

The Role of the Indonesian Muslim Community Identity in Strengthening Indonesia-Malaysia Relations

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Abstract. This article departs from the reality that identity played a significant role in Indonesia-Malaysia brotherhood relations. In addition, Malaysia is home to many Indonesian diasporas, either to work or study. In fact, the Indonesian diaspora still maintains a connection with the motherland through communities amid of identity issues with the Malaysian local. For instance, the emergence of anti-Malaysian versus anti-migrant sentiments, the use of a controversial term called 'Indon' and 'Malingsia' in the middle of Muslim brotherhood identity. Therefore, using a qualitative approach supplemented with unstructured interviews, this study found that Islamic identity obviously contributed to the harmony of people to people relations between the two nations. Indeed, Islamic identity became a catalyst especially for many Indonesian workers to build close contact with the Muslim local community. These findings are important for sociology and international relations students and researchers.

Keywords: identity, diaspora, indonesia-malaysia relations, community

Introduction

The role of identity is truly significant in influencing international relations, especially bilateral relations between the two countries (Hagström & Gustafsson, 2015). Included in this case is the relations between the two brotherhood countries—Indonesia and Malaysia. In this context, the role of the Indonesian diaspora becomes paramount in the midst of the identity discourse of the two nations. Indisputably, majority of Indonesian diasporas are Muslims and have noble motivation to struggle to find a decent living (Abu-Sahlieh, 1996). However, as a diaspora, they remain faithful in preserving and establishing contact with their ancestral lands (Adamson, 2012). Even though living overseas, they can still freely preserve their identity (Dickinson, 2017; Adamson, 2006). Such dynamics can occur due to a major international geopolitical transformation after the end of the Cold War in 1991 followed by the rise of globalization (Blumenau, Hanhimäki, & Zanchetta, 2018).

The rise of globalization makes the world more complex because it impacts on an increasingly complex pattern of relations between countries. One of them is caused by the reduction in demarcation barriers due to the emergence of "multiple channels" (Keohane & Nye, 2001: 21). The impact has really affected the transformation of human relations. Anyone can build their relationships and interactions with partners around the world beyond national borders.

Migration is a simple example of how human movements are free and uncontrolled—including the phenomenon of Malaysian-Indonesian migration. Migration is often associated with security issues—threats to public order, national identity, and social welfare issues (Huysmans, 2006) and the problem of illegal migration (Bigo, 2004; Pinyol-Jiménez, 2012; Themistocleous, 2013). This means that internationally, there is no world agency that specifically handles and protects immigrants. Although there is an International Organization for Migration (IOM), it is more focused on dealing with

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refugees and tends to be political (Geiger & Pécoud, 2014).

This is certainly different from trade and financial issues, for example, it must comply with global regulations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Kalm, 2012). In short, the movements of capital, goods, and skilled workers circulate freely; while illegal migration is not clearly regulated. In addition, "human mobility is a human right which is actually implemented differently" (Pécoud & de Guchteneire, 2006). Control over migration is complicated and expensive work such as border patrols, visa issuance and residence permits, courts, detention, and removal of undocumented migrants (Pécoud & de Guchteneire, 2006).

Conceptually, migration is defined as "the inflow or outflow of population from one region to another in order to settle permanently or semi-permanently" (Mishra, 1981, pp. 227-228). In particular, the United Nations (UN) (1970, No. 47) revealed that migration is the movement of people from one place to another for more than one year for the purpose of work or permanent migration, and one year or less than one year for temporary migration, provided they receive payment from a source in the country they enter. Meanwhile, the entry of human migration is influenced by several factors such as lack of employment, few opportunities, political persecution or abuse, and improving a better life (Lee, 1966).

Literature studies show that immigrants (المهاجرون) from Indonesia, who are predominantly Muslims, are known to be steadfast in holding their cultural identity. Therefore, it is not surprising that there are many Indonesian descendants in Malaysia who retain their original identity. Johor, in Malaysia, for example, has very strong historical ties with Riau, and the involvement of ethnic Bugis from Sulawesi Indonesia (Rahilah Omar, Khazin Mohd. Tamrin, Nordin Hussin, & Nelmawarni, 2009; Zuraidi, 2012; Ayu Nor Azilah binti Mohamad & Wayu Nor Asikin Mohamad, 2017). While Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia has a very close relationship with West Sumatra, Indonesia, because they are both dominated by ethnic Minang (Zed, 2010; Bahauddin, A., Hardono, S., Abdullah, A., & Mali, N. Z., 2012; Masri, 2012; Haza Hanurhaza Md Jani & Mohd Ramzi Mohd Hussain, 2012). Meanwhile, the people in some parts of the West Coast in

Malaysia Peninsula, especially in Selangor, are predominantly Javanese (Khazin Mohd Tamrin, 1977; Sekimoto, 1988; Miyazaki, 1996; Maiwan, 2011). In addition, there are Banjar ethnic areas concentrating in Selangor, Perak, and Johor regions. The Banjar ethnic diaspora came from South Kalimantan who performed a massive migration to Malaysia Peninsula in the late 19th Century and early 20th Century. (Lamry, 2010). The Banjar ethnic group is one of the ethnicities that greatly influence Islamic life in Malaysia because of their Islamic culture (Wahyudin, 2014). This is evidenced by the role of Banjar scholars who are very influential in Malaysia to this day (Muhammad Hasan Said Iderus, Latifah Abdul Majid, & Ahamad Asmadi Sakat, 2016). The 'Islamic' environment which is very beneficial for the Indonesian diaspora is supported by the Malaysian Constitution which places Islam as the official state religion (Abdul Wahab & Abdullah, 2017). Therefore, eventually, this dynamic affects the relations between the two countries, especially concerning issues of identity.

To maintain and actualize their identities, many of the Indonesian diasporas then set up overseas organizations or associations. This is reasonable because social organizations have a very significant role in Indonesia (Perdana, 2015). Therefore, the main purpose of this paper is to find out the role of the identity of the Indonesian diaspora, especially those belonging to organizations or associations in Malaysia and their implications for Indonesia-Malaysia relations.

Research Methodology

To achieve the objectives of this study, the writer uses a qualitative descriptive approach. In realizing this study, the authors use secondary data sources, especially previous studies from journals, books, seminar proceedings, and other documents such as working papers, and online sources (websites). This study is also supported by primary data in the form of interviews with selected informants using the rule of purposive sampling (Tongco, 2007). In this case, the authors have conducted interviews with informants, especially the heads of Islamic organizations in Malaysia such as FORKOMI (Indonesian Muslim Community Communication Forum), IPMI (Indonesian Muslim Workers' Association), including Malaysian citizens who have actively mingled with Indonesian activists and former

diaspora—either workers or students.

The research stages are (1) designing research, (2) preparation of field research (including contacting prospective informants to be interviewed using information technology especially WhatsApp application, (3) conducting direct interviews while collecting secondary data, (4) analyzing data on findings and displaying them in the form of quotations and data presentations based on predetermined themes, (5) making conclusions. Therefore, the authors divide this paper into three important parts: the introduction, research methodology, discussion, and is closed with the conclusions of this paper.

Results and Discussion

The Identity of Indonesian Diaspora and Its Impacts on Muslim Community in Malaysia

Discussing the identity of the Indonesian diaspora in Malaysia certainly cannot be separated from the development trend of the increasing number of Indonesian migrants each year. There are various versions of data on estimates of arrivals in Malaysia including from Indonesia. The latest data shows that the number of foreign nationals in Malaysia reached 3.2 million (Department of Statistic Malaysia, 2019). Meanwhile, according to the National Agency for Placement and Protection of Indonesian Workers (BNP2TKI), until June 2019 only 20,367 workers were sent to Malaysia (BNP2TKI, 2019). However, a study shows interesting data where until 2018 the number of foreigners, especially migrant workers in Malaysia, has reached 7 million people (Lee & Khor, 2018). This is an astonishing number of which 1.7 million are workers from Indonesia (Nasa, 2017). In

table 1 depicts data related to the distribution of Indonesian workers' employment sectors in Malaysia according to the Indonesian Embassy in Kuala Lumpur.

Observing the above trends, it is very interesting to examine the identity of the Indonesian Muslim diaspora and its impacts on the relations with the local Muslim community which further influences the relations between the two countries. In this context, there are several Indonesian-based religious organizations, especially in Penang, Malaysia, for example, FORKOMI (Indonesian Muslim Community Communication Forum), IPMI (Indonesian Muslim Workers' Association), *Majelis Yasinan Riyadus Sholihin*, and FOKMA (Indonesian Muslimah Communication Forum in Malaysia). These Indonesian Muslim Communities in Penang are actively performing various Islamic activities especially related to humanitarian and educational issues. In general, the Islamic identity of the organization cannot be separated from the identity and ideology of its original place, Indonesia. In general, the discourse on Islamic identity in Indonesia, especially among movement organizations, is divided into two major narratives, traditional Islam and modern Islam (Lili Yulyadi A, 2007).

However, the analysis of the dichotomy of Islamic identity in Indonesia always departs from Geertz's argument (1964) regarding the terms *santri*, *priyayi*, *abangan*. In its development, some experts criticized the dichotomy because it was considered to be in contradiction with the reality of the current era (Sutherland, 1975; Nakamura, 1983; Bachtiar, 1985; Hefner, 1985; Koentjaraningrat, 1985; Woodward, 1989; Beatty, 1999). This is due to significant developments occurring at the level of Islamic society along with social, economic and political dynamics in Indonesia. In addition,

Table 1
Distribution of Indonesian Workers' Employment Sectors in Malaysia

Sectors	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Construction	224,398	216,898	211,016	207,623	196,93
Plantation	319,332	312,832	290,484	287,781	260,23
Manufacture	219,608	213,108	206,78	199,784	167,16
Services	42,193	40,993	41,021	41,021	38,684
Agriculture	95,503	92,003	103,974	105,485	98,779
Maid	291,812	294,115	294,784	279,134	230,14
Total	1,192,846	1,174,013	1,148,050	1,120,828	991,94

Source: Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia (KBRI), Kuala Lumpur (2010).

the locus of research and communal-based in one place, Mojokuto (Pare) in East Java, made Geertz's analysis less relevant in explaining the authentic identity of Islam in several Indonesian places which turned out to be very diverse (Barton, 1994; Tago & Shonhaji, 2013). The latest is the Presidential Decree No. 22/2015 concerning National Santri Day which marks the recognition of *santri* in the socio-political sphere of Indonesia makes Geertz's dichotomy less relevant. However, Geertz's analysis is fundamental to the understanding of Islamic identity in Indonesia (Ahmad Najib Burhani, 2017).

If traced carefully, the Islamic identity of the Indonesian diaspora is greatly influenced by the dynamics of the movement of Islamic organizations in Indonesia. In general, in Indonesia, there are two big narratives of Islamic thoughts—traditional and modern. However, a unique debate emerged about these two concepts. In some literature studies, modern Islam is greatly influenced by 19th century Islamic political thought related to anti-colonial issues that offer Islam as a solution to the problem. These thinkers, for example, Jamal-Al-Din Al-Afghani (1838-1897), Muhammad Abduh (1845-1905), and Rashid Ridha (1865-1935 AD) are amongst the originators of the Pan Islamism movement (Lili Yulyadi A, 2007). The two thinkers' ideas ultimately inspired the birth of Islamic renewal movements such as Al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn (Zahid, 2012), and in Indonesia, for example, *Sarekat Dagang Islam/SDI* (1905), Muhammadiyah (1912), and *Persatuan Islam* (1923) (Padmo, 2007; Asyari, 2011). In other words, modern Islamic thought also tends to be associated with the movement of Islamic religious teachings' purification from elements of local traditions (Lili Yulyadi A, 2007; Hasbullah, 2014).

Conversely, with the development of modern Islamic thought above, traditional Islamic thought also emerged. Traditional Islamic groups, especially in the Indonesian context, are often associated with Islamic groups who reject the idea of purification and the relationship of Islam with local culture (Aroni, 2012). Traditional Islam in Indonesia is represented by organizations such as *Nahdlatul Ulama* (1929), *Al-Wahsliyah* (1930), *Persatuan Tarbiyah Islamiyah* (1930), and *Nahdlatul Wathan* (1953). The establishment of the organization was said to be a response to the establishment of Muhammadiyah (von der Mehden, 1995; Feener, 2011). Interestingly, in different literature studies,

the definition of traditionalism tends to be attached to groups that define religious teachings in a narrow, textual, and dogmatic way. This group was then very attached to the so-called Wahabi and Salafi groups (Abrahamov, 2014; Hoover, 2014). However, the Muhammadiyah movement is considered not included in the category of Wahhabism and Salafism along with the controversy and dynamics of the organization towards post-puritanism (Jinan, 2015; Latief, 2017).

Therefore, in the context of the identity of the Indonesian diaspora who are members of several social organizations in Penang, Malaysia, they cannot be separated from the dynamics of Islamic thought in Indonesia. Traditional and modern Islam is seen as two big identities that are closely related to the identity of the Indonesian diaspora in Malaysia. Theologically, the Islamic identity of the two societies can be said to be not much different, especially in the context of public worship (*mahdhah*). However, ritual worship as a social construction is very likely to be able to influence the knots of the community's identity, for example, like a fostering brotherhood or even encouraging friction (Fauzan, 2017). Further, the identity of the Indonesian diaspora is obviously influencing local communities in Malaysia and has an impact on the possibility of a new identity or acculturation of identity between the two communities. For this reason, the authors focus on the impact of the identity of the Indonesian diaspora, especially in two important aspects, ritual (Durkheim, 1912) and political orientation (Kasdi, 2015).

Amongst the Indonesian Muslim communities in Penang, Malaysia, especially those who are affiliated with various social organizations, they seem to experience a different situation. Interestingly, even though the organization is ideologically not an Islamic organization, it often holds Islamic activities. The Indonesian Citizens Association (PERWIRA), for example, held the *Yasinan*, *Tahlilan*, and *Shalawatan* ritual gatherings. These activities can be performed most likely due to the majority of its members coming from among the *pesantren* base such as Madura, Jember, and others. Most often the activity was also attended by local residents, especially local community leaders. However, participants were still dominated by Indonesian citizens. This was also stated by KJRI Penang staff regarding the involvement of local communities in Penang, Malaysia:-

Even though the majority of participants are our people, but I don't think it means that these activities are limited to our people only. I remember the IPMI (Indonesian Muslim Workers' Association) of Penang used to be giving out food to the homeless. It might also be supported by local (local) people (Interview G).

For them, the issue of identity in the context of Islamic activities is over and need not be debated. One resource person stated:-

Usually, those who come already know. They respond very well. Wow, this means it's the same, one group ... there is no difference (Interview B).

Meanwhile, some Indonesian diaspora who are professionals, such as students, seem to have a lack of interaction with the local community. Supposedly, the intellectuals are more often associated with the local Muslim community in order to provide enlightenment related to social issues between the two countries. However, the fact that it did not materialize, and the students were more preoccupied with academic matters on campus or the place of their respective activities. Only occasionally do they attend local Muslim community activities such as weddings. Even so, it is interesting to look into the narrative of one of the intellectual informants who stated that:-

There is one area that is indeed all of Indonesia's education, especially from Bawean, East Java. Yes, they do the ritual exactly the same as Indonesia, especially among *Nahdhiyyin* (Nahdhatul Ulama organizations). Even though most of them are Malaysian citizens (Interview A).

A similar response was expressed by one of the Indonesian intellectual communities in Penang Malaysia, who were members of the Indonesian Muslim Community Communication Forum (FORKOMMI). One of the informants who also served as chairman of the organization stated that:-

The recitation activities of FORKOMMI is with the Muslim community (secondary level students and higher education students). *Yasinan* activities are usually performed by the *Majlis Riyadhus Salihin* community. If in the sap garden, the Malay people are very enthusiastic to join. But if *Yasinan* is held in the Alma area, Bukit Mertajam, there is no Malay participation (Interview C).

This means that not all members of the Indonesian diaspora have the experience of socializing with the local Muslim community. This is influenced by the scope of the association more spent at work or study. However, at least, the analysis of intellectual circles which can actually be a bridge of information and communication between the two communities is very important. Indonesian intellectuals have also indirectly improved the perspective of local communities in Malaysia, which has been dominated by negative views of Indonesians who are seen as "trouble makers" (Nasrullah Ali Fauzi, 2009; Liow, 2005). Therefore, the involvement of Indonesian diaspora intellectuals in Malaysia is very important—whatever its form is.

In addition, in the context of political influence, the position of Indonesian Islamic organizations in Penang, in particular, tends to be insignificant. It means that the organizations are trying not to interfere or discuss local political issues in Malaysia. This is as stated by one of the informants:-

In terms of political matters, we rarely talk about politics because it is sensitive. But we become loyal listeners. More or less, the same as here (Indonesia). If we talk with people in the mosque, the prayer room, wearing turban, they are inclined to PAS (Malaysian Islamic Parties). They use the arguments (religious references). But if among Malaysians who are nationalists but are still Malay, they are inclined to UMNO (United Malays National Organization) (Interview B).

The statement above clearly shows that political issues inevitably remain a discussion among Islamic organizations in Penang with the local community. Although it seems implicit, based on observations in the field, it shows that political discourse is an interesting topic of discussion among Indonesians and Malaysians, not least those who are members of Islamic organizations. This is at least confirmed by the statement of one Malaysian local who lives in Penang:-

Yes, it is normal to discuss politics with (pseudonyms), because we are compatible, the person likes the Islamic ideology as I do. But not with all Indonesians we talk politics. Only those who we know well enough (Interview D).

Thus, this section shows that in the context of the influence of religious ideology, especially ritual and political choice, the role

of Indonesian religious organizations is quite significant and complementary. It is said to be significant because religious rituals, which are actually the same and owned by local communities, are not optimally implemented. It was precisely due to the arrival of Indonesians who had better organizational awareness than Malaysia, especially after the 1998 reformation (Freedman, 2009), the religious rituals of the local community come alive. The similarities in religious teachings wrapped in a congregation make it easier for these activities to run well and have a wider impact.

Indonesian Diaspora Identity and Indonesia-Malaysia Relations in the context of people-to-people contact

The identity of the Indonesian diaspora who are members of religious organizations can be said to be the same and tend to be acculturated with each other. However, it affects the ups and downs of the intensity of bilateral relations, especially in the context of people to people relations. Therefore, this section focuses on the role of the Indonesian diaspora incorporated in religious organizations in Penang in influencing Indonesia-Malaysia relations. To find out its influence on Indonesia-Malaysia relations, it needs to be seen in the context of the case. In this case, the authors focus on two issues inherent in the daily lives of the Indonesian people. The two important issues are 1) the issue of the Indonesian diaspora including the Indonesian workforce (TKI) in Malaysia, and 2) the issue of cultural identity between the Malay Muslim community and Indonesian Muslim descendants.

Based on data from the field, there are several interesting things related to the existence of Islamic organizations in Penang in particular and in Malaysia in general in influencing fluctuations in relations between the two countries. For the first issue related to the Indonesian diaspora, precisely the existence of the religious organization helped to increase Indonesia's image in the eyes of the local Malaysian community. In an interview, one of the Indonesian Consulate General staff in Penang stated that:-

I have never done a research on that, logically it can improve image the [of positive Indonesia] (Interview E).

However, this statement was reinforced by another Penang Consulate staff who has

been involved in and overseeing activities with Indonesian citizens such as associations including religious organizations. The staff stressed that related to the role of the Indonesian diaspora in strengthening the image of Indonesia in the eyes of Malaysian citizens:

... My answer is it can be. [...] religious activities or social activities by these organizations/associations help the Consulate General in forming a positive image of Indonesia. We encourage the existence of a community to facilitate protection and coordination (Interview G).

As previously known, the image of Indonesian migrants or diaspora in the eyes of Malaysian local communities is rather negative. Indonesian migrants tend to be associated as troublemakers, especially in the era of Mahathir Mohamad's leadership. This negative perception also seems to have been triggered by a series of criminal actions and the involvement of several unscrupulous Indonesian workers in various problems. Moreover, many Indonesian citizens have illegal status and live illegally in Malaysia (Liow, 2005). It must be admitted that the negative stigma has more or less influenced the "*ukhuwah Islamiyah*" between the Indonesian diaspora and the local Muslim community. Moreover, this situation is supported by local media coverage which always discusses and frames Indonesians negatively. The mention of the term "Indon" accompanied by negative framing seems to be one of the causes of the increasingly fertile stigma of Indonesia as "second class" in the eyes of the local Malaysian community (Nasrullah Ali Fauzi, 2009).

Even though the Indonesian diaspora appears to be in an unfavorable condition in the context of social relations, it is undeniable that economic factors are driving the flow of Indonesian migrants to Malaysia to work and move in various fields. Precisely with this situation, this has forced some Indonesian citizens to survive and try to adjust to the situation in Malaysia. Especially for the Indonesian diaspora who are Muslims and work as non-formal workers and live in the midst of local communities, then mingling is the right choice. One informant stated that:-

Mingling with locals is actually safer. When I was illegal, I spent my time in the mosque. Even like in getting protection. They knew I was [illegal], but said nothing. Once upon a time, I was invited

to pick oil palm in a location some distance away. I said I was afraid, but they instead said, later if anything should happen, they would be responsible (Interview F).

The above statement clearly shows that it is undeniable that the local Malaysian community has a negative view of the Indonesian diaspora in general. Both those who work as skilled workers and unskilled workers are all considered as a part of the "problem" carrier in Malaysia. However, it is undeniable that some Malaysians actually consider the Indonesian diaspora as a contributor to national development. Therefore, despite the negative view of the Indonesian diaspora, the existence of an Islamic identity can find a harmonious atmosphere. Especially with a large number of Indonesian diasporas being pioneers and activists of religious activities increasingly adding to the harmonious relations between the people of Indonesia and the local Malaysian community. It is not uncommon that to assimilate with the local Muslim communities, the Indonesian diaspora becomes comfortable and instead receives protection in the midst of the uncertainty of life as an illegal immigrant in Malaysia.

As for the context of the issue of cultural identity between the Malay Muslim community and the descendants of Indonesian Muslims, something interesting also happened. First, the Islamic identity between the Indonesian diaspora and the Malaysian local community has a positive impact on the relations between the two countries. Historically, it has been said that the role of Islamic identity and similarities between the two countries are very important and influence the dynamics of relations between the two countries, both before and after independence. This is confirmed in the history of the early independence of Indonesia and Malaysia, including the process of reconciliation after the confrontation that took place very quickly (Kunaseelan a/I Muniandy, 1996; Nik Anuar NM, 2000; Liow, 2005). These religious ties, although are seen as declining, are basically still strong when the elites of the two countries also use the norms and values of similarities and Islam. This happened when Indonesia was under the leadership of President B.J. Habibie and Malaysia under Dr. Mahathir Mohamad with his Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim. During this period, the Islamic relations between the two countries were said to be very close and influenced the harmony of the two countries (Lili Yulyadi, 2009).

At the lower levels, it seems that

Islamic identity also greatly influences the relations between the Indonesian and Malaysian diaspora. Although the position of the Indonesian diaspora, including in Penang Malaysia, tends to be the same in the eyes of the local community, real Islamic identity is able to dilute the relations between individuals which are the basis for relations between the two countries. Even the existence of Islamic identity indirectly has encouraged informal assimilation between the two communities. The informal assimilation referred to is the dissolution of Indonesian citizens in the Malaysian local community although it is not followed by the fusion of becoming Malaysian citizens. The existence of informal assimilation is able to make the relations between the two countries take place in full harmony in the Islamic *ukhuwah* frame.

This was at least confirmed by several informants who stated that:-

So far I have never heard about it (while associating with local Muslims), whether someone is from Indonesia or from Malaysia. Nope, maybe because a factor of fellow Muslims. It is just like one door (Interview B).

Furthermore, the informant also stressed that the Islamic identity between the two communities (people to people) is important in conflict resolution between the two countries. The informant stated that:-

Positive things, [signifying] Islam, one family, as if instead [intending that] ... administrative matters such as the law that Indonesians must have a passport, there must be a permit [visa], it was defeated by that kind of relationship. Oh, this is fellow Muslim, the culture is the same, it's even [I feel] safe. But it's the state [rule] which must be obeyed. But if there are political issues [between the two countries] at the very least. After that, it returns to normal (Interview B).

On another occasion, one of the informants also stated that Islamic identity is very important in the context of relations between the Indonesian and Malaysian diaspora, especially those with illegal status. Maybe this is a pragmatic goal, but the fact is that this identity is able to eliminate the social barriers that have become the obstacles in building harmonious relations between the two communities. It actually looks beneficial if the Islamic identity is in the midst of various challenges faced. One informant stated:-

When I went to the mosque, I felt like I received protection. I am familiar with Encik Yasin [while I ask for information on job opportunities]. There is work. Can I do [spraying pesticides] work? Is there [Fertilizing] work? [I answer it] Yes, I can.

Furthermore, the informant also emphasized that:-

If we talk about religious articles, I don't see [me being] illegal or not, Indon [Indonesia] or local [Malaysian citizens]. The important thing is [he] is a Muslim (Interview F).

Identity is indeed an adhesive between the two countries. In the aspect of communication, there is still an imbalance, but at least the existence of the Indonesian diaspora with a variety of positive religious and social activities can be accepted and welcomed by the local community. Although having the status of migrants, once again due to the equality of identity, it is able to place the Indonesian diaspora as "brothers". The previous informant's explanations clearly show that the position of the Indonesian diaspora is very important and indirectly influences the social and religious life of the local community. In the eyes of diplomacy, the local community's response to the activities of the Indonesian diaspora can be one of the parameters that this identity influences Indonesia-Malaysia relations in general. This is as stated by a staff of the Indonesian Consulate General in Penang that:-

During my placement in Penang, there were no complaints from the local community regarding the activities performed by our religious organizations (Interview G).

This means that the existence of this identity has a significant impact on increasing people to people contact relations between Indonesia and Malaysia. More importantly, this identity can actually dissolve communication barriers which have been the obstacles between the two parties. On several occasions, there are indeed elements of communication barriers, especially the mention of the term "Indon" which has become a habit of the local Malaysian community. In addition, a negative view of the Indonesian diaspora inevitably remains an obstacle. Nevertheless, the existence of Islamic identity is able to dilute communication and can strengthen relations between the two communities which is a very fundamental element for strengthening bilateral relations between Indonesia and

Malaysia.

Conclusions

This study concludes that in the context of the influence of religious ideologies in particular rituals and political choices, the role of the Indonesian diaspora especially those belonging to Indonesian religious organizations is quite significant and complementary. It is said to be significant because, basically, local communities are less concerned with religious rituals which are actually the same as migrants. It was precise with the arrival of Indonesians who had better organizational awareness than Malaysia, especially after the 1998 reformation, the religious rituals of the local community become alive. The similarities in religious teachings wrapped in a congregation make it easier for these activities to run well and to have a wider impact. However, the role of individual diaspora even though outside Islamic organizations can be said to be very important and cannot be underestimated.

The reality in the field also shows that the influence of the Indonesian diaspora's Islamic identity is implemented in the form of daily worship activities and associating with local Malaysians especially in Penang. For example, holding a series of activities/rituals that happen to be ideologically (*madzhab*) the same as local communities in Malaysia. In addition, several members of the Indonesian diaspora are also involved in socio-religious activities. Like becoming the Imam of mosque, reciting teacher/religious teacher, and so on. Indirectly, these activities are very effective in transferring Islamic values of the Indonesian diaspora in Malaysia.

At the same time, a real Islamic identity also has a significant impact on increasing people to people contact relations between Indonesia and Malaysia. More importantly, this identity can actually dissolve communication barriers which have been obstacles between the two parties. On several occasions, there are indeed elements of communication barriers, especially the mention of the term "Indon" which has become a habit of the local Malaysian community. In addition, a negative view of the Indonesian diaspora inevitably remains an obstacle. However, the existence of Islamic identity is able to

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