archipelago itself. In his 15<sup>th</sup> century chronicle of the Sultanate of Melaka, Tomé Pires reports that Sultan Mahmud decreed travel to Mecca was not necessary, for “Melaka was to be made into Mecca.” In recounting this anecdote, A.C. Miller continues, “Mahmud’s declaration aroused criticism among the Muslim community of the port, but again it has a Sufi explanation. Some Muslim mystics believed that the pilgrimage was unimportant. The Ka’ba, they argued, might visit *them...*” (Thomaz, 1993).

According to legend, Sunan Bonang and Sunan Giri – two of the nine *wali* or missionaries who spread Islam to Java – took a vow to make pilgrimage to Mecca. Stopping in Melaka, they were convinced by *wali* Langan to instead return to the archipelago and spread Islam there. In this transformation the psychological notion of engaging with the global flow of Muslim bodies to the Arabian peninsula was remapped onto the localized flow of ideas between the islands. The global motion of bodies through pathways carved by commerce evokes the localized motion of bodies – a system that continues to this day.

What is new about this current moment is the proliferation of certain technologies and political/economic circumstance that facilitate this identification. In Indonesia, these

circumstances seem to have emerged around the end of president Suharto's regime in 1998. Emerging out of the confusion and intense bloodshed of the "anti-Communist" purge in 1965, the Suharto government maintained an intense degree of centralization that had been the legacy of the nationalist Sukarno government before him. Like Japanese occupation of 1942-1945 and the Dutch Colonial project before it, Suharto's *New Order* government sought to maintain control of media and economic production from the seat of government control in Jakarta. Under Suharto, Indonesia maintained a heavily planned economy consisting of nationalized heavy industry and agriculture, as well as a mediasphere marked by intense censorship controls.

By the mid 1990s, this system seemed to be cracking. Indonesia's geopolitical position as a leader of the Non-Aligned Movement, extracting material support from both the United States and Soviet Union was destabilized by the collapse of USSR. Indonesia's position globally was furthered weakened by continuing criticism of its brutal colonization of Timor-Leste, which came to the fore globally through widely broadcast images of the Santa Cruz massacre in 1990 and nationally through the circulation of such images by VHS. Political figures like Gus Dur, the head of *Nahdlatul Ulama*, the largest Islamic organization in the world; and Megawati, the daughter of Sukarno, began to make more brazen criticism of the regime. However Indonesia's economy, like those of many other Asian countries, was expanding rapidly. Its currency, the Rupiah, was quietly increasing in strength against the dollar. Indonesians were enjoying a standard of living never before accessible to such a large population in the region.

This situation would not last. In the summer and fall of 1997, a year marked by some of the worst dry season wildfires in contemporary Indonesian history, something went terribly awry. Sparked by a sudden run on the Thai Bhat in 1997, global currency markets suddenly turned against many emergent Asian economies. As investors sold off their currency reserves in droves the value of the Indonesian rupiah against the US dollar began to plummet nearly overnight. It was devastating. The price of goods quickly skyrocketed as inflation increased by 65%. Many Indonesians saw their life savings functionally evaporate overnight. 1998 saw the Indonesian Gross Domestic Product, which was previously growing by about 8% contract by -13.6% During the height of the crisis, nearly 1 in 3 Indonesians was unemployed. By way of comparison, at the height of the Great Recession of 2008 in the United States 1 in 10 US Americans were out of work. Without the cloak of economic prosperity to protect it, the Suharto regime collapsed. Suharto resigned on May 21<sup>st</sup>, 1998, and appointed his vice president, BJ Habibie, as head of state.

Throughout the dark days of the financial crisis, Indonesia sought aid from neoliberal, international institutions in order to stem the bleeding. In order to access \$43 billion in liquidity from the International Monetary Fund, the Indonesian government agreed to a vast range of structural economic reforms, dismantling many of the centrally planned elements of its economy in favor of neoliberal models under the watchful gaze of an international technocratic class.

The dissolution of the Suharto regime in the wake of the Asian financial crisis removed the centrally controlled censorship structures which had previously shaped



media and arts production in Indonesia, just as it had heavily modified its centrally planned economy and lead to a successful independence referendum in Timor-Leste. The *Reformasi* state liberalized its economy as it liberalized its control of media. In pursuit of liberal democratic norms, the censorship licensing regime previously promulgated by the Indonesian government was largely abolished. Simultaneously with both the liberalization of the Indonesian economy and Indonesian media, internet technologies became increasingly prevalent in Indonesia.

These decentralizing dynamics came into high relief during the late stages of the Poso conflict on the island of Sulawesi. Central Sulawesi, unlike most of Indonesia, is traditionally Protestant Christian region. However, in the years leading up to the first Poso riot in 1998, immigration from the rest of this heavily Muslim country had increased. A series of riots began and occurred with some regularity over the next four years drawing multiple ethnic and religious groups into the conflict.

The Poso riots are perhaps most notable for their intensity, the longevity of the conflict, and the crucial role that media of many kinds played in stoking the flames of communal violence. Aragon argues that the dissolution of Suharto era media – monolithic, tightly controlled, and heavily censored – in favor of a “fractured” media landscape directly contributed to the narrativization of the conflict. According to Aragon, each group occupied its own, isolated mediasphere comprised of a wide bouquet of technologies; television, internet media, radio and even graffiti all played a role in creating and reaffirming the dramaturgy of the conflict.

Aragon argues that national media coverage, “non-market” media, and internet media all came to play specific roles during the four-year-long Poso conflict. She argues that national level media coverage had little role in the conflict at its outset in 1998;

“except to the extent that Muslim versions of events were publicized and the minimalist coverage supported Jakarta’s ability to ignore the region’s structural problems. By contrast, non-market based communications, such as politically motivated fliers about opposition leaders’ alleged crimes, religiously hostile graffiti, banners, and rumors about violent events, were instrumental to the early mobilization of group hostilities.” (53)

As we can see, the vertical predominance of Jakartan media was already waning to the emergence of a horizontal media topography. This dissolution of central media control – or at least its relevance – would play a crucial role in the unfolding of not only the rest of this conflict but an array of religiously tinged protest movements that have flourished since the end of the Suharto dictatorship.

Indeed, one of the most significant things about the Poso conflict is that it tracks almost directly onto the early penetration of the internet into Indonesia. Though Aragon observes that most Indonesian media on the Poso conflict was “Muslim authored,” she states that Protestant Churches circulated their own reports on violence widely through the internet. This circulation was instrumental in gaining the sympathies of US based Christian communities. This was religiously oriented network was particularly key after 9/11, when Muslim-Christian violence could be cast within terrorism narratives before the US government and the United Nations.

Throughout her analysis of the Poso conflict, Aragon emphasizes a critical lag in the movement out of the Suharto dictatorship and into the *Reformasi* period. She writes; “removing the armature of press censorship did little to deconstruct New Order categories of citizenship and agency” (53). Though technology in its material proliferation and attendant diffusion of knowledges, group identifications, and epistemes had dramatically shifted, the legal, national criteria of citizenship lagged. Nationally understood norms were slow to static but at the micro level individuals and communities were reconfiguring themselves in response to a host of rapid developments. These reconfigurations travelled along newly established media pathways that allowed for the rapid establishment of new movements, new understandings – perhaps most clearly evidenced in the propagation of numerous conspiracy theories which attributed the violence to Al Qaeda or international, Christian-Chinese-Western-Imperialist cabals. (55)

What I seek to illustrate is that the dissolution of central government control of media, economy and technology in Indonesia has led to the intensification of certain identities beyond *keindonesiaan*. Furthermore, the rapid circulation of data on the internet enables both the synchronous experience of fiscal realities that were key to the financial contagion of the late 1990s and a simultaneity of experience across global sectarian identities. Currency speculators in New York, London, and Tokyo were able to move their money out of Rupiah and into Western currencies along much the same infrastructure that enable Protestants in Poso to leverage church groups in the United States. While the phenomena of globalization is not new in Island Southeast Asia,

Indonesians have never before been able to collapse the physical and chronological differences between themselves and other to the degree that they can now.

This I argue leads to an intensity of somatic experience that is novel.

Anthropologist Richard Wilk has written about the role of television in collapsing this chronological lag (2004). I assert that internet media, and particularly social media, is so effective at this synchronization that it begins to dramatically implicate the bodies of those who interact with it. It is the intimate implication of the body that lends power to internet images of Christian churches being burned – an intimacy that would have been mediated by an intense time delay in an older, print media world. There is something unique about my ability to watch in “real time” as Ahok lives his life in jail after his blasphemy conviction. My body is placed in something close to a direct, proximal, synchronous relationship to his – something that would not be possible without the unique materiality of internet media, particularly social media.

As we will see in the two cases that I put forward, the Indonesians I discuss are deeply affected by this new neoliberal norm. They experience global media in nearly real time with the phenomena it depicts. They are nearly direct audiences to the transnational movement bodies and capital that defines our times, and they accordingly respond with their bodies.

## ***CASE STUDIES:***

***#saverohingya***



Fig. 1: *Koreo dari bobotoh di Stadion si Jalak Harupat, Sabtu. 2017.* Photograph.

Tribunjafar/Lufti Ahmad Mauludin. Web. 11 April, 2018.

On September 9, 2017 fans of an Indonesian soccer club, Persib Bandung, performed a *koreo* before a match with Semen Padang. A *koreo*, short for the Bahasa Indonesia word *koreografi*, is perhaps more commonly known as a card stunt in American English. It consists of a large group of people often in a stadium seating holding up strategically placed colored cards to create a large aggregate text or image. The most heightened examples of this technique may be the “Grand Mass Gymnastics and Artistic Performance Arirang” held in Rungnado May Day Stadium in Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. There, choreographers have arranged large swathes of people in stands facing the viewer’s box. Each individual person is given a carefully

sequenced set of monochromatic cards which they hold above their heads and flip at certain moments. In the aggregate, this allows for the creation of large human-powered murals portraying propagandistic portraits, vistas, and tableaux. The form is so heightened in Pyongyang that images can be animated – humans acting as pixels on a large screen, giving the appearance of waterfalls, running rivers or triumphant soldiers in motion.

These images are not only used to celebrate the Kim family and the North Korean regime but also serve a highly specific, transnational, political purpose – visiting tourists and diplomats are invariably taken to the Mass Games (as the Arirang is sometimes known) to form an audience of a handful for a cast of literally thousands. The power of these images and the fact of the mass unity that powers them can overwhelm and intimidate visitors (“North Korea Shows off Its Grandeur – and ‘Life as Usual’”). Furthermore, images of these card stunts are powerful and move transnationally, giving the performance currency beyond its physical limits. In this way, images of Arirang not only serve as records of a performance in Pyongyang but also perform themselves. They archive the initial performance and perform anew in their circulation beyond North Korea.

The *koreo* that Bobotoh, a Persib Bandung fan organization, performed was not so complicated. And yet, it also demonstrates a purposeful arrangement of bodies in space and a similarly canny understanding of the politics of dislocated images in the globalized world. Fans formed the text – “SAVEROHINGYA” in white letters against a red and blue background – during a daytime match (see fig. 1). The composition takes up an

entire bank of stands. In order to render the entire text readable, a photographer needed to use a wide-angle lens or take a photograph from very far away from the stands themselves. This captures the full scope of the text but also communicates the totality of the gesture. Seemingly every single person in the stands is holding a card to create this image, indicating the both the solidarity and sheer size of support for the message displayed.

Futhermore, capturing the entire text also necessitates capturing the architecture of the Si Jalak Harupat stadium. For reasons that I have not been able to understand, Persib played this fateful match in Harupat, which they have occupied since 2009, and not their recently constructed stadium across town, Stadion Gelora Bandung Lautan Api. The two buildings are distinctly dissimilar. The later is larger, holding 38,000 people to Harupat's 27,000. Furthermore, while Harupat has a tall bank of seats along one long side of the pitch which are sheltered and flanked by two distinctive ironwork cupolas, all of Gelora's seating is contiguous and roofed. The effect for the compositional purposes of the *koreo* in Harupat is distinct. Images of the *koreo* show a tall, wide rectangle of stands packed with people and bookended by the metal cupolas and defined by the jutting roof. The text stands alone against green pitch and bright blue sky – a striking, textual image that would have been muddled by empty seats or non-participating fans on either side.

Futhermore, this *koreo* was strategically timed before the match began. Apparently performed during the national anthem, both teams were on the field in the highly ritualized staging that is typical of pre-match moments. This is when official photographs are taken. Furthermore, the orientation of the players on the field during this

moment is similarly crucial. They face away from the Bobotoh in the stands behind them. The messages then put the players in relief. Many photos of the squads that would be fielded that day show the players against parts of the massive white letters behind them.

It also indicates the audience for this performance. It is not necessarily the fans, who cannot see the composition they are inside of; nor the players, who face away from the *koreo*. Instead the audience is the camera and the viewers beyond. Individual participants in the *koreo* must act with faith that the unity and visual impact of their image is striking. Bobotoh chose this specific moment for the protest, when the text literally has the backs of the players on the field during a heightened, highly photographed moment of national tribute to effectively communicate the unity of the message they seek to deliver. We, Persib, are in solidarity with the Rohingya against the atrocities they face. And we want people to see this image and know it.

The Rohingya people of Myanmar live largely along the border with Bangladesh. Myanmar is an extraordinarily diverse country, home to over 130 ethnic groups speaking a profusion of languages. Burmans, who are largely Theravada Buddhist, make up about two thirds of the country's official population and are largely in control of policy. Myanmar has gone through enormous changes of late; its notoriously oppressive military junta yielded to international pressure and domestic circumstance and released Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, a Nobel laureate and advocate for democracy in Myanmar, from 15 years of house arrest in 2010.

The subsequent liberalization of Myanmar's government has been halting and incomplete. While Suu Kyi and her party, the National League for Democracy, allegedly



has control of the civil government of Myanmar, the military still controls major parts of the apparatus of power. Crucially, the civil government of Myanmar has seems unwilling or unable to control violence against the Rohingya people of Rakhine state.

The Rohingya are predominantly Muslim. They are seen by many in Rakhine and Myanmar broadly as subversive, transient terrorists; illegal border crossers from neighboring Bangladesh who are in Myanmar to outbreed the “native” Buddhist population. The violence that military and militia groups have visited on the Rohingya is staggering. Rapes, house burning, murders; Human Rights Watch estimates that at least 214 villages have been simply erased from Rakhine state. As of late September 2017, the Internal Displacement Center estimated that over 600,000 Rohingya people were displaced. This is out of an estimated population of 1,000,000 total (IDMC, 2017).<sup>1</sup>

Many Indonesians have been outraged by the ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya, and for some time. In 2014, a man named Rokhadi was sentenced to six years in prison for masterminding a plot to bomb the Myanmar embassy in Jakarta in revenge for atrocities against the Rohingya (“Indonesia Jails Militant Over Myanmar Embassy Bomb Plot,” 2014). In 2017 – just three days before the *koreo* in Bandung, someone threw a petrol bomb onto the embassy grounds as public anger towards Myanmar and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi mounted across Muslim communities in the Archipelago. The Jakarta Post noted that protests outside the Myanmar embassy coincided with protests that moved

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this thesis, I will refer to atrocities against the Rohingya and ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya. I will not use the word genocide. I do this in accordance with the current international rhetoric around this violence, which refuses to use the word genocide to describe what is happening in Myanmar. To do so would trigger certain legal mechanisms, certain responsibilities that state and international actors are currently reluctant to tolerate. Savvy readers may hear an echo of Rwanda in this parsing of terminology.

through Jakarta's Buddhist (likely, Chinese) neighborhood ("Petrol bomb thrown at Myanmar embassy in Central Jakarta,").

On the internet, Twitter users – particularly those in the Indonesian language world – began to deploy the hashtag #saverohingya. This allowed for the intense circulation of two crucial kinds of imagery. First, users following this hashtag were exposed to incredibly graphic imagery of alleged atrocities committed by the Myanmar military and vigilante groups in Rakhine against Rohingya Muslims. I say "alleged" not because all photos of the carnage along the border were false, but because both pro-Rohingya and pro-Myanmar users globally deployed falsely attributed photographs, often interspersed with correctly attributed photographs, in order to pursue their own narratives. Myanmar users circulated images of Bangladeshis arming themselves during the 1971 war with Pakistan in order to propagate the idea that the Rohingya people are violent terrorists. Mehmet Sismek, the deputy Prime Minister of Turkey, issued an apology for tweeting a series of images accompanied by the text "Stop turning a blind eye to ethnic cleansing in #Arakan #Myanmar Int'l community must act now..." Some of the images of corpses included were ironically from the Rwandan genocide in 1994 but were attributed to contemporary massacres in Myanmar. By the time he had deleted the tweet, it had been liked by more than 1200 people and shared 1600 times.

Secondly, this specific hashtag allowed for users to circulate discourse protesting against the ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya. Many Indonesians who deployed this hashtag were content to merely engage with the text of the tweets. Others would post or

retweet news items and photographs about the Rohingya from other users. And still others used the platform and this hashtag to circulate images of protest.



Fig 2: Tweet by user @Umnia. Screen capture by author. Web. 2018.

Taken less than a week after the *koreo* in Bandung on the other side of Java, this tweet is an example of a protest arranged at school in Brodong; a municipality on the north east coast of the island (see fig. 2). This *pesantren* or Islamic school is one of over 6,000 run by Muhammadiyah; one of two massive Muslim organizations in Indonesia.

Unlike its rival Nahdlatul 'Ulama, which is associated with the syncretic practices of *pria* elites, Muhammadiyah specifically encourages reformist Islamic thought. In the image, we can see about thirty children in bright orange uniforms. The words themselves are easily read as separated by gender: girls, identifiable by their brilliant white *jilbab* or *kerundung* head coverings, spell out “SAVE” with their bodies on the ground. They sit mostly with their legs crossed or pushed directly out in front of their upright torsos. The boys have the more complicated task of spelling “ROHINGYA.” Many of them lay flat on the tarmac, their bodies stretched in long lines or scrunched into the curve of an R or an O. This gender division is evocative of a *mesjid*, where women pray as a group behind the men.

As in the Persib Bandung example, the bodies of the participants form a connection between themselves, the rendered text, and architecture of meaningful significance. This photograph was deliberately taken from a high angle. Accordingly, the viewer’s position vis-à-vis the image is extreme; this allows not only the full text spelled by the bodies of the students to be legible but also clearly displays much of the lime-green school building. Furthermore, it suggests an audience which is not physically present in the moment of performance. Again, the text of this image is invisible to the individual participants – as is the case with floor pattern in choreographic composition. But the arrangement of their bodies in relation to the school, the photographer, and the text with its attendant meanings, points towards a final audience that can only exist on the other side of the network.

The text of the tweet provides some clues as to the effect of this composition. The tweet by user @Umnia77 could be translated as follows: “Action by children, MI

Muhammadiya 02 Sedayulawas, Brodong, Lamongan, East Java. #SaveRohingya. Cc @muhammadiya @Danilanzar.” Much of the character limit of this tweet is devoted to specifically identifying the village, subdistrict, regency and province of the school. This full listing of the location of this school serves to root the image in a highly specific community and locate it nationally. I see irony in the highly specific geography of the image. In some ways, it contrasts with the dislocation of the Rohingya. There is no discussion of Rohingya experiences. Instead, the school as an institution is foregrounded and placed into conversation with a larger but still sub-national organization. This is evidenced by its “CC,” which invokes the twitter accounts of both Muhammadiya and Dani Lanzar, the chairman of the Muhummadiya youth league – a notification that both accounts would have received directly.

There is further subtlety in the brief text which begins the tweet, “Aksi Adik2.” The 2 indicates abbreviated reduplication, which transforms the singular *adik* – “younger sibling” – into the plural *adik-adik* – “younger siblings,” which I render as children. This phrasing places the viewer of the tweet into a familial relationship with children who are individually unidentifiable within the image. *Aksi* is a noun that has been borrowed from Latin by way of Dutch meaning a political or military action as well as behavior or conduct; in this context, it is suggestive of both a protest but also a degree of martial organization. There is another natural choice for a noun here: *protes*. And yet the user who posted this tweet reached for *aksi* instead. This is perhaps because of the alliterative appeal of the phrase “Aksi adik-adik,” but I posit that *aksi*, like *koreo*, has an immediacy that is linked to movement. *Protes* can be merely verbal; “I don’t like this.” But *aksi*

demands that we recognize the purposeful configuration of bodies that is displayed before us. Furthermore, *aksi* uses fewer characters than *protes*. This is particularly significant as this tweet occurred before Twitter increased the tweet character limit from 140 to 280 in November of 2017, further underscoring how meaningful it is that the user specified the location of the school is such great detail.

This tweet continues to have an active life outside of the mere text and image of the initial posting. Here are some of the earliest responses to the tweet:



Fig. 3: Twitter thread in response to tweet in figure 2. Screen capture by author. Web. 2018.

Almost immediately, other twitter users begin to engage with the initial tweet. These tweets offer us some crucial clues about how content performs on this platform. First, the tweets are universally supportive of the action. They encourage the students in their actions and state that the image gives them hope in humanity: “Children, thank God we are still human, fertilize and spread this human-ness to every corner of the country!” writes the first poster, @AdeAnnie1 (see fig. 3). Her displayed name, #PKS8Meneng, refers to a nearby regional branch of *Partai Keadilan Sejahtera*, an Islamist party in the model of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.

In this one interaction – an initial tweet of an image accompanied by text and a response by another user – we can already see the entangled threads of bodies in global circulation. Burmese soldiers compel Rohingya bodies to move across the border into Bangladesh. Indonesians receive images of this movement and are compelled to arrange their bodies in response. This second movement is deeply entangled in the already existent flow of ideology and religious thought at a transnational level – a flow that is paradoxically hyper-evident in domestic religious and political connections.

Where, then, does performance live in this tweet? The movement of the children in this *aksi* is far delayed from the images they’re presumably responding to. The live performance of the *aski* was clearly not the intended end of the choreographed protest. The composition of the image, the language of the tweet, and its specific direction towards other Twitter users demonstrates that the reach of the performance extended far beyond the live event. And yet the performance is still not contained in the single tweet

alone; the performance snowballs as the tweet lives on its platform. It is recirculated by other users. Other users respond to it, adding additional layers of public, performative engagement with the inciting tweet. The tweet continues to perform in perpetuity; a vibrating moment of engagement that can only grow in size.

Susan Leigh Foster argues forcefully for a somatic understanding of historiographic writing (*Choreographing History*, 1995). I similarly argue that we ought to consider the ‘bodily writing’ of our thumbs – the somatic experience and performance inherent in cradling a smartphone in hand, liking, retweeting, responding to mediated performances that compel our own bodies into movement. In this way, Twitter becomes a container for an ever-increasing series of bodily relationships that implicates the user in both a virtual and material manner.

Some of the most significant moments of engagement come in the ensuing tweets. Almost immediately, they begin to relate this image to *Persatuan Sepakbola Seluruh Indonesia* – the Football Association of Indonesia – as evidenced by the hashtag #KoinUntukPSSI. At this moment in time there was a rumor that PSSI would impose fines on Persib Bandung, or perhaps its fan clubs, such as Bobotoh, in accordance with FIFA policy on political demonstrations during soccer games. To my understanding, this rumor was initiated by this tweet:





Fig. 4: Tweet by user @DhikkiE. Screen capture by author. Web. 2018.

Accompanied by a watermarked photo of the *koreo* during the singing of the national anthem, the text of the tweet reads “PSSI [Indonesian Soccer league] threatens to place a 30 million Rupiah fine for this *koreo*. Everyone in Bobotoh replied, ‘Don’t worry! We’ll pay!’” In my research, I have not been able to find evidence that PSSI ever seriously

considered sanctioning Persib Bandung or Bobotoh for this political demonstration. To my knowledge Twitter user @DhikkiE is not affiliated with the soccer league, the team, or the fan club in any official capacity. However, the rumor was off.

Immediately, people responding to this tweet express their outrage. They perceive any fine for this demonstration as gross hypocrisy.



Fig. 5: Twitter thread in response to tweet in figure 4. Screen capture by author. Web. 2018.

The first tweet in response to the original is from user @DekiFaixaL. It sarcastically states that soccer should not be politicized and that everyone should

remember to vote for Pak Edy, the chairman of PSSI, when he runs for governor of North Sumatra province in its gubernatorial election in the summer of 2018. In response, @DhikkiE replies that protests are only a problem if Muslims are the victims. He compares this to demonstrations of solidarity, such as moments of silence, that swept European soccer in response to terrorist attacks in Paris, London, and Spain. “That’s the FIFA rule.”

This cynicism is telling. It evokes Taylor’s formulation of “scenario” – “meaning-making paradigms that structure social environments, behaviors, and potential outcomes” (*The Archive and Repertoire*, 26). Unlike the textual narratives of the archive, Taylor posits that these paradigms might live in bodily acts of transference. Her paradigmatic example is the colonization of the Americas – a scenario that has re-occurred across the hemisphere time and time again since the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Americans (broadly defined) know the contours of these encounters and the limited set of outcomes they entail. Similarly, the Indonesians know the scenario entailed in global responses to terror attacks in Western Europe; grand displays of sympathy that are internationally lauded. They see the converse of this scenario in the perceived indifference of this same global community to the massacre of Muslims. Certain arrangements of bodies merit praise, others merit dismissal or censure.

In this interaction we again see a complex engagement with bodies and borders in the globalized/glocalized world. The text of @DekiFaisaL’s tweet foregrounds bodily movement in the gubernatorial election: “jangan lupa pilih...” he writes. “Don’t forget to pick...” An alternative choice would have been something like “kita harus memilih...” or

“We have to elect...” Here, the *me-* prefix for *pilih* would turn “pick” or “selection” into the more formal verb “elect.” It is possible that the user selected this terminology because of its economy and its more informal connotation. If so, it would demonstrate the degree to which the constraints of the platform – a character limit – are intimately tied to the creation and furtherance of kinesthetic language.

In this way, such a selection would be yet another echo of the deliberately internet-oriented composition of the *koreo*. Gingrich-Philbrook and Simmons use the anthropological term epiphylogenesis to describe the role of technological prosthesis in human evolution. They assert that as humans evolved through the use of tools, all human performance thus integrates prosthetic technology. Thus, performance coevolves with technology. I see this usage of Twitter as another stage in this partnership. Despite appearing the erase boundary, body, and kinesthesia, the medium itself serves to reinforce a psychological understanding of these things in its users.

This aggregation of performing, moving bodies through Twitter becomes especially evident in #KoinUntukPSSI, literally “coin for PSSI,” a short-lived twitter campaign that accompanied outrage over the prospect of a PSSI fine for the *koreo*. In response, several Twitter users began to organize events in which they collected change to send to Bandung to pay any fine. Users responded to tweets about the *koreo* and the alleged controversy by tweeting images of themselves posed at small fundraisers for the cause, or of brightly colored oil drums stenciled with #KoinUntukPSSI. These tweets are then further kinesthetic echoes of the Rohingya crisis; images of Muslim bodies – dead, fleeing – circulates to Indonesian Muslims. These Indonesians then arrange their bodies

in response, performing a *koreo* which circulates within a discourse that implicates both national and international institutions. Suspecting reprisal by these institutions, further groups move themselves into block parties, small concerts, or school-wide demonstrations.

This phenomenon seems to closely follow events that occurred in 2009 during the “Coins for Prita” campaign. Prita Mulyasari, who had sent an email to friends and family complaining about her treatment at the Omni Hospital in Jakarta, was fined and sentenced to six months in prison for defaming the hospital under the Information and Electronic Transaction Law. This outraged many facebook users, who began to collect small amounts of change – both materially and virtually – in order to pay Prita’s fine.

Lim notes that gendered, religious symbolism was key in the rapid spread of “Coins for Prita.” Images of Prita wearing a headscarf and holding her two infant children adorned posters, Facebook profile images, and even ballads posted on YouTube. As Lim states,

“Symbolising religious piety, the scarf also demonstrates the moral character of the subject in determining her status as an icon... As such, the movement appealed to both women and men who subscribe to traditional family values and gender roles... for them, Prita symbolised the common, the normal and the women they knew. One participant who identified herself as a housewife stated: “She is just like us. If this could happen to her, it could happen to me, to any one of us”

In a similar fashion, #KoinUntukPSSI traffics in similar modes of symbolism and identification. Outrage over the ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya taps into anxieties about Islamic identity at a global level: “Unsur Politik dipakai saat Islam yg menjadi korban...” writes @DhikkiE. “It’s ‘political’ when Islam is the victim.” The movement of “common” individuals, such as Muslim soccer fans either in the *koreo* or in the collection of coins is contrasted with the intransigence of large institutions – PSSI at a national level, FIFA at an international level. One might speculate that these large institutions are stand-ins for something deeper and bigger; the global disparity in attention to the murder and expulsion of the Rohingya when compared to victims of terror attacks in European capitals.

In her discussion of social media activism in Indonesia, Lim claims that the most successful social media activist campaigns utilize “simple or simplified narratives” which are “associated with low risk activism and are congruent with ideological meta-narratives, such as religiosity or nationalism” (2013). She partly attributes this to the “techno-materiality of access;” that activist discourse on Indonesian social media is shaped by material constraints on bandwidth and access to devices. I find that this definition does not go far enough – indeed, the material limits and possibilities uniquely offered by Twitter greatly impacts how content lives on the medium to the extent that it shapes the qualities of the content itself. In its character limit, Twitter forces users to greatly distill their textual composition. As Lim observed, this distillation does not allow for qualification of statements and it gives rise to prose that is highly provocative and digestible.

Furthermore, the nature of the user interface further shapes this discourse. Users have a variety of modes of engagement with a single tweet or tweets strung into conversation. They can reply directly, or like the tweet, or recirculate a tweet to their own followers. Each of these movements is performative; these performances both generate new contexts and further remove the original content from its initial context. In this way, complex situations – who, exactly, said PSSI was going to fine Persib Bandung? How much would this fine be? – become distilled through a perpetually accreting series of re/performances. This rapid accretive distillation is not possible with print media or television news. In its rapidity and semi-democratic profusion of access this accretion contributes to a developing sense of communal movement.

In this way, Indonesian Twitter is furthering extant dynamics through fusion. It is welding together an extant ideology of co-religious identification within the *Ummah*, a national political discourse about the role of Islam in Indonesian life, and the intense circulation of bodies wrought by globalized media penetration. Indonesian Twitter is being used as both a cinema and a stage; users receive images of bodies in motion – Rohingya bodies in flight, Indonesian bodies in protest – and arrange their bodies in response. This arrangement is both obvious in #KoinUntukPSSI and subtle, in the embodied nature of Twitter engagement.

### **#klubdansa #amerikalatin**

Komunitas Salihara (literally, Salihara Community) is an interdisciplinary arts venue in South Jakarta. It showcases a broad range of artistic output, from the visual arts to performance.<sup>2</sup> Komunitas Salihara is a “private” arts venue; it does not receive government support. This model of arts organization is in some ways quite novel. The earliest of these organizations was Rumah Nusantara in Bandung, West Java which was founded in 1998. Its name literally means “Archipelago House,” with *nusantara* carrying a nationalist connotation that links contemporary Indonesian identity back to Majapahit echoes of medieval kingdoms. *Nusantara*, unlike *Indonesia*, contains no trace of Latin connotations between the archipelago and the Indian subcontinent. Rumah Nusantara is, first and foremost, a house donated to a group of actors. Using the rent-free living and venue space, this company survives on donations from its audience and programs a wide variety of programming that “could not have survived the New Order era level of regulation with any public prominence.” (Jones, 163). As demonstrated by the mediatization of the Poso conflict, the dissolution of central government ownership, funding, and censorship of media and expression has led to a more diverse range of expressive activities. In private arts venues, these activities are also reliant on recalibrated understandings of value, market, audience.

However, these changes were swift but not total – Jones notes that in Cirebon, another large city in West Java, artists were still seeking permits from municipal

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<sup>2</sup> It also has a café, which I hear is quite lovely.



authorities and paying police as late as 2003. He identifies a profound regional split between artists in the national core who quickly aligned themselves with the *Reformasi* movement and regional artists.

“Pan-Indonesian artists have adopted *Reformasi* themes and become increasingly vocal in their criticism of social and political events, in addition to benefiting from the end of the licensing regime of arts events. There has not been an equivalent impact among regional artists who were less involved in the largely urban *Reformasi* movement.”

We can see further inconsistency in the application of one of the most notable pieces of censorship legislation active in *Reformasi* Indonesia; the 2008 Anti-Pornography law. This contentious piece of legislation forbids the display of *porno-aksi*, a broadly defined category that can apply to public nudity, kissing, and erotic dancing. However, this law has faced fierce opposition at the regional level, particularly from the tourist-heavy island of Bali. Additionally, the law doesn't apply in sports or arts venues – but this requires permitting by a government authority. In this way, *Reformasi* cultural policy is neither a perfect rejection nor perfect continuation of the tight fisted central government censorship which marked the New Order period. Instead, it is a *mélange*; certain aspects of the censorship regime remain but become less relevant as one moves into the more heavily cosmopolitan hubs of the country – specifically, the arts venues within cities on the wealthy, cosmopolitan inner islands.

Unshackled by the deregulation and privatization demanded by IMF and other foreign creditors after the 1997 financial collapse, capital and power have accreted in

Indonesia's enormous cities. Responding to this movement, humans have moved their bodies in response. There is a saying in Bahasa Indonesia; *ada gulah, ada semut* – where there's sugar, there's ants. Enticed by the prospect of jobs and mobility in these urban centers, individuals from across the archipelago have swollen the sizes of Indonesia's cities.

They're not alone; foreigners from across the planet are increasingly migrating to Indonesia. I argue that this dislocation is creating relatively novel "scapes" within the elite communities in these cities. This emergent mental topography is in some ways an echo of the method by which the colonial schooling system – with its dislocation of many "native" boys from various ethnicities and their subsequent accretion proximate to Batavia – served as the cradle of Pan-Indonesian nationalism.

It is within these spaces; the city in the macro, the arts venue in the micro; that elite Jakartans can exercise their cosmopolitan desires. It is within this context that Komunitas Salihara's 2017 programming focused heavily on Latin America. The figure of the Latin American in Indonesia is heavily undertheorized. Characters from Brazil, Argentina, and Mexico take up a curious place among the highly diverse national media culture of the Republik. In the first season of "Kelas Internasional," a hit YouTube comedy series, a beleaguered Bahasa Indonesia instructor struggles to teach a class of about a dozen adults from many foreign countries ("Kelas Internasional," 2015). The humor is largely drawn from comic misunderstandings of basic Indonesian vocabulary and grammar in a style reminiscent of "ethnic acts" in American vaudeville. Similarly, the students personify national caricatures. In these crudely drawn silhouettes we can see

insight into Indonesian perspectives on the respective cultures of the students. In the first season of the show a student from South Korea, Lee Jyong Hyun, is highly concerned with his looks and will spontaneously burst into K-Pop style dance sequences or bars of Korean rap. He often argues with Michiko, a mainland Chinese student, about whose culture is superior. Tyson Lynch, an Australian student, dresses in flannel, Doc Martens and cut-off jeans and is highly bellicose and loud. Abbas Aminu from Nigeria mostly grins, waves, and doesn't speak.

But two characters stand out to me in how they engage with the Indonesian characters of the show; Carlos from Colombia, and Angelina from Brazil. Both are portrayed as deeply passionate, magnetic individuals who bewitch everyone they encounter. While the Indonesian characters on the show are mostly confused or alarmed by the majority of the students, Carlos and Loyd invade the lives of the faculty and staff of the international school. The priggish headmistress is shown fawning over Carlos' smoldering good looks, and Loyd's carefree sex appeal is a major source of distraction for all the men on the show; both the students and the Indonesian instructor and janitor.

These depictions of South Americans in Indonesian media are hardly unique. In a sideplot of Nia Duta's landmark light comedy *Arisan!* a group of elite Jakartan women begin taking Spanish lessons from a young, attractive male tutor named Ruben (Nia Dinata, 2003). Ruben's country of origin is never specified, nor does he speak much Spanish in the movie. (Indeed, the actor who plays Ruben isn't listed in the credits.)

Instead, his role in the movie is as a sex object: the women flirt with him and he eventually seduces one of the main characters.

These depictions will seem very familiar to Western readers: this is the Latin Lover, a common stock character in US American popular culture. But for the purposes of this thesis, what is significant about the appearance of this archetype in Indonesian media is their position relative to cosmopolitanism and capital. They appear in highly urban settings among other transnational bodies. They mark spaces of cosmopolitan engagement and associations with the capital necessary to travel to and from the Archipelago; the notion of a class of motley foreigners learning Bahasa Indonesia only makes sense in the context of contemporary transnational labor migrating to a liberalized Indonesia. In the context of a movie that is already replete with elite, cosmopolitan objects, Ruben the Spanish tutor is an extravagance – the women who hire him are not trying to learn Spanish so they can work in the Hispanosphere. They hire him so they can practice a liberalized sexuality upon him in front of each other. This is set against the main plot of the movie, which concerns a gay man's struggle to find self-acceptance in the world of incredibly wealthy Jakartans. For Indonesian consumers of these media, Latino and Latina bodies signify wealth and cosmopolitan sexual norms.

These examples demonstrate that the Latin image signifies the inverse of what Indonesian consumers perceive to be Indonesian norms. Where “ordinary” Indonesians are Muslim, modest, reserved and conservative, Latinas and Latinos are secularized, open, outgoing, and liberated. Elite, cosmopolitan, mobile Indonesians are free to associate with this photo negative of Indonesian culture and in doing so demonstrate their

association with the transnational, cosmopolitan capital and cultural norms that it represents.

In this environment, Latin American and by extension Latin America signifies the practice of a contemporary, cosmopolitan, liberated sexuality – a freedom of transnational movement (perhaps leisurely?) that is available only to the most elite sectors of Indonesian society. Latin Americans come to Indonesia not as colonizers or missionaries but as luxury ornaments for the powerful. They, like rural Indonesians perhaps, are drawn to the capital accreting in Indonesia's cities. That these bodies, not quite Western but affirmatively not Asian, are drawn into interaction with Indonesian elites on Indonesian turf is an immensely significant statement about the power, wealth, and cosmopolitan tastes of urban Indonesia's elite class.

As of late, Komunitas Salihara has hosted a broad swath of Latin American themed programming ranging from book club meetings in which participants discussed the literature of Jorge Luis Borges to screenings of Latin American movies. I will focus my analysis on two particular programs; a series of Latin dance lessons held by the venue in the summer of 2017 and “+51 Aviación Borja,” a theater performance by Okazaki Art Theatre, a Japanese company, which toured through the venue in early September of 2017 – around the same time as the #saverohingya movement.

These two items were both heavily promoted on Komunitas Salihara's Instagram page. Indonesian Instagram is a highly particular place. If Twitter, with its dictatorial character limit, is ordered by text, Instagram is about graphics. Every Instagram post must begin with an image. It is not possible to post naked text. Users flit through myriad

filters, vignettes, and tilt shift effects until they have modified an image to their liking. (Thus in order to interact with the platform as it is intended the user needs to have a smartphone equipped with a camera.) As with Twitter, users can leave comments on these posted images. However, they cannot easily recirculate the original post to their own networks as one might do with a retweet. The conversation is tightly shackled to the content and account of the poster.

These features make Instagram an ideal medium for commerce. In its highly graphic nature and a user's close control over content and conversation, an Instagram account brings visually oriented consumers directly into the tightly manicured world of the salesperson. Indonesians have quickly transformed the platform into a digital marketplace. Some of this commerce may seem familiar to Western viewers, such as carefully manicured advertisements linking the viewer back to a digital storefront. Some of it seems less familiar; images of batik or ikat *kain dan kebaya* apparel with superimposed prices, accompanied by text listing the mobile phone number of the vendor.

In this way, Indonesian Instagram is already a space of fluid motion. Here, images and capital flow freely from mobile phone to mobile phone, liberated from the fixedness of not only the brick and mortar storefront but also of desktops and laptop routed into a home or café connection. Indeed, even the act of securing access to mobile data in Indonesia is diffuse. Through a dispersed system of SMS payment and street-side SIM card vendors, Indonesian smartphone users purchase “Flash” – weekly or monthly packages of mobile data – by text message. Thus, the purchasing of goods as well as the

maintenance of the means for securing those goods echoes the mobility of the contemporary moment.

The confluence of the mobility of Instagram markets and elite Indonesians' desire to associate themselves with cosmopolitan motion interests me greatly. For this reason, I have chosen to analyze the Instagram account of Komunitas Salihara, specifically its promotion of Latin American themed events and performances during 2017. I will read performances evident in their use of images and engagement with commenting users. In an ethnographic sense, this data will allow us to understand the role globalized performance plays in the aesthetic tastes of elite Jakartans.



Fig. 6: Instagram post by @komunitas\_salihara. Screen capture by author. Web. 2018.

This image advertises a Bachata class that will take place at Komunitas Salihara every Tuesday in August of 2017 (see fig. 6). The text on the image suggests that this is one of many such events: it states that it is but one *kelas* - class - within *Klub Dansa Amerika Latin*; Latin American Dance Club. This phrase offers some significant points of interest. First, the usage of *dansa* seems purposeful. A cognate of the English *dance* and the Dutch *dans*, *dansa* specifically connotes social, likely mixed gender movement. Its alternative might be the Malay-derived word *tari*, which is visible in the lower right corner of the image in the phrase *Studio Tari*. *Tari*, unlike its cousin, connotes cultural movement. Court dancers *tarian* for a Sultan in highly formal, single-gendered performances. Certain kinds of kids *berdansa* in the *diskotek* for and with each other.

Similarly, the phrase *klub dansa* is also significant as a construction. In Bahasa Indonesia, an adjective comes after the noun it qualifies. Thus, the phrase can literally be rendered “dance club.” However, as in English, the word *klub* can mean both “group” (*klompok*) or nightclub (*diskotek*). *Klub dansa* can be perhaps rendered as both “dance club” and “club dancing.” This suggests a place for students to learn a specific dance form – bachata – and marks that form as one that is aligned with social dancing conventions that originate in the West.

This connotation is both furthered and complicated by the young couple depicted in the promotional image. Rendered in vivid blues against a bright orange field, a man in a tight, heavily jeweled, possibly sheer top kneels on one leg. He supports his partner – a beautiful young woman with a long ponytail in a short, gauzy dress with matching



rhinestones – in a deep split that shows the perfect lines of her entirely bare legs. He holds her weight with his hand underneath her armpit. She reciprocates with an arm wrapped tight against his waist. They beam outward at the viewer, inviting being seen – ambiguous, yet intimate.

In its display of a woman's bare legs and the intimate embrace of the dancers, such an image could conceivably violate the 2008 Anti-Pornography law. Furthermore, the class is marked as *dansa* and not *tari*; an important distinction that would perhaps have legal ramifications should a religious group ever seek to censor *Komunitas Salihara* as “cultural spaces” are exempted from the reach of the law – if licensed. Regardless of its legal implications, the social significance is clear. The dance that will be taught in this class operates within a space of mixed-gendered intimacy derived from a cosmopolitan context. Significantly, the rendering of the image in blue and orange serves to further obscure any phenotypical racial classification of the dancers themselves – their bodies becoming a site of cosmopolitan elision.

Though its depiction of intimacy may be transgressive in a national Indonesian context, it is still operating within a very familiar heterosexual dyad. The male and female dancers depend on each other in a manner that is challenged by other operations of dance within an urban Indonesian context, such as the cabaret performances of Indonesia's third gender minority, waria in Yogyakarta or Dangdut pop star Julia Perez's public pole dancing at a South Jakarta intersection in 2012. Both upset the heterosexual coupling script; the waria in their disruption of a rigid gender dyad, and Perez's radical performance of solo sexuality. Both received or continue to receive opposition from

hardline Islamic groups in Indonesia. In this way, the Bachata image is both challenging and comforting in its sexual politics.

The text that accompanies the image invites the viewer to register for a beginning level bachata class taught by Rino Apriland. It then briefly contextualizes the form. *Bachata adalah tarian yang berasal dari Republik Dominika di Kepulauan Karibia –* “Bachata is a dance which originates from the Dominican Republic in the Caribbean Archipelago.” This contextualization is telling. It uses *tari* and not *dansa* when situating the practice within its geographic context. This suggests that there is something “cultural” about the form when linked it is linked to a particular foreign country. Thus, learning the dance is simultaneously an ethnographic, educational exercise as well as a social one. By participating in these lessons, the text in combination with the image suggest that students will not only associate themselves with the embodied cultural practices, replete with embedded values, of Latin America. It also suggests that this literal exercise in transnational movement will also import an intellectual understanding of an “over there” culture.

This is an echo of the ethnographic gaze. Whereas Indonesia has been the object of analysis of untold scores of Western academics (including myself,) now Indonesians have the ability to secure their own power by practicing these same ethnographic inquiries on the cultures of others – specifically Latin others. The usage of *Kepulauan Karibia* is instructive here; it specifically names the Dominican Republic as part of an archipelago. The Caribbean basin has another name in Indonesian – *Hindia Barat*, the West Indies; the figurative and literal antipode of *Hindia Timur Belanda*, the Dutch East Indies. Though

not explicitly drawn out in the text, this reversal is still discernable in the operation of power and gaze evident in the advertisement.

The comments that proceed are largely individuals posting the Instagram handles of other users. This notifies a user that they have been tagged and draws their attention to the advertisement and it also serves to perform the tagging users' tastes in a way that is visible both to the original poster and the larger Instagram public. Instagram users have the option of sending others' public posts directly to another user via direct, private message; "DMing." Indeed, this arena is replete with norms and performance practices of its own, such as when one user attempts to flirt with another via this messaging service (often by referencing the content they've posted on their profile) in a practice known as "slid[ing] into their DMs."

But public tagging marks something distinct. I posit that these displays of engagement constitute a public address as theorized by performance studies scholar Michael Warner in *Publics and Counterpublics* (2002). By openly tagging a friend, a user engages with something nearing a public. Most significantly of all Warner's criteria, this act of public tagging constitutes "an address of public speech that is both personal and impersonal" (57) Unlike the personal recommendation of a DM, such an action serves to link the tagger-tagged dyad to a large discourse. It links both individuals to the image and text posted by the original user and further associates the dyad, the post, and the original user to a "relation among strangers." This public carries with it the aesthetics, histories, and values that are so mediatized that it is only map-able onto a virtual geography.



Fig. 7: Instagram post by @komunitas\_salihara. Screen capture by author. Web. 2018.

This relationship is further confirmed by a post promoting “+51 Aviación San Borja,” an avante-garde theatre piece by Japanese company Okazaki Art Theatre. The piece premiered in Japan in 2015 but played at Komunitas Salihara on September 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – less than a week before the *koreo* in Bandung. This Instagram post promoting the first performance included two still images and one brief clip of the performance, showing three young, Japanese performers. The short clip featured in the post shows the performers walking in place in an exaggerated, clown manner. One performer says his lines with a presentational, monotone delivery that speaks to me of contemporary, internationally circulating avante-garde theatre artists like Richard Maxwell and Half Straddle. All performers directly face the audience under flat front light. The deck of the

stage is covered in thick, bright multi-colored striped which serve to highlight the sparseness of the back wall. Faded with the spill of the front light, this wall shows two sets of surtitles that interpret the Japanese text of the performance. English surtitles are displayed in white on the top of the wall. Beneath them, Indonesian surtitles are displayed in yellow.

The text of the post reads as follows:

(SLIDE) 

TONIGHT AND TOMORROW!

See theatre performance “+51 Aviación San Borja” by Okazaki Art Theatre (Japan) on Wednesday and Thursday, 06-07 September 2017 20:00 WIB!

“+51 Aviación San Borja” tells the story of the lives of Japanese immigrants in Latin America.

General tickets are RP75,000, student tickets are RP50,000.

Tickets for the performance of “+51 Aviación San Borja” can be purchased at the Salihara counter, which opens two hours before the performance.

#Theatre #KomunitasSalihara #LIFEs #VivaReborn #AmerikaLatin

The post begins with a command to slide accompanied with a right facing arrow.

In the mobile Instagram interface, this would be directly beneath the images. It cues the viewer that this post contains not just one piece of media but several, and that this gallery can be accessed by swiping right. Literally, it is an invitation to bodily motion; in order to access the full content of this post about moving bodies, the viewer must move their body alike.

Furthermore, the post annotates the show time by stating its time zone. WIB stands for *Waktu Indonesia Barat*, or West Indonesian time. Covering Sumatra, Java, and

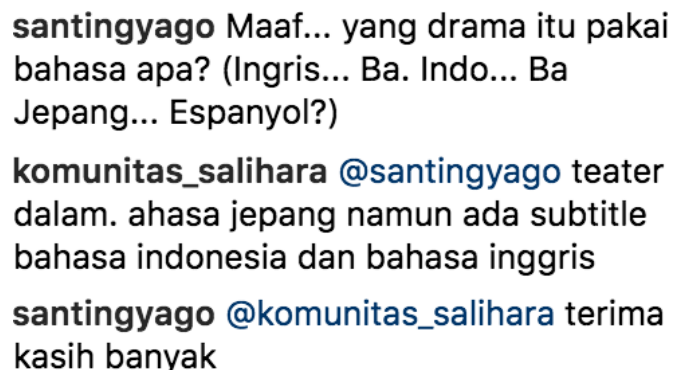
much of Indonesian Borneo, this time zone encompasses most of Indonesia by population but only a third of the geographical length of the archipelago. This time zone annotation makes sense in two scenarios; first, that the performance will be broadcast outside of the time zone, necessitating this annotation so non-local viewers could coordinate their schedules. As such a broadcast is not noted in the post, I find it highly unlikely that this was the case. Alternatively, such an annotation could also serve to orient viewers who would be physically present. This would be useful if such an audience would arrive in the time zone on the day of the performance. Such an audience – perhaps from neighboring Singapore, which is one hour behind WIB, would be disoriented by this travel and necessitate reorientation. If this were the case, this annotation serves to associate the performance with the traveling body of the audience, replete with the power and capital such a body connotes. I do not think this travel needs to be literally the case for the audience to derive context from this gesture – the suggestion of association with dislocated people who need this annotation might be significant enough to confer prestige upon firmly located audience members.

Additionally, the context and content of the performance itself demonstrates a macro vision of this association with cosmopolitan bodily circulation. The text accompanying the images and video indicate that “+51 Aviación San Borja” is performed by a Japanese company and that it addresses the experiences of Japanese immigrants in Latin America. Thus, the cultural output of a former colonizing power – a power that continues to be a hub of Asian material and cultural capital – has been attracted to this venue in Indonesia for consumption by elite Indonesians of taste. Additionally, in

digesting the content of this work the audience will be able to explore the dynamics of Pacific migration not as objects but as subjects. The work is also set in Latin America, a place of particular association with antipodal values as discussed above.

Taken together, these elements suggest that by engaging with this work the audience may be able to reaffirm the transnational nature of their aesthetic tastes. This transnationalism in turn associates them not with the othered subject of the colonization, political repression, or rapacious neoliberal exploitation. Instead, these tastes are a technology for reasserting the identification of the viewer with ideoscape of capital and mobility. Like many upwardly mobile groups, the elite followers of this Instagram page may cement their status not by discarding the systems of exclusion, but by coopting them.

Crucially, this process does not necessitate the physical presence of the viewer's body before the performance. It can occur through mediated engagement on the Instagram platform. This is evidenced in the reflexive address of public tagging. It is similarly visible in direct engagement in the comment thread between Instagram users and the Komunitas Salihara account.



**santingyago** Maaf... yang drama itu pakai bahasa apa? (Ingris... Ba. Indo... Ba Jepang... Espanyol?)

**komunitas\_salihara** @santingyago teater dalam. ahasa jepang namun ada subtitle bahasa indonesia dan bahasa inggris

**santingyago** @komunitas\_salihara terima kasih banyak

Fig. 8: Instagram post by @komunitas\_salihara. Screen capture by author. Web. 2018.

**santinyago** Excuse me... what language is this drama in? (English... Indonesian... Japanese... Espanyol? (*sic*)  
**kominutas\_salihara** @santinyago the play is in japanese but there are subtitles in indonesian and english  
**santinyago** @kominutas\_salihara thank you so much

This conversation could have been very easily carried out over direct message. However, this user sought specifically to engage with the venue in this public fashion. It offered both the commenting user and Komunitas Salihara's account to engage in the maintenance of a reflexive, mutual performance. It demonstrates a sensitivity to linguistic subtlety in performance between the commenter and the poster while also drawing in a public.

This public-building is further complicated by the fact that @santinyago lists his name on his profile as Santiago Gonzalez and does not appear to be natively Indonesian. Several of his posts are in Spanish, perhaps explaining the elision between *Bahasa Spanyol* and *español* in his comment. The presence of Latin bodies within the space of performative consumption indicates that the audience for Komunitas Salihara is not solely Indonesians, but also transnational migrants or perhaps tourists to Jakarta.

In this exchange, then, a possibly Spanish-speaking user asks this Indonesian arts organization what language this Japanese production (set in Latin America) will be performed in. The organization replies that it will be in Japanese, but with both Indonesian and English subtitles. The exchange happens entirely in Indonesian. Why, then, include Indonesian subtitles at all?



I posit that the answer to this question lies in the particular public language politics of contemporary Indonesia. The interactions which spill forth from this post implicate the reflexive circulation of a Warnerian public not only through one instance of the public tagging discussed previously, but also through a discussion of language which invokes the politics of global English and national Indonesian. Sociolinguist Nelly Martin has theorized a *bahasa gado-gado*, a blending of Bahasa Indonesia, English, and colloquial Jakartan dialect, as a particular “linguistic resource that can side-step the social norms that construct “Indonesianness” via state ideology and law” (2017). She observes that Indonesians in popular media code-switch to English when discussing topics that disrupt prevailing expectations of Indonesian social behavior. In her discussion of *Arisan!* Martin demonstrates that English provides both a neutral space for the characters to speak about being “gay” without using the Indonesian words *homo* or *homoseksual*, which carries a heavily negative stigma. Martin further demonstrates that the deployment of English in these contexts serves to associate the speaker and their values “foreign-ness.”

I discern a similar dynamic in this Instagram post. However, this production (as evidences in this post) not only implicates the function of Global English as a space of counter-Indonesian values but also as a space of power. Martin, citing Bourdieu and Edwards, also identifies the symbolic power of English in an Indonesian context. “Language,” she writes “in this light, is an identity marker that has symbolic functions. English is functioning as a symbolic vehicle, something that people utilize to distinguish themselves from others.” Conceivably, the presence of English surtitles further distinguishes the audience of “+51 Aviación San Borja” from a purely Indonesian space.

It imbues the performance with prestige derived from the dividuality of the Komunitas Salihara attendee and a monolingual or less fluent Indonesian.

However this dividuality is not entirely clear. Indonesian titles are clearly displayed underneath English titles the Instagram post and are referenced by the Komunitas Salihara account. This provides Indonesians who lack total fluency in English to associate themselves with this prestige space of transnationalism. Furthermore, in the panoply of languages – Japanese, Indonesian, English, presumably haunted by Spanish – the venue becomes dislocated, or perhaps unlocated. Like *bahasa gado-gado*, this linguistic multiplicity offers a space of challenge to Indonesian-ness and the values and connotations it carries. But this space is not unmarked. It carries its own values, its own connotations. These are connotations of power, of capital, of advanced education, and of mobility.

At its core, the *#AmerikaLatin* evoked by both the Bachata post and the “+51 Aviación San Borja” post evoke a public specifically disassociated with the archipelago. Through the performance imagery, the practice of public tagging vs private DMing, and the linguistic choices on display, Komunitas Salihara’s Instagram account offers itself not only as a promotional vehicle for a material venue but also as a site of performance unto itself. Instagram users seize upon the space proffered by this account to reflexively circulate public building address that is intimately tied to the intensified, perceived movement of capital and bodies wrought by the processes of globalization. Globalization produces many losers in our world. By associating themselves with those who chose to

move, those who do the moving, the public surrounding Komunitas Salihara associates itself with the winners.

## **RT: Conclusion**


### **Future Motions**

What, then, can we learn by drawing comparisons across both cases? First, there is a significant difference in the mediums and the motives behind social media usage around the #saverohingya protest and programming at Komunitas Salihara. Whereas Twitter allows Muslim Indonesians the ability to quickly disperse information to a wide network, Instagram aggregates viewers into a carefully maintained garden. This in turn shapes the qualities of the performance that such media contain.

Second, the discourse around the treatment of the Rohingya is explicitly political. Indonesians who engage with the #saverohingya movement on Twitter directly implicate structures of power. In the case of the protest in Bandung, these structures were both national – PSSI – and international – FIFA. Users sought to voice their displeasure with the perceived injustice of a perceived moment of political censure. There is no such explicitly political motive in the evidence I present from Komunitas Salihara. The posts presented by the venue and their subsequent reception by other Instagram users does not explicitly implicate, protest, or advocate for particular arrangements of power. Instead, they present quotidian concerns – getting friends to attend a dance class with you, the specifics of a theatre performance, how and where to buy tickets.

There are substantial moments of overlap, however. Neither the mass circulation of protest imagery nor the very existence of Komunitas Salihara as an independent arts venue would have been easily possible during the Suharto-era censorship regime. These

venues of discourse are only possible through the dispersion of state control over media. As previously indicated, this fracturing of the media landscape is not homogenously applied. Not only are there regional variations in licensing pressure on arts organizations in Indonesian; the Anti-Pornography law has been applied to target specific marginalized groups. It has emerged as a point of deep contention between ethnic minorities, such as the Balinese, who see it as a threat to cultural practices which are both traditionally significant and important draws for tourist revenue. Similarly it is conceivable that if the mass demonstration in Bandung had been for LGBT rights or against maltreatment of Ismailis in Indonesia and not in support of a sympathetic, benighted Sunni Muslim minority, the event may not have been mediated in the same way- or at all.

Both cases also demonstrate social media as a multifaceted container for performance. Tweets and Instagram posts do not only serve to archive a live performance event; they also create a performance unto themselves. This performance does not fit easily upon many extant dyads in our field. They are neither archive nor repertoire; neither abstract nor fully embodied. Perhaps they are neither live nor mediated; their implication of the physical body of the social media users (“SWIPE ) and the iterative nature by which additional users circulate and respond to posted threads blurs these distinctions.

What is certain is that social media users in these cases are responding bodily to the accelerating processes of globalization. Though neither global circulation nor the mediated, virtual topographies it creates are new to maritime Southeast Asia, contemporary Indonesians are responding to these motions with a rapidity that had been

heretofore impossible. Images of Rohingya people in flight can quickly elicit motions 2000 miles away in Bandung Java. The circulation of neoliberal capital through *Reformasi* Indonesia can elicit a Japanese company to move itself to a Jakartan stage – or for elite Jakartas to move their bodies to a Bachata beat, dancing power in their consumption of Latinidad.

It is not novel that trade carves out channels of migration, capital, and image. What is novel is the intensity of this braiding and the capillary diffusion of the motion enabled by these channels. It is significant that the same penetration of information technology which enabled the rapid spread of currency contagion during the 1997 Financial crisis also enabled the spread of media access that would be so key to *Reformasi* era society. I seek to draw attention to the fact that the very technologies that enable the phenomena of circulation play host to the kinesthetic empathetic responses to the circulation itself.

What conclusions can we draw from this examination? First; that globalization exists meaningfully in the space between moving bodies – this is undoubtedly the case. In establishing the historical context for the dynamics I examined, however, I learned that the implication of bodies meeting other bodies in motion is not novel. Global trade and migration has compelled Indonesian into motion since at least the 10<sup>th</sup> century. In retrospect, this should be obvious. What is new is the intensity of this dynamic. Furthermore, Indonesians are not consistently enacting the same kinesthetic empathetic responses – indeed, their empathies seem to be split. Despite the freedom afforded Komunitas Salihara by its independent status and urban location, not a single post from

his period makes reference to the concurrent, intense agitation occurring around the Rohingya crisis. Instead, the public within which Komunitas Saliakra sits is seemingly separate from that addressed by #saverohingya.

Second, that social media perhaps constitutes an archive, maintained and edited by the people. In its textual focus, it certainly resembles an archive. Furthermore, individual users curate the content they re/circulate in much the same manner that an archivist curates an archive. Furthermore, the knowledges codified in social media threads serve a similar technological role to an archive in a Heideggerian sense – both are means for the individual know itself (Mulhall, 1962). However, these cases demonstrate that social media does not function purely as archive in that no sole person or group of people has total control over its access. An individual may curate their social media exposure and engagement, but these curations are intensely public. The public nature of social media allows it to exist between textual archive and embodied repertoire.

In this way, social media is a unique container for performance. It is both a log of an embodied, live performance and a stage upon which users perform in response. A Twitter conversation, an Instagram comment thread are both sticky. They catch performance and in each interaction performs and re-performs on its surface, vibrating - perhaps in perpetuity. Thus, these acts of engagement constitute performances which trouble binary definitions of the archive and the repertoire.

However, through the process of writing this document, I've found that Michael Warner's description of publics and address seems more apt to describe these dynamics than the archive/repertoire dyad. Such posts and interactions easily fulfill many of

Warner's criteria for publics and address. These media build communities of both familiars and strangers through mere address. Crucially, these publics would be maintained by the reflexive circulation of texts between the poster, responding users, and even users who see the tweets, posts, and comments but do not interact. These publics are conceivably linked to specific communities – a global (or at least regional) community of Muslims for the Twitter case, and an elite, transnationally mobile cosmopolitan class around the Komunitas Salihara Instagram page.

However, Warnerian publics do not capture the intense implication of the body and its movement exhibited by these two cases. Both cases exhibit a profound kinesthetic dimension. It is accurate though incomplete to assert that these bodily reactions are guided by kinesthetic empathy. I find that the active curation of motion – in the macro, the organization of bodies into protest, the booking of a Japanese theatre company to a venue; in the micro, the decision to swipe right or compose a tweet with your thumbs – this motion curation is thoroughly agentive. The kinesthetic empathetic response is located in a place before conscious agency.

If social media performances are the circulation of public building address, can we say that the public at play in #saverohingya and Komunitas Salihara's Instagram promotions are aligned? In many ways, they are – both are rooted in Indonesia at almost precisely the same moment in time. Both largely deploy Indonesian to communicate their values and goals, though both also deploy Global English on occasion. Both are deeply implicated in bodily movement at a local, Indonesian level in response to bodily movement in transnational sphere. However, the performances evident within these two



cases are in many ways inversely opposed to each other. The Twitter users we've explored are deeply concerned with national intuitions like PSSI and the perceived decline in national, religious character. They associate this decline with FIFA and a foreign valuation of the lives of Westerners above the lives of Muslims, who are placed in opposition to each other. In the Komunitas Salihara case, users actively seek to associate themselves with norms that are non-traditional by Muslim Indonesian standards. To do so, they perform their transnational aesthetic tastes, sexual dynamics, and language proficiency. Both of these performative identifications are strategies for responding to intense global circulation.

## **Practical concerns**

Social media is emerging as a critical tool for ethnographers. It provides an incredible wealth of information that is simultaneously highly public and highly personal. This dual nature is as treacherous as it is promising. Social media posts are not solely as public or as private as they might seem. Indeed, they carve out a space between these two (Victorian) divisions that I don't feel entirely prepared to engage.

Similarly, scholars of performance studies ought to pay greater attention to the specific role that social media posts play in troubling binary notions of archive and repertoire. In their textuality and indexability they recall an archive. However, the iterative unfolding of these threads accretes performance content in a way that seems to recall the repertoire. They are perhaps like an artefact – I feel that this association is very promising for future exploration.

I urge performance studies practitioners and ethnographers interested in this medium to move quickly. Though many people of my generation have been raised on the notion that nothing – particularly social media posts - can ever be removed from the internet, this is patently false. Links die. Image hosting expires. The great vitality, the contemporaneity promised by social media sources is attended by the fleeting impermanence of its content. In an abstract sense, this impermanence is reflected in the mercurial nature of the social dynamics it evidences. I am writing this document less than a year after the phenomena I discuss occurred. Still, these hashtags, these promotions have faded out of the intense sense of intimacy and synchronicity that drew me to them.

Though I assert that these posts accrue performance in perpetuity social media users seem to have quickly stopped interacting with them in ways discernable to me.

For all the promise of social media as a performance text, it possesses myriad ethical dangers. In writing this document I grasped for guidance on how to ethically source content. The Institutional Review Board at the University of Texas assured me that publicly available social media posts did not require IRB review nor notification of the original posters. Still, the ethics of this exploration feel unformed, fraught. In internet culture, malicious actors may seek out identifying information about an individual on social media and circulate it with the intent to harass. This practice is known as doxing. Sometimes this employs literal espionage. Sometimes, it is merely the aggregation of publicly available materials. I find this practice abhorrent. I could not shake the feeling that the ethnographic depth offered by exploring individual users social media accounts is countered by the depth of ethical conundrum.

Specifically, I had the option to dive into the political beliefs of the individual Twitter users I encountered. I would have been able to discern this information from statements they tweeted or retweeted, often about the role of Islam in politics or in opposition to an illusory, perceived Communist revival. Similarly, many of the Instagram users who engaged with Komunitas Salihara's content made posts on their personal pages which suggested that they were ethnically Chinese. As useful and as public as the information may be, I still felt it was possibly unethical to expose this information in this document.

Much like the double-edged promises of neoliberal globalization, social media ethnography offers tempting opportunities that are matched by the potential ethical hazards of the medium. While I seek to establish social media as a crucial stage of performance particularly for scholars and artists interested in globalization, we must not lose sight of the humanity, the potential vulnerabilities of the individuals we may access. I urge my colleagues (and I remind myself) to not fall into exploitative practices in our rush to explore these new channels of understanding.

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