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# **MUSLIM SPACES AND PIETY POLITICS:**

Muslim Mothers Embroidering Multiple Interpretations  
of Islam in the Contemporary Context of Transnational  
Urban Landscape of Auckland

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts  
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**Hanny Savitri Hartono**

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New Zealand has been home to many migrants including Muslims for the past many decades. Muslims from diverse ethnic backgrounds have travelled and chosen this country as their new place of residence. Based on participant-observation fieldwork in Mt Roskill, a suburb in Auckland that is known for its highest Muslim population in New Zealand, this study seeks to map how devout Muslim mothers from different ethnicities strive to live their lives as pious Muslims. This ethnographic research aims to examine two primary issues: Muslim women's engagement with their role as pious Muslims who endeavour to improve themselves in terms of understanding and practicing Islamic tenets in the midst of multiple discourses and practices available to them; and their engagement with their role as mothers who try to bring up their children as good Muslims in a diverse and increasingly global Muslim community within a larger scale of non-Muslim urban landscape. In particular, this study addresses how these women imbue piety in their children and improve themselves to be better Muslims in different Muslim spaces; home, *tafsīr* and *tajwīd* classes, communal prayer, their children's *madrassa* and public school. Themes of music, clothing, gender-segregated spaces, greetings and *ṣalāt* (prayer) among others, emerged throughout the text in which piety politics is the core. For these Muslim women their lives are marked by negotiations to social mores, religious belief and practice vis-à-vis the diverse Muslim community and the larger non-Muslim context.

I have been fortunate to have the opportunity to study a topic that is close to my heart. A number of people have been very supportive of me academically and personally. This research would not have been realised without the generosity of the Muslim women and mothers who live in Mt Roskill, and my Muslim friends and acquaintances. You have opened your homes to me and shared your stories. I thank each and every one of you from the bottom of my heart. *Jazakallahu khayrn. Terima kasih banyak.*

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*Notes: All photographs except for figure 1 were taken by the researcher.*

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*Note on transcription*

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In general, I used English Transliteration System outlined in the *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies (IJMES)* for transliterating words in Arabic. Diacritical marks are included to indicate different sounds of Arabic letters.

## Introduction

It was early autumn, mid afternoon in Christchurch. The rented hall was packed with participants attending the annual meeting of the Islamic Women’s Council from different regions in New Zealand as far north as Auckland and as far south as Dunedin. I was talking to a Fijian<sup>1</sup> teacher, whom I have known from our previous meetings in Auckland, discussing the last presentation on young Muslim women’s career choices and a rather heated argument about the matter. We were waiting for the time to do our afternoon prayer. In the midst of our discussion, a Southeast Asian woman in her late thirties in a long sleeved blouse and a pair of trousers with a rectangular long scarf covering part of her hair approached us from the back of the room. She sat behind us and when we paused she interjected with a sincere plea to help her in her family situation. I did not know why she asked for our help. Perhaps the nature of our conversation drew her and encouraged her to ask for help. Or she might have been desperate. She said that she intentionally drove from her home in Christchurch to come to the meeting that day so that she could meet people who might be able to give her guidance in her predicament. In fluent English she told us that she became frustrated with her son. She had been watching with whom her teenage son had been socialising in the past few years and she did not approve of this. It also became more and more difficult to persuade her son to go to a mosque to do his Friday prayer. Devastatingly heartbroken, she witnessed her only son become even further from his *dīn*<sup>2</sup>. Her divorce with the father of her son might be the cause she said. Every possible “avenue” that she could think of had been tried to bring back her son to the right path of Islam. But it was to no avail. I asked her whether her son had any male role model as a “substitute” for his father who no longer lived with them and had no religious influence over him. She explained that no one in her extended family had time to dwell on her problems since they were already very occupied with their own families and day-to-day lives. The Fijian teacher agreed with me that what her son needed was a

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout the text a “Fijian” refers to a “Fiji Indian Muslim”

<sup>2</sup> Way of life for which humans will be held accountable and recompensed accordingly on the Day of Judgment. The word is the root of the Arabic terms for “habit,” “way,” “account,” “obedience,” “judgment,” and “reward,” and is often translated as “religion.” It implies that living in obedience to God is an obligation owed to Him, for which people will be taken to account, judged, and recompensed. *Dīn* encompasses beliefs, thought, character, behaviour, and deeds.

good role model who could guide and encourage him to be involved with religious activities in Christchurch so he could also expand his circle of friends to include good Muslim teenagers. Since we ourselves could not help as we both lived in Auckland, I suggested a family friend who resided in Christchurch and whose teenage and young adult children were actively engaged with Muslim organisations. I was about to introduce her to my family friend who happened to be attending the meeting as well when she said that she knew my friend and would definitely talk to her to discuss her problem.

Coming to the annual meeting of Islamic Women's Council in a very early stage of my fieldwork only confirmed and strengthened my prior conjecture that one of the issues in the minds of many Muslim mothers was how to bring up our children to be good Muslims. The above vignette was simply an example of how some Muslim migrant mothers in their everyday lives are overwhelmed by the reality of the complexity of parenting in the transnational urban context of New Zealand. I am not suggesting that being Muslim parents back home in a majority Muslim country is easier than in a secular country, as they also face many challenges and predicaments. Yet living as minorities in which the religious and cultural values they embrace are alien to the majority population bears its own nuances in their dealings with everyday lives.

Entering the field site in Mt Roskill, I was equipped with a number of questions about how Muslim mothers lead their children to be good Muslims, particularly how they inculcated the practice of *ṣalāt*<sup>3</sup> in their children. However, it became immediately apparent as soon as I met with my key informants that there were other pressing issues they were interested in talking about apart from how they teach their children about *ṣalāt*. Thus, through my ethnographic research my aim was to understand how Muslim women sought to make themselves and their children into good or better Muslims. As a Muslim myself, and a mother of three children, who migrated from a country of majority Muslim populace, I always have this yearning to learn from other Muslim mothers, especially from pious women, about how they bring up their children to become devout Muslims. This ethnographic research was an appropriate platform, I thought, to delve deeply into such a topic in a systematic manner without which no in-depth understanding would materialise. As I have been

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<sup>3</sup> *Ṣalāt* is ritual prayer including the five times daily mandatory prayer.

residing in Auckland for more than a decade and have been socialising with Muslim mothers of different ethnicities and shared stories of motherhood, I might perhaps have a certain “hypothesis” of “good” Muslim parenting in the back of my mind. But my so-called hypothesis might or might not be confirmed through the findings of this study. Thus being reflective throughout the research and writing process was vital, as it would inform the reader how I came to arrive at certain conclusions (Chapter Two section one).

Mt Roskill was a natural choice for me as a field site. Although I have never lived in the neighbourhood, many of my Muslim friends and acquaintances live in Mt Roskill and have deliberately chosen the area as their place of residence. Their intention to live there always intrigues me. The demographic data also confirmed that Mt Roskill is the borough in New Zealand most inhabited by Muslims<sup>4</sup>. Mt Roskill itself is quite unique in terms of Muslim space. It developed into a multi-ethnic neighbourhood only recently after the current rise in migrants and refugees. In some areas, melting pots of East meets West are very much felt (Chapter Two section two). Moreover, I have been unable to locate any ethnography focused on the piety of Muslim mothers that has been carried out specifically in the suburb. So, I supposed, it would be interesting to study the notion of piety of Muslim mothers who live in a neighbourhood known for its high density of Muslim population in New Zealand in which no other research has been conducted.

My literature review surrounding Muslim migrants who live in non-Muslim countries has covered a number of studies mainly dealing with issues such as identity (Ajrouch 2004, Bendixsen, S. n.d., De Raedt 2004, D’Alisera 2001, Dickson 2009, Grimm 2007, Haddad, Smith and Moore 2006, Jacobson 1997, Karim 2007, Kibria, N. 2008, Knott and Khoker 1993, Sarroub 2005), family values and issues (Barazangi 1996, Basit, 1997, Eisenlohr 1996, Kay 2006, Swanson 1996), integration and adaptation to the host society (Abid 2006, Bouma 1997, Haddad and Lummis 1987, Khan 2003, Saeed 2003), veiling and Muslim clothing (Bullock 2002, Killian 2003, Lorasdađi 2009, Mandel 1989, Ruby 2006, Tarlo 2010), gender (Hamdan 2007, Johansson 2008, Roald 2001), parenting (Maiter and George 2003, Phalet and Schönplflug 2001), and schooling (Osler and Hussain 1995).

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<sup>4</sup> According to the data recorded since 2001 the percentage of Muslim population in Mt Roskill area has always been much higher than the overall percentage of Muslim population of New Zealand (see table 1).

While there are numerous investigations on various topics concerning Muslims as mentioned above, the subject of piety is rarely discussed in the context of transnational Muslims living as minorities in a secular society. A handful of studies focusing on piety have been conducted in Muslim majority countries, such as Egypt (Mahmood 2001a,b, 2005, Schielke 2009), Indonesia (Rinaldo 2008), Lebanon (Deeb 2009), Bangladesh (Huq and Rashid 2008), and Malaysia (Tong & Turner 2008). Others were more concerned with piety either as their focal analysis or sub-topic among converts in the West (Oestergaard 2009, Winchester 2008, Rouse 2004) or among minority non-migrant Singaporean Muslims (Nasir and Pereira 2008).

Indeed the aforementioned studies focus on the issue of piety. Yet none discuss it from the viewpoint of women in their role as mothers except a study conducted by Tong and Turner (2008) in Malaysia. Tong and Turner (2008) in their sociological research drew attention to religious practice in terms of three aspects of female piety namely, veiling, polygamy and childrearing. On the issue of childrearing, they found that professional Muslim women were confronted by the dilemma of pursuing their careers in the midst of responsibilities to shape their offspring into pious Muslims. They were particularly concerned with the financial burden of enrolling their children in a private religious school and providing their children with *ḥalāl*<sup>5</sup> food. Meanwhile, Mahmood's studies were more concerned with disciplines of *ṣalāt* within oneself (2001a) or piety movement among Egyptian women and their engagement with the mosque (2001b, 2005). Schielke's research (2009) was focused on young Egyptian Muslims and their faith through their experience during the fasting month of *Ramadān*. Pious religious practices of Indonesian women who belong to a political party expressed through their clothing and marriage was Rinaldo's topic (2008) in which he explored the relationship of piety and modernity. Deeb's study (2009) involved Shi'i Muslim women and the relationship between practices of piety and politics through analyses of transnational discourses about gender roles and stereotypes about Muslim women. Huq and Rashid (2008) discussed the development of Islamic piety among a group of elite women in Bangladesh through their involvement with a weekly Qur'an reading class.

One study in particular that lightly touches on the issue of piety of Muslim migrants in an urban landscape of a non-Muslim society is D'Alisera's anthropological

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<sup>5</sup> *Ḥalāl* is that which is permitted

research on Sierra Leonean Muslims in Washington D.C. Although her ethnographic text examines two primary issues, namely Muslim migrants' engagement with their homeland and their interaction with a diverse, multicultural, increasingly global Muslim community in their search for identity, the latter captured my attention early on while I was conducting my own fieldwork. The reality in New Zealand is that as Muslims we also engage in daily living amidst a multi-ethnic Muslim community within the context of the wider non-Muslim society.

Furthermore, studies on Muslim migrants in New Zealand are relatively scarce. Most investigate the topic of multiculturalism that Muslim minorities are part of (Kolig 2006, 2010, Kolig and Shepard 2006, Nachowitz 2007, Shepard 2002) which include their religious organisations (Shepard 2006). Other scholars delved into issues such as intergenerational cultural transition, adaptation of Muslim mothers and their daughters (Joudi 2002) and Muslim women's clothing (Bahiss 2008, Boulanouar 2006<sup>6</sup>). A number of studies of Muslim migrants also focus on psychological wellbeing in Muslim women (Jasperse 2009), and identity, acculturation and adaptation of Muslims (recent projects conducted by the Centre for Applied Cross-Cultural Research, Victoria University of Wellington under the supervision of Prof. Colleen Ward). Yet, I have been unable to locate any ethnographic studies solely focused on the piety of Muslim migrant mothers, which have been carried out more specifically in Mt Roskill. This confirmed for me that the issue of piety among Muslim migrant women in New Zealand warranted scholarly attention.

Hence, the purpose of this research is to examine two main issues, namely, Muslim women's engagement with their role as pious Muslims who endeavour to improve themselves in terms of understanding and practising Islamic tenets in the midst of multiple discourses and practices available to them; and their engagement with their role as mothers who strive to bring up their children as good Muslims in a diverse, multicultural, increasingly global Muslim community within the larger scale of a non-Muslim urban landscape. Pious Muslim women with whom I work are those who are actively involved in acts of piety which include praying, fasting and reciting the Qur'an. All my key informants wear *ḥijāb*<sup>7</sup> and *'abāya*<sup>8</sup> as part of their daily attire

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<sup>6</sup> Boulanouar's study, which is published in a New Zealand journal focuses on veiling and modesty, and does not particularly discuss how veiling is practised or experienced in New Zealand.

<sup>7</sup> *Hijāb* is a Muslim woman's head covering, also known as a veil

<sup>8</sup> *'Abāya* is a shapeless full-length cloak or over-garment that covers the whole body and is usually worn by women in the Middle East

outside the home. These Sunni<sup>9</sup> Muslim women from different ethnicities seek to be better Muslims in their everyday activities in a myriad of times and places. However, since my participants are involved in different religious sites in terms of their enactment as pious Muslims I, too, have chosen these spaces as points of departure for my ethnographic text. As suggested by Metcalf (1996:4) a Muslim space constitutes a context in which Muslim patterns emerge by means of transmission of sacred words and religious practice as a focus of Muslim worship and of moral behaviour. I borrow Talal Asad's term for defining Muslims as people who are engaged in "a discursive tradition" that "includes and relates itself to the founding texts of the Qur'an and the *Hadīth*<sup>10</sup>" and in the history of that interaction (Asad 1986:14). It is important to underline that in this text my approach to the anthropology of Islam is similar to Eickelman (2007:58-73) and Asad (1986:14-17) in which the study of Islam in a local context takes the "middle ground" between the study of village Islam and that of universal Islam. In a transnational context Muslims are often faced with a conflict between the traditional Islam that they take from "back home" and the universalistic principles of Islam. It is imperative to realise that I need to focus on the differentiations within the local/traditional Islam, defined within global Islamic discourse of the current migration context, and the ways the multiple "locales" contest and accept dominant discourses (D'Alisera 2004:10-11).

Eickelman (2007) suggests that to study a world religion in local contexts entails an understanding that "any religion's ideology and practice are elaborated, understood and subsequently reproduced in particular places and at particular moments" (2007:58). However, Eickelman cautions against the tendency to emphasise the multiplicity of Islamic expressions as "all equally valid expressions of fundamental 'unconscious' Islamic principles" (2007:58). While perhaps this tendency is an understandable response to the orientalist search for an ahistorical, essentialized Islam that "provides a conceptual end product which likewise reduces Islamic tradition to a

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<sup>9</sup> Sunni is a traditionalist, orthodox branch of Islam, whose followers are called *Ahl as-Sunnah* ('People of the Path'). It is followed by 90% of Muslims. Sunnis accept the *hadith*, the body of orthodox teachings based on Muhammad's spoken words outside the Qur'an. The Sunni differ from the Shi'ite sect in that they accept the first four caliphs (religious leaders) as the true successors of the Prophet Muhammad.

<sup>10</sup> *Hadīth* is the recollections of individuals, including the *sahabah* (closest companions of the Prophet), about the Prophet's spoken words and deeds and that of other early Muslims. It is read in conjunction with the Qur'an. The *hadith* is the implementation on how to do the Islamic tenet stated in the Qur'an. *Ahādīth* were collected, transmitted and taught orally for two centuries after the prophet Muhammad's death and then began to be collected in written form and codified. Compilers were careful to record *hadīth* exactly as received from recognised transmission specialists.

single essentialist set of principles” (2007:59), it also ignores the fact that most Muslims “do believe there are universal principles that are essential to an understanding of Islamic belief and practice” (D’Alisera 2004:10, Eickelman 2007:59). In order to understand how these Muslim women produce, (de)construct and then (re)produce their religion in their context, mere juxtaposition of various forms of religious expression is not enough. This is especially so when the women involved are in the transnational context of migration. Muslim women, who travel and have come into contact with an *ummah* (community of believers) with multiple languages, sects, races and customs, become aware of the lack of commonalities and are sometimes overwhelmed by them (Eickelman & Piscatori 1990:xv, D’Alisera 2004:11, Tapper 1990). Consequently they may find themselves questioning their previous religious practice and seeking a new understanding of what it means to be Muslim. They often return to universal orthodoxy to find answers, while at the same time dealing with the multiple, sometimes conflicting, religious understandings and practices (D’Alisera 2004:11). It is in this light that this essay is written.

In this ethnographic essay I have chosen to incorporate “spaces” and the theme of piety politics. I integrate issues of space to explore the religious life of Muslim women. In this sense the “Muslim spaces” of home, religious classes, schools and communal prayer are delineated in terms of the “social space” in which identities as pious Muslims are defined, (re)defined and negotiated in the new context of migration, as well as the “cultural space” that emerges in a wide variety of ways as Muslim women interact with one another and with the larger community of non-Muslims in their engagement to be better Muslims and to be pious Muslim mothers (Metcalf 1996a:2). These Muslim spaces entail the multiple senses of the word “space”, not simply as physical space but also as social/cultural/religious space since the physical space is imbued with the qualities of Islam. Thus Muslim space is a locale or a setting in which a particular social activity, in this case religious, occurs (Rodman 2003:207). As Metcalf elucidates “the emphasis on space allows us to explore Muslim cultural practices beyond the articulation of elites to the everyday practices of ordinary people” (1996a:3).

With multiple and overlapping layers of Muslim spaces it is only natural to start my text at the heart of where these women live, their home. Home is the “heart” where these women live as pious Muslims because as mothers their utmost responsibility is to bring up their children to be good Muslims (Haddad et. al.

2006:92). I suggest that there are two dimensions in which to distinguish Muslim spaces. Firstly, it is in terms of social interactions of Muslims and other people around them that can be divided into two parts, namely spaces in which Muslims interact with one another and in which Muslims interact with the larger community (Metcalf 1996a:6). Secondly, I would like to add another dimension, namely control. Home is where Muslim mothers interact with their Muslim husband and children and where they have a lot of control over how much and what kind of transmission of cultural and religious practices takes place in their home. It may not be wholly Islamic as outside influences, including secular influences from television or the Internet, for example, may peek into their living room. Meanwhile, Islamic religious schools, classes and communal prayer, which are totally Islamic in nature and in which they interact with other Muslims, are not entirely under these mothers' control. They have little control over the kind of religious beliefs and practices being taught or practised in these Muslim spaces. For example, they cannot dictate what is being discussed or how a *sūrah* (a chapter of the Qur'an) is being interpreted, although they can choose which religious class they would like to join or which religious school they would like their children to enrol in. Indeed they still have the freedom to change school or class when religious practices and interpretations create too many conflicting values for them. Meanwhile spaces of their children's public school and the wider community are where they interact with the larger community. In these spaces that are far from Islamic, they practically have no control over how and what kind of cultural space emerges as they interact with the others. It is in these Muslim spaces of home, religious classes, schools and communal prayer that they constantly define, (re)define, and negotiate their religious belief and practice, some more intensely than others.

So, since it seems logical to start at the "heart" of where my Muslim informants set out on their pious journey everyday, I too begin my ethnographic journey with these women from home where they imbue their children with religious understandings and practices, to the place where they study exegesis of the Qur'an (*tafsīr* class), where they learn how to recite the Qur'an (*tajwīd* class), and at their communal prayer. Also, I have chosen their children's school and *madrassa* (Islamic religious school) as sites where these women negotiate and redefine their beliefs and religious practices in the midst of a multi-ethnic Muslim community and the larger secular society. Multifaceted themes emerged throughout the text which includes issues of music, clothing, gender segregated space, greetings, and the "proper" way of

doing *ṣalāt* (prayer). These themes basically are some of the issues that are faced by Muslim migrants and dealt with by Muslim women in their engagement as pious Muslim women and mothers within the context of a multi-ethnic Muslim community and the wider non-Muslim society around them. At the core, they navigate their pious lives around culturally embedded interpretations and practices of Islam and the “correct” interpretations and practices of Islam.

The essence of the themes that emerge throughout this essay is piety politics. I use the phrase “piety politics” in this essay to convey “objectification” as the process by which basic questions come to the fore in the consciousness of large numbers of believers: ‘What is my religion?’ ‘Why is it important to my life?’ ‘How do my beliefs guide my conduct?’ (Eickelman & Piscatori 1996:38). Through “objectification” that involves self-examination, judging others, and judging oneself, the sense of contrast—contrast with a past or contrast with the rest of society—that shapes religious style (Metcalf 1996a:7) becomes the focal point for Muslims in their day-to-day dealings with the multi-ethnic Muslim and non-Muslim community around them. As pious Muslim women in this study show how they define and “objectify” the way they dress, do their prayer, and use music in their children’s public school, illustrates how these women are caught in discussions with themselves, consciously or not, or with others to figure out the discourse of correct practices.

This is a small study that only focuses on a small number of devout Muslim women and mothers who currently live in Mt Roskill. It is by no means exhaustive and representative of many other Muslim women who reside in Mt Roskill or in New Zealand. Rather, it may provide a glimpse into the lives of Muslim migrant women and hopefully it can serve as a foundation towards a framework for more extensive research.

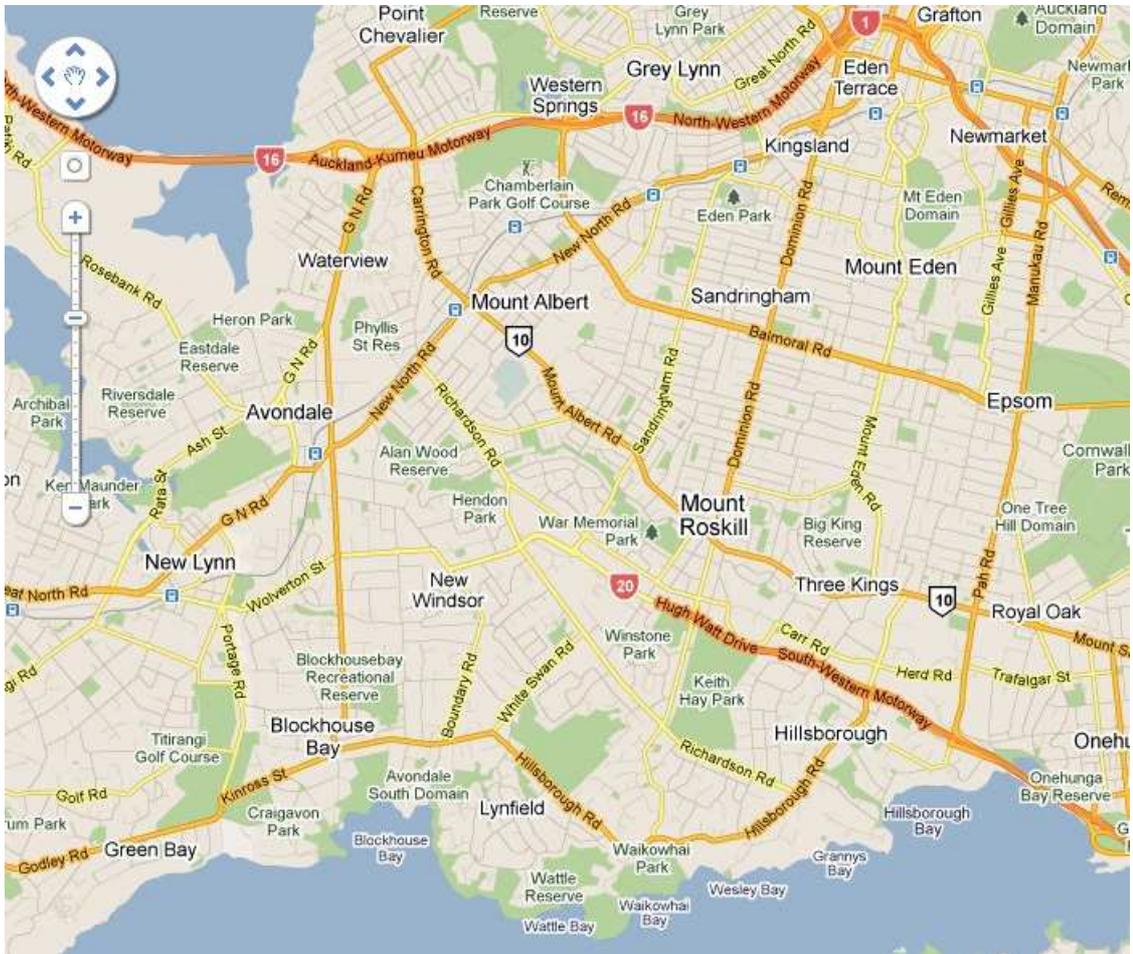
This thesis has been organised around different spaces in which Muslim women negotiate, define and (re)define their belief and practice, and is peppered with prevalent themes. Each chapter includes ethnographic materials with integrated literature and theoretical discussion. Following my discussion of methodology (Chapter Two), Chapter Three commences with ethnographic descriptions of home as a private site in which my informants engage in rigorous acts of imbuing Islamic practices in their children, with detailed narratives and discussions about *ṣalāt* (second part of the chapter), and ends with challenges that are faced by Muslim women in their role as mothers (third part of the chapter).

Chapter Four conveys the *tafsīr* class as a temporal locus where cultural traditions collide with the universal Islamic discourse in which the issue of music for Muslims takes centre stage. In the second part of this chapter, I take the reader along to *tajwīd* class in which piety is achieved through reciting the Qur'an but is constantly negotiated within the context of Qur'an competition. In Chapter Five discussions are mainly focused on communal prayer as a site in which Muslim women face the reality of competing interpretations of "proper" Islamic practice and belief in a transnational context, especially on issues pertaining to the "proper" way of doing *ṣalāt*, clothing and greetings.

Chapter Six discusses the ways education of Muslim children in Mt Roskill becomes a place in which my informants constantly negotiate and seek to define themselves as Muslims within their current contexts. The first part of the chapter deals with *madrassa* as a quintessential form of education for Muslim children, particularly in terms of socialising religious discourse and embodied bodily practices through which Muslim mothers endeavour to imbue appropriate understandings of particular religious discourses and practices. In the second part of Chapter Six I explore how Muslim mothers entangle themselves in discussion on clothing, music and gender-segregation issues with their children's public school.

The essay concludes with discussions on the findings, especially on the themes of music, clothing, greetings, non-identical ways of doing *ṣalāt*, and gender-segregation. Although some similar findings were also found in an ethnographic research with Muslim migrants on the other side of the globe in terms of Muslim identity, some of the issues discussed in the other text were not analysed in the context of piety of transnational Muslim women. Hence, it is hoped that the findings from this study provide a new angle to understand how Muslim women in New Zealand deal with their everyday lives as pious women and mothers.

*Map 1: Mt Roskill*



Source: <http://www.wises.co.nz/>

**Table 1: Religious affiliations in Avondale/Roskill Area**

Religion	2001 <sup>11</sup>	2001 (%)	NZ 2001 (%)	2006	2006 (%)	NZ 2006 (%)	2009 <sup>12</sup>	2009 (%)	NZ 2009 (%)
No religion	18,633	23		22,914	28.7	36.7	15,477	27.4	34.6
Christian	40,938	50		40,143	50.2	57.3	26,220	46.5	54.2
Muslim	3,537	4.0	0.6	4,803	6.0	1.0	3,768	6.7	1.0
Hindu	5,406	7.0	1.0	8,700	10.9	1.8	6,732	11.9	1.7
Buddhist	2,175	3.0	1.1	2,730	3.4	1.5	1,818	3.2	1.4
Other religions	1,401	2.5		1,584	2.0	3.3	495	0.9	0.7
Not elsewhere included	10,953	13		11,355			7,305	13.0	14.3
Total	82,155			90,459			56,394		

<sup>11</sup> The 2001 and 2006 data is sourced from Reidy (2007:149).

<sup>12</sup> The 2009 data is taken from Mt Roskill electorate profile, July 2009 published by the Parliamentary Library and is prepared from Statistics New Zealand 2006 Census data.

***Fieldwork at “home”***

*“As I undertake fieldwork in my home-town area, I experience the familiar and the unfamiliar colliding, overlapping and interrelating in a critically productive, yet tense, dialectic. Questions arise for me such as: What is the field? What is home? When am I an anthropologist? When am I a local?” (Madden 1999:259).*

*“The agent of scholarship is a living person, not just a mind.... There is no way of understanding people except through one’s own experience and power of imagination” (Kirsten Hastrup 1994:174-175).*

In the first part of this chapter I convey my personal history, the field site and my field experience, particularly my phone experience with my informants, and the fieldwork. Revealing my personal biography at the beginning is important to set the tone of reflexivity throughout the text. Being reflexive is essential as I believe that by presenting myself at stage front can provide the reader with information necessary to assess how the findings came about. Meanwhile in the second part of the chapter I explore Mt Roskill with its social and cultural changes from predominantly Christian residents in the past to a more multicultural community in the present time, and why my informants intentionally chose to reside in the area.

**The Agent of Scholarship**

Prior to my introductory journey into anthropological fieldwork last year<sup>1</sup>, I had been captivated by the lives of practising Muslim mothers, especially migrants, who live in Auckland, my “new home” for the past eleven years. My husband and I came here as students with our two children in early 1999 from Jakarta. The intention to make Auckland our permanent home never crossed our minds since we had jobs to go back to in Indonesia and we had our dreams to take back the knowledge we acquired here to

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<sup>1</sup> I conducted a fieldwork as part of my research project for my postgraduate diploma course.

our students at a public university in Jakarta but our plans changed drastically when my husband was offered full-time employment in the “city of sails”. Uncertain about the prospect of our future, we sought assurance in prayers and advice from our parents.

One of the issues that ensued from our discussions with our devout Muslim friends here and back home after we decided to permanently migrate was about the social environment in New Zealand and whether this milieu could induce and instigate proper upbringing for our children. Naively believing that good parenting emerged from ourselves as parents rather than from the wider community, we remained confident that as parents we could strive to provide the best possible Islamic education and upbringing to our children. Moreover experience in Jakarta had taught us that Islamic school was no guarantee of successful, contented and pious Muslim children.

With time flying by and our youngest son, who was born in Auckland not long after migration, settled well in his second year of primary school, I resolved to take the opportunity to go back to university. My husband, who always encouraged me to resume my postgraduate study, was very supportive and remains my strongest supporter in my endeavour.

From the first moment I enrolled as a postgraduate student in social anthropology I already knew that I would like to do research on Muslim mothers. No longer interested in pursuing previous cross-cultural research topics in cognitive development from psychological perspectives that I was studying in 1999-2000, I was eager to embark on a new research venture. For more than eight years prior to enrolling I had been observing and participating in social interactions with Muslim migrant mothers from diverse ethnicities. I met a lot of Indonesian Muslims, many of them of Arab descent, in many *pengajians*<sup>2</sup> and we became friends. In *masajid* (mosques) I encountered and became acquainted with Muslim mothers from Egypt, Fiji, Syria, Pakistan, Singapore, Malaysia and other parts of the world. I became curious as to why some Muslim mothers tended to allow their children to act improperly like running around the room and shouting during *pengajian* while others were stricter and tried to instil good manners from the time their children were toddlers. I wondered when and how these Muslim mothers inculcated Islamic values in their children. When I witnessed young Muslim men in their twenties becoming

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<sup>2</sup> *Pengajian* (Indonesian language) is *tafsīr* class where the Qur’an is elucidated, explained and interpreted to be understood by the participants.

*imāms*<sup>3</sup> in Friday congregational prayers at a *masjid* (mosque) in Mt Eden that my husband manages with his friend, I marvelled how their parents brought them up to become good Muslims with excellent Qur'an reading ability who could outstandingly memorise long intricate *suwar*<sup>4</sup>?

As a Muslim I have come a long way, although so called “perfect piety” is far reaching and not an easy platform to achieve. Both my maternal and paternal grandparents were *priyayi*<sup>5</sup> who were very devoted to their Javanese culture. Javanese celebrations, like *mitoni*<sup>6</sup>, *tedak siten*<sup>7</sup> and traditional weddings that were mostly influenced by Hinduism<sup>8</sup> were pivotal in their families' lives. I never knew my paternal grandfather as he died when my father was about ten years old. But my other grandparents told me in many of their stories that they were educated in Dutch schools with other *priyayi* children. They spoke Dutch<sup>9</sup> with native fluency. I remembered they always conversed in fluent Dutch with my Dutch aunt who married my paternal uncle although my aunt could speak fluent *bahasa* (language) Indonesian and understand a little bit of the Javanese language. When I was young my paternal grandmother taught my younger sister's children songs and nursery rhymes in Dutch. As *priyayi* they spoke and understood all strata of the Javanese language including *kromo inggil*<sup>10</sup>. My

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<sup>3</sup> *Imām* is someone who leads a congregational prayer in a mosque or Islamic celebrations, such as Friday prayer

<sup>4</sup> *Suwar* is the plural form of *sūrah* (chapter of the Qur'an)

<sup>5</sup> *Priyayi* refers to upper-class nobles, aristocrats, the bureaucratic elite, and people of royal heritage and the descendants of aristocratic nobles (Daniels 2009:48). It is Java's gentry in contrast to *abangan* as Java's peasantry; is similar to *abangan* in terms of their embodied religious values yet they are more refined and polished in their behaviour, demeanour and spoken language. *Abangan* and *priyayi* are very much fascinated with traditional rituals defying the importance of “true” Islamic values (Geertz 1968, Woodward 1989, 2010).

<sup>6</sup> The *mitoni* ritual is performed for a seven months pregnant mother for the health of the mother and the foetus, and to turn away any ill health (see <http://jv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mitoni> for a comprehensive account of the ritual). See also Newland (2001) for discussion on *tingkeban* (a similar ritual as *mitoni* in West Java) from a syncretism perspective.

<sup>7</sup> *Tedak siten* means to set foot on earth. The ritual is performed when a baby is 245 days old to depict the baby readiness to face life ahead (see <http://www.joglosemar.co.id/tedakstn.html> for a complete description of the ritual).

<sup>8</sup> For an extensive coverage on Islamic spectrum in Java that entails some descriptions of *kejawen* (Javanism) see Daniels (2009).

<sup>9</sup> Since 1602 Indonesia was occupied by Dutch colonialism, which lasted for about three and a half centuries (Setiadi 2006:370). Under Dutch colonisation only Indonesian children of people who worked for the Dutch and the aristocrats had the opportunity to go to schools (2006:371).

<sup>10</sup> *Kromo inggil* is the highest level of the Javanese language and is used to show respect from younger persons to older people or from a person with a lower status to someone with a higher status or someone respected (Woodward 2011:16). The Javanese language with its levels of low, medium and high, and its specific usage would create a marker between *priyayi* and *abangan* since dialect, proficiency and designated usage could indicate and differentiate the two variants. As Woodward explains “to speak Javanese is to speak in hierarchy as well as in language” because “differences in age, gender, social

maternal grandmother was born inside the *keraton* (palace) wall in Yogyakarta, Central Java. Although she was not a direct descendant of the Javanese king from his first wife, she was the granddaughter of one of the king's *selirs*<sup>11</sup>. All my grandparents had their own royalty title in front of their names of *raden* for male and *raden ayu* for female. Curious as to why some people had the title while many others did not, I used to persistently enquire of them the need to acknowledge their title from time to time<sup>12</sup>. Their highly cultural upbringing was a stark contrast to their lack of religious understanding and practice. They did not perform their *ṣalat*<sup>13</sup> because they did not know how. My maternal grandfather, who I was very close to, never fasted in his life. My maternal grandmother only prayed regularly and fasted every *Ramadān*<sup>14</sup> in her old age after she underwent a self-study of Islamic teachings. So it was very understandable that my mother learned how to pray on her own initiative. No schools in my parents' time taught *agama* (religion) Islam in their school, like schools in my time<sup>15</sup>. My father even learned *ṣalat* from his children. When he visited my family in Auckland, a month before he passed away in 2003 he told me in the midst of his nostalgic remembering that he still kept the handwriting I did with my sister years ago of *suwar* and short Arabic verses for *ṣalat* that he used when he learned how to pray. I was deeply moved. Although before he died he performed his daily prayers diligently and fasted regularly, read the Qur'an in Arabic and went for *hajj*<sup>16</sup>, and became a devoted and pious Muslim, his journey was long and not without struggles.

Despite the fact that I, perhaps, was better educated in terms of Islamic tenets than my parents and grandparents, I always felt the need to improve my Islamic understanding and practice. Seeing other Muslim migrants with their Islamic discernment and practice, some better than others, I began to consider seriously learning Islam. One of the milestones I was trying to accomplish was learning about

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status, educational attainment and the social context in which a conversation is conducted influence the selection of the speech level appropriate for both self and other" (2011:16).

<sup>11</sup> *Selir* is a formal wife of a king but not his first wife. Javanese kings used to have more than one wife.

<sup>12</sup> I remember at the front of the house close to the entrance of both my maternal and paternal grandparents' house their names with their royalty title were inscribed on a metal or wooden plate. Houses in the 1960s-1970s in urbanised Indonesia had the house owner's or tenant's name written on a plate and fixed to the wall close to the front door to indicate who lived on the premises.

<sup>13</sup> Prayer

<sup>14</sup> *Ramadān* is a special month (the ninth month) in the Islamic calendar in which Muslims conduct their fasting. It is considered as a holy month.

<sup>15</sup> See Smith-Hefner (2005) for discussion on the resurgence of mandatory religious courses throughout the educational system from primary schools to universities during Suharto's "New Order" government (1966-1998).

<sup>16</sup> *Hajj* is pilgrimage to Mecca as fulfilment of one of the five pillars of Islamic ritual practice.

the importance of wearing a *ḥijāb*. After two years of self-study of the Qur'an and the *ahādīth*<sup>17</sup> and discussions with my sister, who also went through the same uncertainty, I decided to adopt a *ḥijāb* as part of my daily attire. I remembered the very last time I met my father he said kind words on the subject and supported my decision, and yet I knew for certain he would have been reluctant if we had worn the *ḥijāb* some twenty years ago.

### **The Field Site and Field Experience**

When it was time to choose a field site I was faced with predicaments. My previous fieldwork<sup>18</sup> involving Muslim parents in Auckland, Hamilton and Christchurch was not an “ideal” world in terms of classical anthropological approach in which people live in one locale with its distinct and bounded culture. Although a number of anthropological studies on Muslim migrants show that physical distances that separated informants do not create problems (see D'Alisera 2004 and Kolig 2010) as long as the anthropologists “treat people as contextualised social beings, describing the thickness of their lives in terms of the fact that people live in a world of relationships as well as a world of abstract social forces and disembodied images” (Ortner 1997:64). Yet I wanted to experience a sense of being in a local community and to participate in their activities. Doing participant-observation, that was my aim.

So early in the year I had come to a decision that I would like to do my fieldwork in Mt Roskill, a suburb in Auckland City that is known for its high Muslim population. I would like to focus on devout Muslim mothers who live in the neighbourhood. Hence soon after I came back from attending an annual Islamic Women's Council of New Zealand conference in Christchurch I called Aisha<sup>19</sup> who has been living in the area for a number of years. I have known her for more than ten years and we have been in contact regularly throughout the years. We mostly talked on

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<sup>17</sup> *Ahādīth* are the recollections of individuals, including the *sahabah* (closest companions of the Prophet), about the Prophet's spoken words and deeds and that of other early Muslims. It is read in conjunction with the Qur'an. The *hadīth* (singular of *ahādīth*) is the implementation of the Islamic tenet stated in the Qur'an. *Ahādīth* were collected, transmitted and taught orally for two centuries after the prophet Muhammad's death and then began to be collected in written form and codified. Compilers were careful to record *hadīth* exactly as received from recognised transmission specialists. Traditionally, the body of authentic *hadīth* reports is considered to embody the *Sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad. Muslim reformers encourage Muslims to be more discerning in acceptance of *hadīth*.

<sup>18</sup> The fieldwork was conducted as part of my Postgraduate Diploma research.

<sup>19</sup> I use pseudonyms throughout my text to protect the identity of my informants

the phone or I visited her house to visit her elderly mother, especially on *Eid-ul-Fitr*<sup>20</sup> to show my respect<sup>21</sup>.

In our phone conversation I told her about my intention to conduct a study in Mt Roskill and asked her help to be my key informant and to introduce me to her multi-ethnic Muslim friends who live in Mt Roskill. She accepted my request willingly and was keen to take me to see her friends in a couple of days at a sewing class she regularly attended.

After dropping my children off to schools on the North Shore that morning I drove my car to Aisha's house as promised. She lives not far from a *ḥalāl* butchery. As I arrived in front of her house I did not see her car in the driveway. So I sent her a text message saying I was at her house and for her not to worry, as I knew she must be busy taking her two boys to school. Not long after, she arrived in her car with her young daughter with bags full of groceries she had bought at a flea market nearby. After unloading the plastic bags from her car to the kitchen we went to the sewing class that is located not far from the mosque.

I was wearing my grey *'abāya* with a shade lighter greyish long *ḥijāb*. The *'abāya* that was hardly worn had a chance to step out of my closet. I felt a bit out of my comfort zone as I had never worn an *'abāya* except to a mosque or special event for Muslim women. But I stood by my plan to change from my daily outfit when I was out and about in "the field". Certain that my daily attire of long baggy pants and a long sleeved blouse or tunic with a *ḥijāb* were up to standard in terms of Islamic dress code<sup>22</sup>, I grappled with the idea of wearing "proper" Muslim clothes. Yet more conservative Muslims disapproved of a pair of pants for Muslim women.

Despite the fact that several of my attributes are similar to my informants, like religion, marital status and our role as mothers, our personal biography and ethnic backgrounds differ. I remember Aisha telling me about her childhood in a village in Indonesia. Reading the Qur'an in a *madrassa*<sup>23</sup> was her everyday chore after school. In her native village where Muslim public culture was dominant, children running together to a mosque in their *kerudungs* (veil) and *sarungs* (sarong) and laughing at

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<sup>20</sup> *Eid-ul-Fitr* is a festival celebrated at the end of the fasting month of *Ramadān*

<sup>21</sup> It is customary among Muslims to go to family and friends, especially older people, on *Eid-ul-Fitr* to show respect

<sup>22</sup> Taylor (2007:112) describes Muslim women's clothing in Indonesia as mix-and-match sets of headscarves, trousers and blouses.

<sup>23</sup> *Madrassa* is an Islamic religious school. Arabic letters and Qur'an reading in Arabic are commonly taught in a *madrassa*.

small jokes made by friends was an everyday sight. By contrast, remembering my own childhood in the urbanised metropolis of Jakarta, a *madrassa* was never part of my life.

Being reflexive is crucial; as I believe that my personal characteristics determine the facets I study and my findings (Salzman 2002:807). Conveying my own feelings, assumptions, actions (Briggs 1976 cited in Salzman 2002:807) and personal biography, I hope, helps the readers judge the angle and view from which the findings arose (Salzman 2002:807-808). Abu-Lughod (1991:140-141) suggests that the problem with “halfie anthropologists”, “people whose national or cultural identity is mixed by virtue of migration, overseas education, or parentage” (1991:137), is that they cannot easily avoid the issue of positionality since the researched is “in certain ways the self”, thus weakening the objectivity (1991:141). But by reflexive device, Bourdieu (2003:292) argues, the objectification of the researcher is maintained, whereby the researcher’s self and their relationship to the researched became an object of exploration (also Voloder 2008:34). Abu-Lughod (1991:141) affirms that “the focus is on the ‘situatedness’ of knowledge, the recognition that the ethnographer’s personal history plays a significant role in enabling or inhibiting particular kinds of analytical insights (Hastrup 1992:119) or oversights” (Voloder 2008:34).

As we parked our cars in a car park outside the sewing class I saw there were other cars already parked on the grounds. The building was small with a tiny sign above the entrance door. The plaque was so small that I could not read it if I passed the premises by car. It seemed quiet from outside but as we approached the front door I could see a few women inside the room. When we said our *salām*<sup>24</sup> an African woman in a colourful ‘*abāya*’ and a traditionally African wrapped *hijāb* opened the glass French door. She was apparently Aisha’s friend whom she wanted me to meet. There were other African Muslim women in the room who were engaged in their work in front of their sewing machines. Most of the women in the class were Muslims with one non-Muslim teacher reliever. All the Muslim women wore *hujub* (plural of *hijāb*) and ‘*abāyāt*’ (plural of ‘*abāya*’) except a South Asian teacher who wore a *shalwar kameez*<sup>25</sup> with a transparent shawl loosely covering part of her hair.

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<sup>24</sup> *Salām* is the Islamic greeting “Assalamu alaikum”, which means peace be upon you.

<sup>25</sup> *Shalwar kameez* is a Punjabi-Urdu term (it is originally from a Persian word “salwar” and an Arabic word “qamis”) for a traditional dress of South Asian women and men of loose pyjama-like trousers and a long shirt or tunic

Entering the class was like entering into a different world. I had never seen a room full of Muslim women in *ḥujub* and *‘abāyāt* outside mosques or a specially organised event for Muslims. I was definitely in “the field”, I thought to myself. Yet the field and home in my case were blurred and not easy to distinguish. The distinction of the field and home suggested by Gupta and Ferguson (1997:12) (also cited in Morton 1999:244) did not apply to me. They point out that “the distinction between ‘the field’ and ‘home’ rests on their spatial separation” in which one place is designated as the site where data is collected and the other as the place where “analysis is conducted and the ethnography is written up” (1997:12). Furthermore, the field and home are characterised by “the standard anthropological tropes of entry into and exit from ‘the field’” (1997:12).

When I was at home I also made calls to Aisha, not only to find out whether she had other friends she would like me to meet, for those calls were where she shared her stories about her children, and the *tafsīr*<sup>26</sup> and *tajwīd*<sup>27</sup> classes she attended regularly. I also engaged in phone conversations with Nabila in which she told me about the *madrassa* her son regularly attended in between our discussions about cake and meatball recipes. Wasn’t I at “home” when those calls happened? Why did it feel so much like “the field”? Had I not exited “the field” at those times? Why had something so familiar as the telephone become so unfamiliar and then familiar again in a different way as I often used it when I was not out and about in “the field”?<sup>28</sup>

I used to wonder whether phone conversations could be regarded as fieldwork. The dilemma arose from the notion of participant-observation as the key method of anthropological research. As D’Alisera elucidates, “the anthropologist’s job is to find just the right balance between participating and observing” and yet the telephone did not seem to serve the observation role as much as “going native” would (2004:33). However, as soon as I realised that through phone conversations fieldwork data could also be collected without having to observe, I could accept it as part of my field site and as an essential fieldwork tool to gather data from my informants. As D’Alisera conveys in her work with Sierra Leonean Muslims in Washington D.C., “familiar cultural categories of home had to be reinvented” in my mind as “the notions of

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<sup>26</sup> *Tafsīr* is Qur’anic exegesis. It is an elucidation, explanation, interpretation and commentary carried out to understand the Qur’an and its commandments.

<sup>27</sup> *Tajwīd* is elocution of the Qur’an which entails proper pronunciation during recitation

<sup>28</sup> See D’Alisera (2004:32-35) for her account of her telephone experience.

familiarity and distance collapsed in on each other in confusing and sometimes emotionally charged ways” (2004:34-35). My telephone experiences with the Muslim mothers with whom I worked was filled with mixed feelings. In a way it was familiar but at the same time it was also “unusual”. As Sunderland points out “telephone interactions are an important envelope in which people produce, maintain and reproduce social relations” (1999:115). Yet as Madden suggests, “the familiar and the unfamiliar [were] colliding, overlapping and interrelating in a critically productive, yet tense, dialectic” (1999:259) in my phone conversations with my informants and in my fieldwork in Mt Roskill as a whole.

Like Judith Okely, who worked with Gypsies in her native England, I too “changed clothing” (1984:5) and toned down my lipstick. Indeed, I did not have to learn another language as I spoke in English or in my native tongue to my non-Indonesian and Indonesian informants, although I wished I could converse in Arabic with my Arabic speaker informant. Yet I was expected by my informants to understand common Arabic terms used by Muslims of different ethnicities<sup>29</sup>. When Afifa explained about her children’s *madrassa* and what they learned, she assumed that I understood the terms she used, like ‘*aqīdah*<sup>30</sup>, *sirah*<sup>31</sup> and *fiqh*<sup>32</sup> while I believed she would explain them to a non-Muslim researcher. Also, I supposed that my informants assumed that I would accept something as true without question because of our similar religious background and marital status. They expected that I would understand them without them having to explain themselves. When I asked Zahra about her parenting goals, her reply of having children who are good Muslims was only revealed after I probed her on my second visit. Although on my first visit to her home she had already explained about how she and her husband have exposed their children to Islamic rituals, she seemed to “take it for granted” that I would have assumed that her parenting goals would be imbuing their children with Islamic tenets so they could become good Muslims. I suspected that if the question were asked by a non-Muslim researcher “to be good Muslims” might be her first answer. She also gave me a

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<sup>29</sup> In conversations between Muslims that I encounter in New Zealand, but not in Indonesia, Arabic terms like *subhanallah* (“glorious is Allah”, used by Muslims to express strong feelings of joy or relief), *jazakallahu khayr* (an expression of gratitude and appreciation, meaning “may Allah reward you for the good”), *masha’Allah* (“Allah has willed it and all accomplishments are only achieved by the will of Allah”) are often used.

<sup>30</sup> ‘*Aqīdah* is the belief system that is based upon a firm conviction in all the fundamentals of faith and the Oneness of Allah, i.e. creed

<sup>31</sup> *Sirah* is the study of the Prophet Muhammad’s life and activities

<sup>32</sup> *Fiqh* is Islamic jurisprudence based on the Qur’an and the *hadīths*

“weird” look mirroring her disbelief when I asked her “what *ṣalāt* means for her”; I was certain that she would react differently if a non-Muslim researcher asked her the same question. So in situations like these in which my informants seemed puzzled as to why I asked questions that they supposed I should know the answers to, I explained to them that some people might have different views or experiences and hence their experiences or views might not be similar to mine.

### **The Fieldwork**

During my fieldwork I attended *tafsīr*<sup>33</sup> and *tajwīd*<sup>34</sup> classes conducted in Mt Roskill which a number of my informants attended. My entry to these classes was made possible and eased by one of my key informants, Aisha<sup>35</sup>. She was a regular participant in both of these classes. Also, I had the opportunity to conduct in-depth interviews and conversations with eight Sunni Muslim women who were stay-at-home mothers<sup>36</sup> from the Middle East, East Africa, South Asia and Southeast Asia whom I met through Aisha or I already knew from my own friendship with them. Their husbands were employed in different sectors of employment. All of these mothers have completed at least secondary school in their native country. Most of their children are of pre-school age to early teens. Another informant has children up to young adult age. They have been in Auckland for at least five years and have been residing in Mt Roskill for the past several years<sup>37</sup>. Mt Roskill was intentionally chosen as the place to live for its Muslim dominant population and facilities. The interviews, which were conducted in their homes, lasted anywhere from one hour to three hours. The conversations that were made in their homes, during breaks in *tafsīr* and *tajwīd* classes and by telephone lasted from as short as fifteen minutes to as long as an hour. No recording device was used during the interviews and conversations. When I had my first interview with one of the women she refused politely my intention to use a digital audio recording. So I never asked to use the device in other interviews, as I was afraid that they would not be comfortable with it. Instead I made a few notes during the interviews and wrote every

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<sup>33</sup> In this class the teacher discussed the meaning and interpretation of the Qur’an, its commandments and linked each verse to examples from everyday lives.

<sup>34</sup> In *tajwīd* class participants learned how to recite the Qur’an in its proper pronunciation.

<sup>35</sup> I had no knowledge of these classes until Aisha told me about them after she knew that I was doing research on Muslim mothers in Mt Roskill

<sup>36</sup> One informant was a married woman with no children.

<sup>37</sup> One of the informants does not live in Mt Roskill but she has been attending the *tafsīr* class for a number of years and has befriended Muslim women in the class.

detail of the interview proper, conversations and observations in my field notes as soon as possible after I had finished interviewing and having conversations.

Furthermore, outside my eight key informants I conversed with my Muslim friends and acquaintances from Southeast Asia and South Asia, and with converts to Islam in their home, in communal prayers, by telephone, at mosques or at public venues. They are mothers of children with a wide range in age from school aged to adulthood. These conversations lasted from around fifteen minutes to around an hour. I attended communal prayers of *Eid-ul-Fitr* and *Eid-al-Adha*<sup>38</sup> in which I met my Muslim friends and acquaintances of different ethnicities. These communal prayers provided me with better understanding of how multiethnic Muslims conducted one of their religious practices and how slight differences in rituals could invoke feelings of restlessness and uncertainty in some Muslims of minor ethnicities in the midst of the majority ethnic group. I also analysed websites and articles on Muslims and their activities in Mt Roskill and other parts of the world. As a Muslim who has been living in Auckland for more than a decade and is very much part of the transnational Muslim community, my life is practically part of the research. My attendance at the Islamic Women's Council annual meeting early in the research process gave me insight into what becomes the main concern of other Muslim women in New Zealand. I visited mosques in Auckland as well as attending other Muslim gatherings in Auckland like *iftar*<sup>39</sup> at a mosque and a *slametan*<sup>40</sup> in a private home. Within the time span of my fieldwork I met Muslim women in their happy times, like in their homes for *Eid-ul-Fitr* festivities and in their food bazaar to celebrate their homeland cultural festival, and in sad times when one of my Muslim friends died suddenly of a heart attack or when I visited Muslim friends who were sick in hospital or at home. These less formal, everyday encounters were as significant as my meetings with my key informants who live in Mt Roskill as they gave me experiences of deep and thick meanings that added to the whole understanding of Muslim women's lives in a transnational context.

Despite my original intention to study the experiences of devout Muslim mothers bringing up their children as good Muslims, especially how they imbue the

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<sup>38</sup> *Eid-al-Adha* is a festival celebrated every year on 10<sup>th</sup> Dhul Hijja of the Islamic calendar to commemorate the willingness of the prophet Ibrahim to sacrifice his son, the prophet Ismail, for the sake of Allah

<sup>39</sup> *Iftar* refers to the evening meal when Muslims break their fast during the Islamic month of *Ramadan*

<sup>40</sup> *Slametan* is a Javanese communal feast (in this case conducted by a Muslim friend) to celebrate a good fortune.

practice of *ṣalāt*, the research took a turn after I immersed myself in fieldwork. As I had come to a decision to focus on pious Muslim women who live in Mt Roskill, my informants seemed more keen to tell me their stories about their engagement in *tafsīr* and *tajwīd* classes to better themselves in terms of Islamic discourses and practices, to recount not only how they teach their children to do *ṣalāt* but also about their children's public school and *madrassa*, and the challenges they face as Muslim mothers.

My first day in Mt Roskill as I started my ethnographic journey was infused with a few surprises and unfamiliarity. As I drove down the long lanes of Stoddard and Richardson Roads coming home from the sewing class that first afternoon, I pondered that the area I have known for years like the back of my hand had to be relearned and navigated around and through the myriad meanings in it. What seemed to be just another suburb for other New Zealanders might have different meanings for my informants as they intentionally chose to live in this neighbourhood. So I thought, has the area always been as multicultural as it is today? Is living in Mt Roskill appealing to the Muslim community due to its dominant Islamic nuances? If so, how is Muslim space in the area created and experienced by the Muslim community?



**Figure 1: Mohammed's Halal Meats at Richardson Road, with the researcher. A man in kurta<sup>41</sup> passing by. Photograph by Sasya Wreksono.**

<sup>41</sup> *Kurta* is a traditional clothing from South Asia in a form of a long loose-fitting just above or below the knees. It is traditionally worn with a loose-fitting trouser but now can be worn with a pair of jeans.

## *Mt Roskill and its Muslim community*

*“Mt Roskill is demographically one of the most interesting, 21st century ethno-cultural melting pots in the country. But there's still nothing much to do in Mt Roskill except visit your parents. I mean, that young 1.5er Korean guy who works for his folks at Roskill Fisheries is pretty hot, and there's the Halal butcher if, if you need, like, meat...” (Mok 2006)<sup>42</sup>.*

I set out that day from my home in Glenfield for a half-hour drive to Mt Roskill, where I was to meet Aisha. I preferred to take the Herne Bay – Point Chevalier route than the motorway. I passed Unitec campus on Carrington Road and finally I crossed the railway crossing on Woodward Road. At Woodward, Richardson and New North Road intersection I stopped as the traffic light turned red. For a split second I wondered whether this meeting with Aisha would be different from my previous social visits. This time I had to pay more attention to our conversations and write them up in my field notes. Not that I had always been taking our conversations lightly. Rather, it was important for me to remember our conversations and what to ask her. I, too, had to switch on my observation mode to the neighbourhood like someone who was new to the locale.

The intersection finally crossed, I entered Richardson Road. For the first few hundred meters I went by well-kept houses of circa early nineteenth hundred. As I drove on and passed the junction of Owairaka Avenue the neighbourhood began to change. I found myself driving past more modest Depression-era homes. I pondered that Mt Roskill must have an interesting history and was not always like what it is today<sup>43</sup>.

Mt Roskill in the past was unlike its present state. Although its boundaries have not altered much since 1842 when it was first defined as part of Eden County (Reidy 2007:12), its social and cultural makeup has changed considerably. Indeed, many physical developments have taken place. But what is intriguing is how a suburb that was once known as “the bible belt” has become the most populous area in New Zealand in terms of Muslim residents.

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<sup>42</sup> First cited in Reidy (2007:138). Tze Ming Mok is a political blogger and activist, poet, fiction writer and essayist who was born in Mt Roskill (Reidy 2007:144).

<sup>43</sup> I first heard from my supervisor that Mt Roskill was known as the bible belt, which surprised me and encouraged me further to learn more about the history of Mt Roskill.

As part of Auckland City Council, its electoral district includes Wesley in the west, Waikowhai and Hillsborough in the south, Three Kings in the north with Onehunga and Te Papapa in its furthest east (Reidy 2007:12). There has been significant doubt as to the origin of the name 'Mount Roskill' although some would argue that it originated from an early evangelist named John Roskill (Mount Roskill Borough Council 1984:7, Reidy 2007:25). The name of Mt Roskill officially appeared for the first time in the *Auckland Provincial Gazette* in 1867 in regard to its declaration as a district pursuant to the Highway Act 1862 (Reidy 2007:25). Previously, it was known as *Puketapapa* by the Maori, which means the flat-topped mountain (Mount Roskill Borough Council 1984:7).

Due to the volcanic nature of the mountain it is understandable that the area became fertile farmland with luscious crops of vegetables, grain and oats, and dairy farms of beef and mutton from the 1800s, and developed into one of the major providers of Auckland city's food supplies (Reidy 2007:29). By the 1860s the very affluent had built large homesteads surrounded by park-like grounds around the suburb, like Monte Cecilia country estate in Hillsborough, which was later taken over by the Bank of New Zealand in 1891 due to the Depression and its trustees' failure to maintain the establishment. It was later bought by the Sisters of Mercy in 1913 to be used as an orphanage and boarding school (Reidy 2007:29-32).

A major local development in terms of building construction in Mt Roskill happened when there was a chronic housing shortage and a high unemployment rate due to the Great Depression in the 1930s. A third of the housing stock in the city centre was no longer habitable as wooden dwellings became old and rotten. So the government decided to expand their existing urban centres to the suburbs in order to accommodate urban workers; this expansion, in the form of the construction of state houses, included Three Kings, Mt Roskill South, Waikowhai and Wesley. By the end of the war 26,000 families were on the waiting list for a state house (Reidy 2007:70-71). In the late 1940s and early 1950s Mt Roskill turned into a thriving suburb with its own shopping centre on Dominion Road, an adequate transportation of trams and buses to and from the city centre and new schools (Reidy 2007:55, 57, 77, 96-97).

Under the governance of Mayor Keith Hay, Mt Roskill had 26 churches for its 35,000 residents by 1988, the largest ratio of churches per head in New Zealand, and thus was justifiably known as "the bible belt". With the decline of Christian belief

among the wider New Zealand community, the Christian vision of Mt Roskill suburban life (Reidy 2007:93) was a marked contrast to the rest of the country.

However, with the current rise in migrants and refugees the image of Mt Roskill has changed drastically. The percentage of Christians in the area is no longer higher than the country's average. Islam and Hinduism have taken over as religious affiliations with a much higher percentage than the national average<sup>44</sup>. Mt Roskill's population of 6.7 per cent Muslim and 11.9 per cent Hindu is far above the national average of 1.0 and 1.7 per cent respectively.

Due to its proximity to the Mangere refugee centre and availability of state houses, Mt Roskill has in recent years become home to many refugees from East African countries such as Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan and Eritrea, and the Middle East such as Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and Kuwait. As New Zealand has been providing a safe haven for refugees from war torn countries, Mt Roskill has been selected as one of the "ideal places" for refugees to rebuild their shattered lives and has housed the largest refugee community in the country (Reidy 2007:138).

New migrants from Asian countries, including India, who are rapidly increasing in numbers also consciously seek Mt Roskill as a place to live. Quality schools such as Mt Roskill Grammar, which was chosen as the 19<sup>th</sup> best school in Auckland by *Metro* magazine's 2006 survey, have enticed many migrants to reside in the suburb (Reidy 2007:138)<sup>45</sup>. On their website Masjid e Umar, the largest mosque in New Zealand which is located in Stoddard Road close to Denize Road intersection, also claims that the mosque has drawn many Muslims to live in the area (Masjid e Umar n.d.). Real estate agents intentionally use the catchwords "close to or within walking distance of the mosque" to attract Muslim clientele to purchase or rent a house in the neighbourhood (Masjid e Umar n.d.).

Mt Roskill is a melting pot where East meets South Pacific. Pacific Island and Maori families, who had been the main tenants of the solidly built state houses have had to leave the suburb due to unfavourable changing of housing policies under the National government in 1991, and consequently have made way for refugees to move into the vacated houses. Although in 1999 the newly elected Labour government restored income related rents for the state houses which had not yet been sold at the

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<sup>44</sup> See table 1

<sup>45</sup> Mt Roskill Grammar is placed second in rank in terms of the best high schools in Auckland by Metro Magazine in its recent 2010 survey (Press Release Metro Magazine 3 July 2010 cited from Scoop n.d.)

time, Pacific Island families faced some problems in “repossessing” the houses they once lived in, as the refugees did not want to give up the houses they had settled in, which has created some tensions (Reidy 2007:141-142).

The mosque itself was previously built as the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa that was put up for sale in May 1996. The Mt Roskill Islamic Trust, which was established in 1989, took an interest and successfully bid for the property in an auction in June 1996. The trust previously operated in a garage that was used as a prayer room and for Qur’an classes to meet the needs of Muslim families in the neighbourhood. With the financial support from local Muslims and overseas donors the purchase price of \$1.5 million was paid off in September 1996 and it was then converted into a mosque. The expansive building that could accommodate 1200 worshippers and a minister’s residence is fitting to meet the growing Muslim community in the area. By 2002 the Trust had bought the adjacent properties to cater for a Muslim women’s *madrassa* (Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand 2005). The mosque is a two-storey building with a huge car park in front of the building and a small one at the back. It is adequate to accommodate around fifty cars. Inside, the main prayer room is carpeted throughout with thick green carpet with a *sajadah*<sup>46</sup> pattern facing the *qibla*<sup>47</sup>, or direction of Mecca with a *mimbar* (pulpit [Speake 1999]) in front of the room.

Despite the reality of having a mosque in the area, Mt Roskill, like other neighbourhoods with mosques in New Zealand, lacks the Islamic sounds of *adhan* (call to prayer) and the sound of Qur’anic recitation that are frequently heard in mosques in majority Muslim countries (Metcalf 1996a:8). The *adhan* is only recited inside Masjid e Umar without a loudspeaker so its sound cannot be heard from afar. This practice may thus create the realisation of a disparity between migrants’ individual and collective pasts and their current transnational context (1996a:9).

The mosque is open for five times daily prayers including Friday congregational prayer and *Eid* prayers for Muslim brothers. Unlike many other mosques in Auckland that cater to both male and female worshippers, this institution

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<sup>46</sup> *Sajadah* is a prayer rug

<sup>47</sup> *Qibla* is direction of Mecca, more specifically the *Ka’bah*, towards which each Muslim must turn in order to perform the *salāt* validly. *Ka’bah* is a small shrine located in the middle of the Great Mosque in Mecca. It is a building that Muslims from all over the world face toward in every prayer and where the hajj is conducted every year.

only provides a praying facility for males. In its *ṣalāt al-Jum'ah*<sup>48</sup> hundreds of Muslim men, young and old, from diverse ethnicities including converts in the vicinity, attend and make their prayers. This reflects the varied cultural backgrounds of people who make Mt Roskill their home and business site. Only Sunni Muslims pray in this mosque. It is common knowledge among Muslims<sup>49</sup> that Masjid e Umar is managed by Muslims from *tablighi jama'at*<sup>50</sup>, although its attendances encompass many others outside the *jamaat*. *Khutbah*<sup>51</sup> for Friday prayer is conducted in English and Urdu. This reflects the dominant Muslim ethnicity of South Asian background who manage the mosque. The mosque provides a weekly Qur'an class for women in the adjacent premises. A myriad of other activities is also offered by the mosque, including *madrassa* for children, Qur'an class and weekly lectures on Islamic tenets for men, marriage ceremonies and a *hajj* training programme.

Apart from *madrassa* offered by the mosque, there are other *madāris* that cater for multiethnic or single ethnic Muslim children. *Tafsīr* and *tajwīd* classes for women are also available in different parts of Mt Roskill, conducted for women from a similar ethnic group in which a certain ethnic language is used and for women from a multitude of ethnic backgrounds with English as their language medium. These classes are held either at a specified location that is owned by an Islamic trust or at different domestic spaces in which the participants reside. A number of Islamic trusts also have their organisation centres set up in Mt Roskill (Kiwi Muslim Directory 2010).

In addition, Muslim businesses which provide goods and services for Muslim clientele also add to the appeal. Opposite the mosque, Khyber Foods and Spices shop retails Eastern spices and *ḥalāl* meat. It occupies an unattractive warehouse-like building with a very limited car park in front of the premises. However, its extensive selections of Middle Eastern and Indian spices with their distinct aroma would definitely lure buyers to come and visit the shop. The *ḥalāl* butchery at the back of the shop also has a good range of fresh meat and chicken. The shop has been in the area at least since 1999. I remember going to this *ḥalāl* butchery for many years from when I

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<sup>48</sup> *Ṣalāt al-Jum'ah* is congregational Friday prayer required of all Sunni men but not of women

<sup>49</sup> And it is confirmed by one of the mosque committee members' wife

<sup>50</sup> *Tablighi jama'at* is Indian reform movement founded by Mawlana Muhammad Ilyas in 1927 in Delhi. It is popular with villagers and peasants. Called for reform of personal religious practices and defence of Islam and Muslim minority populations. Focused on religious, rather than political, aspects of Islam. Spread throughout the Muslim world from 1950 on (Esposito 2003). See Dickson (2009) for ethnographic account on the *tablighi jama'at* movement in Canadian urban spaces.

<sup>51</sup> *Khutbah* is a speech given by an *Imām* (who leads a communal prayer) prior to every congregational prayer.

migrated to New Zealand in early 1999 before the *halāl* meat shop close to my home in Glenfield opened in 2005, to buy stocks of meat and chicken for my household for the next three to four weeks when it was time for me to go to the shop again. The *halāl* butchery in Stoddard Road had a business competitor when Mohammed's *Halāl* Meats opened its store not long after on Richardson Road close to the triangle junction of Richardson Road and Stoddard Road. With its own modernised separate factory for processing, packaging and storage of *halāl* meat products in Avondale, which are delivered to its retail outlets, to hotels, restaurants, rest homes and local suppliers, and exported internationally (Mohammed's *Halāl* Meats (NZ) Ltd n.d.), Mohammed's *Halāl* Meat is a sound business indeed. From one unit of shop in the early days it has expanded to its neighbouring shop in recent years and has opened a fried chicken outlet a la the famous Kentucky Fried Chicken but using *halāl* chicken instead<sup>52</sup>. In spite of practically having no parking space, this retail shop is never free of bustling customers. Unlike Khyber *halāl* meat with its Muslim-men-only vendors, Mohammed's *Halāl* Meats has at least one or two Muslim women serving the customers with other Muslim salesmen around her.

Strolling down west from Richardson Road where Mohammed's *Halāl* Meats is located to the traffic light and turning right into Stoddard Road in the direction of the mosque, I felt a sense of being in a different world. There was a dissimilar atmosphere to the one I am accustomed to in my everyday life in the Marlborough neighbourhood in Glenfield where I have been living for the past six years or my previous residence in Northcote, in which I resided for five years prior to living in the Marlborough area. In spite of seeing different ethnic groups on the streets, I can still feel the ambience of being in a predominantly "white" neighbourhood as I generally notice more Europeans than people from other ethnicities around the neighbourhood and at the school<sup>53</sup>.

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<sup>52</sup> When I visited the shop in February 2011 the fried chicken outlet was closed but will open in March 2011 under a new management. The fried chicken outlet space is leased to a different fried chicken franchiser. But Mohammed's Halal Meats business has acquired another shop space for its spices shelves.

<sup>53</sup> Marlborough Primary has 38 per cent Europeans, which is far above other ethnicities (Education Review Office – Marlborough School 2008). By comparison, there are only ten per cent Europeans at Owairaka District School, the primary school not too far from the mosque, far less than the percentage of Samoan, Maori, Tongan and African (Education Review Office – Owairaka District School 2008). Therefore, people can observe, at a glance, the different ethnic make-up of the two suburbs. Similarly, Mt Roskill Primary only has 5% of its students from European/Pakeha ethnicity with 4% Maori and 37% Indian (Education Review Office – Mt Roskill Primary 2010). While it might only be a rough estimate, the ethnic composition of a primary school is a good indicator of the larger community around the school.

In contrast, the environment in Mt Roskill, particularly the shopping area close to the mosque, emulated a market scene in many Asian suburbs, albeit on a small scale. The atmosphere was so vibrant with colourful displays of goods and inviting aromas from the variety of food. A shop that sold Muslim merchandise, like Muslim garments, a food outlet that offered *halāl* pizza, Indian curry, and an Indian clothing store all enticed multiethnic people to buy goods and food.

The above narratives illustrate public expressions of Muslim life in Mt Roskill in which Muslims create places of worship and facilitate their religious belief and practice through *halāl* goods and services. The focus of the current context of Mt Roskill is to ease worship and sanctioned religious practice in urban transnational landscape. Indeed there is “newness” of meaning (Metcalf 1996a:12) which emerges due to different circumstances of the larger society to the one they encounter back home as is shown by the modification of *adhan* and provision of a men only mosque congregation<sup>54</sup>, for example. As Metcalf (1996a:12) suggests “Muslim ritual and practice cannot be understood as mere continuity with an ‘Old World’ past”. The transformation of Mt Roskill from “the bible belt” into a multiethnic society with strong influence of Islam is only made possible by the nature of the majority society of New Zealand, the legal status of immigrant Muslims — whether they are treated as permanent settlers or as “guest workers” like in Germany<sup>55</sup> — and by relationship of state and religion<sup>56</sup>. As Muslims make claims on public space, they may encounter resistance to Islam, often defined by racism that in turn shapes their behaviour (Metcalf 1996a:12, 14, Metcalf 1996b:124, McCloud 1996:68, 73). What about Muslims in Mt Roskill? How do they feel about living in an environment profuse with multiculturalism, particularly Islamic nuances?

There was a spirit of multiculturalism in the neighbourhood as Huda told me during my visit to her house. She was thrilled when the refugee centre offered her and her children the opportunity to live in Mt Roskill after refusing their recommendation to reside in Three Kings due to the fact that she had not seen any people of African, Indian or Asian origins in the area. She had requested to be accommodated in a

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<sup>54</sup> Although men only mosque is a traditional practice in South Asian Muslim communities, it is a new experience for other ethnic Muslims.

<sup>55</sup> See Mandel (1996) for discussion on Berlin’s Muslim migrant community and how they create, define and contest places in the midst of their status as “guest workers”

<sup>56</sup> See Kolig (2010) for discussion on policy aspects relevant to the integration of New Zealand Muslims in the host society.

multicultural neighbourhood and not too far from the mosque. She has been happily living in her present residence ever since. She liked the fact that she could take a short drive to the mosque to drop her children off to *madrassa* and that she felt and looked the same as others around her. Even the non-Muslims in the neighbourhood, she conveyed, were familiar with and appreciative of Muslims and their values. As Mok (2007) writes in her blog "... I also like being East Asian in Roskill because you can walk down the street and no-one will stare at you or bother you with inane requests. Instead they will smile and say hi, because obviously, we all actually live here". In Huda's road alone there were ten Muslim families of different ethnicities including Afghans, South Africans, Indians and Malaysians. On a different street yet still in the same neighbourhood, Zahra and Afifa, also have Muslim neighbours, with a few Maori and Pacific Island families. When I went to Afifa's house and was waiting for her to come home from dropping her daughter at school, I saw two Maori/Pacific Island men talking on the side of the road in front of one of the men's houses. A few minutes later I observed an Asian-looking woman with a *hijāb* came out from a house opposite Afifa's residence with a boy and a man and they all went into a car parked in the carport and drove away towards the road behind me. About the same time a Pacific Island couple in a traditional Polynesian black *puletasi* (a matching shirt and skirt for women) and *ie fai taga* (skirt-like garment for men) came out from a car behind me and entered a house nearby.

### **The Informants**

My main research informants live not too far from each other in Mt Roskill and send their children to the same primary school but different kindergartens<sup>57</sup>. Zahra, who has been residing in her present address in Mt Roskill for five years with her husband and children, enjoys living in the area because of its high Muslim population. She lived in a different suburb in West Auckland for two years before moving to Mt Roskill. Afifa has been living in Mt Roskill for more than five years with her husband and children. Their first three months in Auckland were spent living in a suburb in South Auckland. With Muslim friends living in Mt Roskill and no acquaintances in South Auckland they then decided to relocate to Mt Roskill to move closer to their Muslim friends, and have been happily residing in the area ever since. The convenience of different

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<sup>57</sup> The daughter of one of my key informants goes to university.

amenities that suit their needs was the reason for them to settle well in the vicinity. Afifa's daughter's primary school, her son's kindergarten, their *madāris*, medical centre, the mosque and her *tafsīr* class are all within walking distance of her house. Aisha, also, intentionally chose Mt Roskill as a place to live as soon as she was married. Since her husband has to travel a lot for his job to different parts of Auckland, as far as Albany to the north and Papatoetoe to the south, Mt Roskill became central with about equal distances to north, west, east and south of Auckland. Although she has moved to different houses since then, she has always selected a house in Mt Roskill. She explained that in Mt Roskill she can go to different activities in the area within close distance with ease, like taking her son to a *madrassa*, learning *tafsir* and *tajwīd*, and learning to sew with other women, mostly Muslims, including dropping her sons off to schools.

In this new place, Muslim migrants have created for themselves spaces and a community on their own terms. They fit into the existing urban social and physical structure, sites and amenities that help them to refashion, express and strengthen their religious belief and practice. Since some Muslim migrants move to this country to stay<sup>58</sup>, they manage to create and define a neighbourhood that gives them the means to feel secure and protected from the profanity of the “outside world”. For my informants, living outside Mt Roskill would mean inviting more challenges for them to live as pious Muslims. Mt Roskill becomes an alternately constructed centre of Islam to the ones they have left behind in their home country.

For my informants, living in the neighbourhood gives them a sense and a feel of “home” away from home. The close proximity to multiple Muslim amenities in the area, like *halāl* butcheries and food retailers, as well as *madāris* (plural of *madrassa*), *tafsir* and *tajwīd* classes, and the mosque, provides them with an “ideal” place to live as pious Muslims in which religious discourse is practised in their everyday lives. The vicinity is a site upon which Islam is realised and reaffirmed. For many Muslims, the space of Mt Roskill, particularly around the mosque with its vibrant facilities for Muslims, defines their religious and social life. In this “peripheral centre”, the Islamic dimension of Muslims' life is “far from a mere changeover from the migrants' previous experience” (Mandel 1996:164). New meanings of religious behaviour and

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<sup>58</sup> A number of my Muslim friends and acquaintances have resided in the neighbourhood for more than ten years. A few have little intention of returning to their home country while others were thinking of going back to retire.

symbols emerge as they deal with their new ethnicity as minorities in the midst of multiethnic Muslim and the larger non-Muslim society. Their engagement with non-Muslims in their children’s public school and in the wider community outside their home gives new meaning to their religious belief and practices. Moreover, it is here that my informants, consciously or not, come to recognise the complexities of multiple religious discourses and practices among a diverse Muslim community. Through their interactions with other Muslims in *madrassa*, *tafsir* and *tajwīd* classes, and the mosque, or in more mundane daily activities such as in the flea market and supermarket<sup>59</sup>, they face the reality of dissimilar practices of the religion. It is a locale in which religion and secular engagement are simultaneously lived and experienced and in which interpretations of “proper” Islamic practice and belief in a transnational context are defined, negotiated and (re)defined.

As the Muslim community in the area embrace new meanings of their religious belief and practices through their engagement with multiethnic Muslims and the larger non-Muslim society, they too transform their domestic space into a Muslim space. How did my informants refashion the mundane space of home, in which they have more freedom and control, into a distinctive Muslim space?



**Figure 2: A girl in hijāb walking down Stoddard Road with a shop that retails Muslim merchandise.**

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<sup>59</sup> In their daily living they witness disparate ways of how Muslim women wear their clothes, for example. Certainly not all Muslim women in Mt Roskill wear similar clothing outside the home. My Muslim friends who live in Mt Roskill are not dressed alike. Few wear Western clothing without a *hijāb*, others wear *hujub* (plural of *hijāb*) with *‘abāyāt* (plural of *‘abāya*) or *hujub* with tunics and long pants or dresses.

## Home and mother's role for piety

*“Piety is progressive, and repeated religious activity is necessarily a learning process over time, whether understood self-consciously as such or not” (Gade 2004:4).*

This morning with clouds hanging over Mt Roskill coupled with some drizzle, I arrived in front of Zahra's house. I could see her car that she used to learn how to drive was parked in her driveway. The house she occupied with her husband and children was located at the back of a section. So I passed her front neighbour who was also a Muslim family. Approaching the front door, I could hear from the loudspeaker in her living room a man reciting the Qur'an. It was quite loud because the windows were slightly opened. Yet the sound was not audible from her neighbour's side of the section.

I said my *salām* but I could not hear her reply. I knew she was home because I could hear her voice talking to her young daughter in Arabic. The curtains on the windows and front ranch slider door were closed. The white net curtains were thick with a big floral pattern all over so it was impossible for someone outside to see inside the living room.

She finally heard my greeting and peeked through the curtain. She welcomed me with a smile and asked me to come inside. A few toys were on the carpet. Her two-year-old daughter smiled at me when I greeted her and she seemed happy to see me for my second visit. Soon Zahra turned off the computer speaker from where the Qur'an recitation was coming. I saw a tall bookshelf with glass doors beside the computer table with a number of copies of Qur'ans inside. We talked on the couch in the living room while her daughter stood beside her mother and climbed onto the couch between her mother and me throughout our conversation, curious about what we were talking about.

In this section I explore how Muslims make their homes into a distinctive “Muslim space” through decoration, signage and practice. In this space Muslim women create an environment in which they embody religious belief and practice, and imbue worship and sanctioned practice into their children to develop them into good Muslims. The decoration, signage and practice within the home are deliberately

organised to convey and embody the teachings of the Qur'an and *ahādīth*. For my informants, the home becomes a space for learning and practising Muslim behaviour and for being separate from the larger society. In the boundary of home Muslim women define an area of control (McCloud 1996:68). As Darke (1994) suggests, the private realm of the home is typically understood as a space that offers freedom and control (cited in Mallet 2004). It is here that they have a lot of control over what kind of and how much transmission of cultural and religious practices takes place in their home. Indeed it does not guarantee that secular influences of public television broadcast and the Internet, for example, are totally absent from their living room. Yet they have some degree of control to organise and select whichever information is available in their home<sup>1</sup>. The control of domestic space is associated with the embodiment of piety of the occupants, I would suggest. Campo (1991 cited in McCloud 1996:69) also argues that a great deal of a house's sacrality depends on the reputation of its female occupants. In circumstances in which the occupants see the home as a focal place to convey and imbue piety they would make their home into a distinctive "Muslim space" that could facilitate their religious belief and practice.

Zahra's home illustrates a space of difference (McCloud 1996:67-68) by means of the Qur'an recitation from the computer loudspeaker and copies of the Qur'an in the bookshelf. The Qur'an is not displayed but placed in an elevated location as a mark of respect (Qureshi 1996:48). Similarly, Afifa also "decorated" her house with the Qur'an in her bookshelf in the living room, while Aisha hung a number of calligraphies of Islamic texts of *Allah* and Muhammad (the Prophet's name<sup>2</sup>) and a *sūrah* taken from the Qur'an, beside the Qur'an and religious books in her bookshelf. All the Qur'ans in Zahra's, Afifa's and Aisha's homes are placed on the highest shelf and are kept on one of the best pieces of furniture in the house. For them the Qur'an and any visual Islamic displays are not mere ornaments, rather as Qureshi (1996:48) indicates, they are meant to initiate articulation and action of religious piety. In essence, Zahra, Afifa and Aisha use objects, images and sounds to create a Muslim space that provides them with a sense of Islamic identity and piety and to fill a void of imagined past. As Metcalf

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<sup>1</sup> One of the Muslim informants from my previous research in 2009 suggested that it was not easy to control her son, who was studying at a university, over how much time he could access the Internet. Yet she still had some control over what kind of information was being accessed by her son by placing the computer in the living room where she could see what he was doing and by being informed about the new technology and its impacts.

<sup>2</sup> From this point onwards the Prophet Muhammad is referred to simply as "the Prophet".

(1996a:4) elucidates “for a Muslim to feel at home or for a non-Muslim to recognise a Muslim space, the presence of certain spoken and written Arabic words is most telling”. The presence of the Holy book, the recitation and Islamic words dictate a certain attitude that Muslims live in this house in which prayer space is guaranteed.

The Qur’an recitation I heard at Zahra’s house also transformed a physical space of an ordinary house into a site of religious identity. Indeed, Muslim ritual requires, at least in principle, no “sacred place” (Metcalf 1996a:6) as what is important for Muslims is the religious practice and not the site. But in practice my informants, like Aisha, Afifa and Zahra, were compelled to decorate their living room with Islamic texts and sounds that are mostly lacking in a largely non-Muslim environment. For instance, the sound of *adhan* and the sound of Qur’anic recitation that is usually heard from a mosque in a Muslim country are replaced by Qur’an recitation from a home computer loudspeaker, by Qur’an displayed in the bookshelf, the sound of *adhan* from an electronic *adhan* clock, and calligraphy on living room walls. Deliberately or not, the presence of these spoken and written Arabic words would have some effect on the children in terms of their sense of identity as Muslims

Zahra’s, Afifa’s and Huda’s house are relatively austere with no pictures or photographs on the wall or on the shelf. Aisha’s home, on the other hand, is decorated with Islamic texts and calligraphy hung on her living room wall whereas such calligraphy was not present at Zahra’s, Afifa’s and Huda’s home. They all recognise some shared Islamic values that pictures of animate objects including photographs of the occupants of the house displayed in the home are prohibited as prescribed by the Qur’an and the *hadīth*<sup>3</sup>. Yet not all Muslims agree about the use of artistically calligraphied Qur’anic verses or other Islamic texts displayed as ornaments on the wall. Although Aisha has no objection on the matter, some other Muslims prohibit such practice on the grounds that such display may serve as an amulet, which incites *shirk*<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> A number of *sūrah* and the *hadīth* denote prohibition for Muslims to display a picture of a human being and/or animal in the house (Qur’an 7:148, *sahih* Bukhari Volume 4 Book 54 Number 448, Volume 5 Book 59 Number 338).

<sup>4</sup> *Shirk* is the sin of idolatry or polytheism, i.e. the deification or worship of anyone or anything other than the singular God, or more literally the establishment of "partners" placed beside God. It is the vice that is opposed to the virtue of *tawhid* (monotheism). In the Qur’an the term *shirk* refers to polytheism in general and to the worship of idols in particular, but the interpretations may vary considerably (Woodward 1989:216).

Muslims often mark their homes as a space of separation (McCloud 1996:67) by drawing non-transparent curtains to exclude the view of neighbours or visitors. Zahra's use of thick floral curtains that are always closed shows how she defines the boundary between domestic space as the House of Islam (Darul Islam) and the outside community as the House of War (Darul Harb)<sup>5</sup> (McCloud 1996:68). The domestic space is viewed as a safe locale in which they have the freedom and control to practise their religion. It is in this site that Muslim women are free to unveil and wear any clothing they wish to, out of sight of their neighbours and visitors. In my visits to their home, some of my informants were not wearing their *hujub* or *niqāb* although others still did. A Muslim female visitor is considered as a sister in Islam in which case a veil is not compulsory. When I came to Aisha's house alone she never put on her *hijāb* and *'abāya* although on other occasions when I visited her house with my husband on social visits she always wore proper Muslim clothing.

Engaging in the embodiment of pious self in the confinement of home also means practising gender roles when guests come to visit. Some houses are consciously demarcated in terms of gender. On my visits to Aisha's home with my husband and children on the *Eid-ul-Fitr* festivity, my daughter and I were sat in the dining room adjoining the kitchen with the curtains between the dining room and the living room drawn close. Meanwhile my husband and sons were escorted to their garage that was already transformed, especially for the occasion, into a dining room. In some other Muslim homes I was guided to one portion of the house, their study or family room for example, by the wife while my husband was having a conversation with their husband in their living room. Yet not all Muslims in Mt Roskill have the same kind of gendered spatial segregation practice in their home. My Muslim friends who live close to the mosque with their husband and children received all their guests, male and female, in the living room and had their lunch in the same space.

Unlike most of the Muslim world, which welcomes television and radio (McCloud 1996:72), the Muslim women with whom I worked try to shut out Western values and open their door only to Muslim values. In her house, Aisha especially

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<sup>5</sup> In this case I prefer to suggest Darul Islam as a religious space whereas Darul Harb is a space of non-Muslim in which Muslims have to deal with secular values. In the home they are not necessarily converting the standard New Zealand house into something like the inward-looking Arab courtyard house. But they seek privacy, shelter and seclusion by drawing the curtains close and by neighbouring with other Muslims.

installed a satellite disk that enabled her and her family to watch Middle Eastern television programmes. My Muslim friend who also lived in Mt Roskill never watched New Zealand television since she had a satellite disk to watch programmes from the many channels of Indonesian television. Despite their wish to invite Muslim values into their living room and shun away from the Western values of New Zealand television I was never convinced that they could totally protect themselves from the outside media influences that they considered *harām*<sup>6</sup>. Many of the Indonesian television *sinetron* (television dramas) shown outside the fasting month of *Ramadān* are never far from non-Islamic values, such as over exposure of boyfriend-girlfriend relationships. As Ida (2008:49-50) suggests, Islamic cultures and identities on Indonesian television are normally marginalized except during the *Ramadān* month. In the holy month the Indonesian television channels become “religious channels” with a range of programmes from talk show programmes, sermons to quizzes, music and *sinetron* rich in religious content (Ida 2008:49).

In this section I also explore how my informants engage in rigorous acts of imbuing Islamic practices in their children, particularly through informal teaching of religious knowledge at home. Through books, stories and other religious resources, and “making Muslim space” at home, Muslim parents introduce Islamic tenets to their children from when they are very young. However, living in a transnational space provides them with the opportunity to witness multiple voices of religious discourse that are incorporated into the everyday practice of religion of a multiethnic Muslim community. Learning from their past and from competing interpretations of “proper” Islamic practice and belief, they seek to redefine their understanding of Islam.

Muslim women with whom I worked began to imbue the essence of faith in their children when they were very young through observing a number of pillars of Islam<sup>7</sup>. Like Afifa and her husband, they always devoted at least a half-an-hour every evening to sit together with their children to “teach” them, especially the older ones, about *Allah*, how to do *wuḍū*<sup>8</sup>, the way to do *ṣalat*, and to read and memorise short

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<sup>6</sup> *Harām* is that which is forbidden and prohibited according to the Qur’an and the *ahādīth*.

<sup>7</sup> The five pillars of Islam include verbal declaration of the oneness of God and acceptance of Muhammad as God’s prophet (*shahāda*), praying five times a day (*ṣalat*), fasting (*ṣawm*), the giving of alms (*zakāt*), and pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*).

<sup>8</sup> *Wuḍū* is known as ‘ablution’ in English. *Wuḍū* is a ceremonial act of washing and wiping the hands, face, arms, head and feet before praying or touching the text of the Qur’an. Without *wuḍū* those activities would be void and unlawful.

*suwar*<sup>9</sup> (*juz' Amma*<sup>10</sup>). Their youngest son, who was only two years old, usually sat with them although he was not required to do what his sister and brother were asked to do. But being in the same room gave him the opportunity to observe and emulate what the others did. In the privacy of their home they designated a room especially for performing *ṣalat*, for teaching their children about Islam and for weekly adult *tafsīr* class in which their neighbours from certain ethnicities came to discuss the Qur'an<sup>11</sup>. The separate room for religious observance and education, as Peshkova (2009:260) points out, "enabled the occupants' socio-religious practices which, in turn, reproduced the meaning of domestic space for them as Islamic". For Afifa a room particularly used for religious observance and education gives a sacred meaning to her and her family's religious experiences. Although my other informants have no special room in which they perform their religious practices or teach their children about Islam, they perform their prayer in their bedroom or living room where they can be without any disturbances and the space is large enough to place their *sajadah* facing the *qibla*. As also reiterated by McCloud (1996:70) the minimal requirement for a Muslim space is a place for prayer in which Muslims can perform the prayer undisturbed while physically facing the *Ka'bah*.

Indeed the life in the house is characterised by "words of Islam". At the core of religious belief and practice are words: "the words of Qur'anic Message, words that explain and interpret the Message, words that praise God and his Messenger, words that express the believer's submission to Islam" (Qureshi 1996:48). In my informants' homes, too, "words of Islam" are used to imbue Muslim identity and piety in their children and themselves. Our family friends who live in Mt Roskill used a colourful poster for children with ninety-nine names of *Allah* in Arabic<sup>12</sup>. Although their baby was only a few months old they have already hung the poster on their living room wall so that it will be the first thing their infant sees and learns when she starts to recognise shape, colours and letters. Aisha also placed a book on prayer for children in the bookshelf in her living room, low enough for her son to access when he needed.

<sup>9</sup> *Suwar* is plural of *sūrah* (chapter of the Qur'an)

<sup>10</sup> *Juz' Amma* is the 30<sup>th</sup> *juz'* (part) of the Qur'an. It contains short *suwar* from *surāh* 78 through 114, the shortest *suwar* in the Qur'an; these are the *suwar* typically read during regular prayer, and *juz' Amma* is generally taught first to children.

<sup>11</sup> The languages used in this class are English and another foreign languages that are understood by people from a number of ethnicities.

<sup>12</sup> As described in the Qur'an and *ahādīth* there are 99 names of Allah (*asmā' allāh al-Ḥusnā* in Arabic) by which Muslims regard God. *Ar-Rahmān* (the Compassionate, the Beneficent, the Gracious), *Ar-Rahim* (the Merciful), *Al-Quddus* (the Holy, the Pure, the Perfect) are a few of the examples.

As Mahmood (2005:54) explains, for a religious pedagogical process to succeed it needs self-reflection in the child about the nature of the religious practice and knowledge and their relationship to God. Thus, conscious deliberation of proper behaviour or why knowing how to do *wuḍū* and *ṣalat*, and to read and memorise *juz' Amma* are important and what they signify becomes “part and parcel” of the pedagogical process that is necessary for the acquisition of a pious self (2005:54). Teaching their children about *tawhīd*<sup>13</sup>, how to do *wuḍū* and *ṣalat*, and to read and memorise *juz' Amma* that are fundamentally useful for *ṣalat* seemed to be vital for Muslim mothers with whom I worked. The basic concept of *tawhīd* is crucial to grasp as without this understanding the child will not be able to comprehend why Muslims need to submit completely to God by worshipping Him.

As Gade explains “piety is progressive, and repeated religious activity is necessarily a learning process over time, whether understood self-consciously as such or not” (2004:4). The “seeds of piety” seem to be implanted in the mind of young children even before they can talk<sup>14</sup>. Like other Muslim parents, my informants acknowledge the need to instil Islamic values and tenets in their children from a very early age. It is a continuous process that has to be repeated from time to time. It is also progressive in nature dependent on the child’s age and level of understanding. To leave it until the child is much older may be too late.

A friend confided in me how she regretted her action a long time ago when she was too busy working which left her with no choice to leave the care of her young daughter to a nanny with a very limited education. When she and her family migrated to Auckland only then did she realise that her daughter had little understanding of Islam and no sense of being a Muslim, and it was too late. Her daughter was already in her teens. With almost all of her friends being non-Muslims she grew increasingly distant from her *dīn*. By this time it was nearly impossible for her mother to persuade her to do her *ṣalat*, not to wear skimpy clothes outside the house, and not to interact too intimately with boys. Although later the mother tried to convey good examples for her daughter by doing her *ṣalat* regularly and wearing a *ḥijāb*, it was of no avail. Her daughter even felt embarrassed walking beside her mother who wore a *ḥijāb*.

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<sup>13</sup> *Tawhīd* is the concept of monotheism in Islam. It holds God as one and unique.

<sup>14</sup> As soon as a child is born, some Muslim parents whisper the *adhan* in the baby’s right ear to ensure that the first words that the newborn hears are words of praising the majesty and greatness of *Allah* (Mukhtâr 2003:23).

Yet people who convert to Islam in their adulthood can divert and develop their moral subjectivity to a new set of dispositions about what is good and bad, right and wrong, permissible and improper, sacred and profane, beautiful and unsightly both in oneself and the larger world in their twenties and thirties (Winchester 2008:1761)<sup>15</sup>. So, is age salient in influencing oneself to understand the faith and adhere to the five pillars of Islam? How crucial is it to introduce Islam as soon as the child understands about matters around her/him? For my informants it is pivotal that some basic introductory religious knowledge is given to the young child with a more structured instruction later when they are older.

Besides the multiple resources available to them, Muslim mothers with whom I spoke also rely on their past as another alternative to guide them in their parenting practices. Harkness, et. al. (1992:171-174) suggest that reflection on the past and its constitution have been central in setting schemas for parents for how to construct their own family life. Recollecting her own childhood, Zahra told me that when she was young and brought up in her country she had to do all the Islamic practices, including *salat* and fasting because her parents told her to do so. There were no questions or discussions why she had to do them. She realised that her parents were also doing their worship and rituals because their parents taught them to. So it was a kind of “tradition” that passed on from one generation to the next. This was understandable, she said, because her mother had no education. Hence, merely following the traditions without questions or being critical was logical. But as she was educated at a university she began to question many aspects of religious practices and was mostly concerned with the propriety of some rituals that seemed to be religious, like the wedding ritual. She realised that some of the traditions they followed were not entirely Islamic. Since she has learned what is Islam and what are cultural traditions she consciously differentiates between Islamic practices from traditions in her own parenting practices and family. She believes that “pure Islam” should not be “bounded by culture” (D’Alisera 2004:73). Eickelman and Piscatori (1996:37-45) suggest that mass education, especially higher education, and Islamic mass communication in the Muslim world

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<sup>15</sup> Lofland and Skonovd (1982) describe six motifs of religious conversion that include intellectual, mystical, experimental, affectional, revivalist and coercion (in Köse and Loewenthal 2000:101-102). In their own research with British converts to Islam, Köse and Loewenthal (2000) find that all motives are present in their respondents except the revivalist motif. Lakhdar, et al. (2007) recommend other motives beside the six motives suggested by Lofland and Skonovd (1982), namely “negativist (opposing my family), mastery state (fighting on the side of the poor) and sympathy state (sharing possessions)”. See Sulaiman-Hill (2007) for a description of Muslim conversion in New Zealand.

have led to objectification of Muslim consciousness. Through schooling and ease of communication Muslims began to question what it means to be a Muslim. This heightened self-consciousness in return sparks debate about Muslim traditions and discourses on a mass scale, not merely awareness of non-Muslim traditions but also that of other Muslims. Therefore, Zahra further explained that she felt the need to critically examine her childrearing practices especially in regard to imbuing Islamic practices and virtues in her children because she expects that as they are getting older her children will also critically question some practices that are not “pure Islam”.

She is not alone in her quest to “purify” her family life from the influence of non-Islamic traditions. Some Muslim migrants are striving to embody a “purer” form of Islam<sup>16</sup>. I could resonate with Zahra’s experience in childrearing in terms of critically examining what seems to be a commonplace and harmless act and analysing whether such an act is Islamic or not. My husband and I have been trying to inculcate the notion that a birthday party is not Islamic in our family. When I was living with my parents my mother always made a special effort to celebrate my birthday, not with a party, but rather by having especially cooked yellow rice for lunch or dinner<sup>17</sup>. Yet for the past number of years I never make yellow rice for my children’s birthday. Instead I cook the yellow rice with fried chickens and *sambel goreng ati*<sup>18</sup> on other days that do not coincide with our birthdays. What we and others, who are pursuing “purer” Islam are trying to escape from, is *bid’a*; “unwarranted innovations, beliefs, or practices for which there was no precedent at the time of the Prophet, and which are therefore best avoided” (Mahmood 2005:87).

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<sup>16</sup> See Kibria (2008:245) for discussion on the tendency to embrace and to return to basic principles of Islam, and to put emphasis on the significance of Islamic tenets in every aspect of life among young Muslim migrants, particularly second generation, that is caused by a conscious sense of belongingness to the minority group and an awareness of ‘previously taken-for-granted assumptions about what it means to be Muslim’.

<sup>17</sup> Yellow rice is used as a compulsory staple food in some Javanese *slametan* (communal feast) such as a birthday. Usually the yellow rice is shaped into a big cone with a number of side dishes, including *sambel goreng ati*, placed around it (*tumpeng*). *Slametan* formally entails *du’a*, a speech from the host and special food (which differs according to the intent of *slametan*) (Geertz 1969:11). It is particularly practised by *abangan* (who practise a more syncretic version of Islam than the more orthodox *santri*) (Geertz 1969:14). See also Beatty (1996) for discussion on the Javanese *slametan* or ritual meal in which he reveals systematic interconnections between syncretism as a social process, the multivocality of ritual and the relationship between local tradition and Islam. Woodward (1988) discusses *slametan* as textual knowledge and ritual performance among Central Javanese Muslims.

<sup>18</sup> Beef liver and cut potatoes fried with spicy ingredients including chilli. This dish and fried chickens are usually served with yellow rice. Yellow rice is steamed rice cooked in coconut milk with a dash of turmeric.

Clearly the search for authenticity in the realm of Islam is important for Zahra. Her discourse, particularly in relation to the transformation of the ritual in New Zealand context, is what Shaw and Stewart (1994:8) have labelled “anti-syncretic”, a discourse that involves “the erasure of elements deemed alien from particular religious and ritual forms.” They further emphasise that “selected forms may be identified as foreign and extirpated, or alternatively recast and retained through claims that they have really always been ‘ours’, thereby deleting former religious synthesis from authorised cultural memory” (1994:8). Yet avoiding what we consider not Islamic is not without its challenges. Moreover, understandably, not all Muslims embrace similar viewpoints. Erasure of the pre-travelled past in some instances seems to be contested. Other Muslims may try, either consciously or not, to weave in global and local interpretations of Islam for their children and themselves in an attempt to create a sense of continuity. They, including some *shaykhs*, may perceive celebrations or practices, even though there was no precedent at the time of the Prophet, as praiseworthy innovations, as long as they do not contradict the Qur’an and *ahādīth*, and do not invite any misguidance. But at least within the boundary of their home, Muslim women have some freedom and control to adopt, or on the contrary to abandon, whatever values and notions try to “sneak into” their home. Specifically, they have some freedom and control over how they would make their home a Muslim space in the midst of diverse religious understandings of the multiethnic Muslim community around them.



***Figure 3: A living room in Mt Roskill with calligraphy signifies a Muslim space.***

## *Ṣalāt and moral selfhood*

*“I conclude that the practice of prayer does not simply fashion a particular self or moral subjectivity, even when interpreted within a particular tradition. Rather, prayer becomes a compelling practice and a key site for moral experience in part because it provokes individuals to engage the contradictions of selfhood” (Simon 2009:259).*

For my informants, *ṣalāt* or ritual prayer, is the most significant form of acts of worship as practising Muslims. No one could claim to be a Muslim if they did not pray, Zahra said. She wanted to underline the importance of *ṣalāt* and thus of teaching one’s children to perform the act of worship. As Simon (2009:259) elucidates, it is through the performance of *ṣalāt* that the capacities of a moral self are realised. Regardless of the degree of their own conformity, most Muslims would agree that regular performance of the *ṣalāt* is required of all Muslims (Bowen 1989:600). *Ṣalāt* is one of the activities of *’ibādāt* that is narrowly interpreted as acts of worship that entail most notably the five pillars of Islam. Broadly interpreted *’ibādāt* encompasses all activities of life from specific rites to everyday dress to how to conduct science. “In between the five pillars and everyday life as *’ibādāt* lies a wide range of Islamic activities from which Muslims in particular societies have constructed distinctive, local ritual repertoires that include rites of passage, sacrifice, recitations of the Qur’an and commemoration of births and martyrdoms” (Bowen 1989:600).

In this section I explore how my informants engage with the practice of *ṣalāt* at home with their children. During prayer Muslims temporarily convert any worldly space, in my informants’ case their home, “into a sacred space set apart, simply by marking it and occupying it in a cleansed state facing Mecca” (El Guindi 2008:136). *Ṣalāt* is a tool in which moral selfhood is acknowledged and defined. Through disciplines of bodily practices they imbue religious virtues in their children, and affirm and further develop their own piety. Yet with a multiethnic Muslim community and its multiple Islamic discourses and practices just outside their front door, belief and practice are negotiated, defined, and (re)defined. Muslim mothers’ interaction with other Muslims outside the home may spark some “objectification”, a sense of contrast in which they compare how similar or different is the way they perform *ṣalāt*. Indeed

as D'Alisera suggests (2004:59) participation in a culturally diverse congregation provides a framework for some exchanges of social and cultural values between and within ethnic groups, “creating dominant interpretations of meaning and practice as well as a multiplicity of voices that resist those interpretations”. In spite of what seems to be a uniform practice of *ṣalāt* among Muslims, competing interpretations of “proper” Islamic practice and belief in a transnational setting are always lurking below the surface and become visible from time to time.

The five times daily obligatory prayer and all other non-compulsory prayers, like *taraweeh* during the fasting month *Ramadān* or *ṣalāt* in the morning of *Eid-ul-Fitr* and *Eid-al-Adha*, start with *wuḍū*. *Ṣalāt* consists of a series of prescribed movements of the body in two, three or four ritual cycles (*raka'at*) depending on what prayers are performed<sup>19</sup>. The prayer, which is performed with proper attire facing the *qibla*, entails a fixed sequence of movements, from standing, *rukū'* (bowing), *sujūd* (prostrating) to sitting, each accompanied by a fixed recitation. During the standing movement at the beginning of every first and second *raka'at* one recites *sūrah* al-Fātihah<sup>20</sup> followed by another *sūrah* of the worshipper's choosing from the Qur'an (see Bowen 1989:600-601, D'Alisera 2004:66-67, Mahmood 2001:830, Quasem 1980:57-62, Rippin 2005:106-108, Simon 2009:260, Winchester 2008:1762). Besides the five times daily prayer Muslims are encouraged to perform other non-obligatory prayers including *ṣalāt-al-janazah*<sup>21</sup> and *taraweeh* (see Möller 2005).

One afternoon when I visited Aisha at her home, she gave me another copy of a book she used to teach her children to perform their *wuḍū*<sup>22</sup> and *ṣalāt*. She had obtained the book free from the house where the *tafsīr* class was held. The intent of *wuḍū* is to acquire ritual purity required for the performance of *ṣalāt* that is in some degree impaired by the bodily functions of defecation, urination, and possibly sexual intercourse (see Burton 1988:21, Quasem 1980:33).

The book that I received from Aisha (Abdullah Al-Mahmoud 1991:19, 56-57) shows the recitation of intention (*niyya*) of the obligatory prayers that is said silently in one's mind. As Powers (2004:427) elucidates *niyya* is done “with the heart” and may or may not be expressed “with the tongue”. Indeed, there are some debates among

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<sup>19</sup> *Fajr* prayer is two *raka'at*, while *Maghrib* and *'Ishā* are three and four *raka'at*, respectively. *Zuhur* and *'Asr* are both four *raka'at*.

<sup>20</sup> Al-Fātihah means “the opener” in Arabic.

<sup>21</sup> *Salāt-al-janazah* is prayer for the deceased before burial

<sup>22</sup> Sahih Bukhari Book 4 and sahih Muslim Book 2 Chapter 3 and 4 explain ablutions (*wuḍū*) in detail.

Muslims regarding *niyya* and how it is supposed to be delivered. While the book I obtained from Aisha shows a prescribed sentence<sup>23</sup> of the *niyya* to recite silently in one's mind prior to performing the *ṣalāt*, other Muslims and religious scholars prefer not to express the intention verbally before prayer. The argument for verbalising the *niyya* is based on the position that verbalisation of the *niyya* is at most a compliment or amplification of *niyya*, although *niyya* is essentially silent (Powers 2006:36-37). “*Niyya* must be done by the *qalb* (heart/mind), as an essential interior; subjective, nonverbal (‘mental’) act, and it may at times also be accompanied by verbal pronouncement” (2006:37). Yet, on the other side of the fence, some scholars argue that it is enough that *niyya* is in the *qalb* and God knows what is in the *qalb*. Thus, *niyya* should not be verbalised and that verbal pronouncement is unwarranted innovation (*bid‘a*<sup>24</sup>) (2006:37). The opposition to verbalisation of *niyya* reflects the desire to adhere to the *sunnah* of the Prophet in which there is no evidence that the Prophet verbalised his *niyya*. I remember that as a child I was taught by my religious teacher at home to verbalise *niyya* prior to prayer. Pronouncing *niyya* seemed to be the preference of Muslims and religious scholars in the Indonesia of my generation. However, when I attended a *tafsīr* class many years ago in Auckland that was led by a Middle Eastern *ustadh*, he argued that *niyya* is essentially silent and done by the *qalb*, and verbalisation is not necessary, indeed it is *bid‘a*. So does *niyya* have to be verbalised to amplify its intention or is *niyya* in the *qalb* more proper? The way Aisha teaches her children to perform prayer, with or without amplification of *niyya*, reflects how she embraces multiple conflicting interpretations of “correct” religious practice. Home, then, becomes a site where she defines, negotiates and (re)defines the “proper” way of conducting *ṣalāt*.

Like Zahra, for Afifa *ṣalāt* is an important tool to build a moral self that defines her and her children as Muslims. As Afifa’s ten-year-old daughter has been learning how to perform *ṣalāt* for a number of years, she conducts *ṣalāt* fairly regularly everyday. She was already able to do it by herself without assistance from her parents.

<sup>23</sup> For example the *niyya* for *Zuhur* is as follows: “Uṣallī farḍaḥ Zuhri arba`a raka`ātin adā-an lillāhi ta`ālā” (“I perform the obligatory *Zuhur* prayer, consisting of four *raka`at*, at its time, for Allah the Lofty”) (Abdullah Al-Mahmoud 1991:19).

<sup>24</sup> *Bid‘a* is “a term in Islamic doctrine that refers to unwarranted innovations, beliefs, or practices for which there was no precedent at the time of the Prophet, and which are therefore best avoided” (Mahmood 2005:87). This is the addition/removal/ignorance of an Islamic law or teaching. *Bid‘a* usually goes against what is written in authentic *ahādīth* and the Qur’an or goes against what the Prophet (SAW) practised and taught.

Yet Afifa admitted that she and her husband still needed to remind her from time to time to do her dawn (*Fajr*) and dusk (*Maghrib*) prayers, particularly. The technique they used to remind her was to say, “this is *Maghrib* time and I want to pray; are you coming?” three times. This kind of question and invitation to pray usually worked. However, when it did not work because her daughter was occupied with other activities like embroidery or needlework, which she was passionate about, Afifa tried to step in and talk to her firmly to put some sense in her so she would do her prayer immediately. From time to time she became irritated and upset if after several times of reminding, her daughter remained unwilling to do her *ṣalāt*. She did not want to smack her daughter although according to a *hadīth*<sup>25</sup> parents can smack their children lightly when their ten-year-old or older children are not performing their *ṣalāt*. She said that it was because she was a girl and not a boy that she never smacked her for not doing her *ṣalāt*. When her younger sons were of the same age as her daughter now, she questioned herself, whether she would smack them if they did not do their prayers. She wanted her daughter to pray regularly yet since *Zuhur* prayer always falls during school hours, except in the school holidays and weekends, her daughter could do the prayer at home when she came back from school. If *Zuhur* prayer time had elapsed, usually in winter, she could do the prayer in conjunction with ‘*Asr* prayer later that day<sup>26</sup>.

As El Guindi (2008:136-138) explains Muslims’ daily life is characterised by “the rhythmicity of interweaving spatiality and temporality of Islam in scripture”. With the five times daily prayer Muslims are engaged in the rhythm of continuous moving in and out of sacred and ordinary. Sacred spatiality and temporality is entered when they conduct their prayer while ordinary spatiality and temporality is experienced as soon as they finish their prayer. Specifically the ordinary space of home is converted into a sacred site when a Muslim prays within the specified, sacred time. As El Guindi (2008:137) suggests, “this interweaving pattern is recurrent, pervasive, and powerful” as Muslims follow the *fard* of daily prayer. Afifa’s narrative above also illustrates how she is continuously interweaving sacred and ordinary into her daily life and conveys

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<sup>25</sup> Sunan Abu-Dawud Book 2, Number 495

<sup>26</sup> A number of *ahādīth* explain about making up the missed (*qada*) prayer at another time when one fails to pray the obligatory prayers because one has slept through its time or forgotten to pray (Sahih Bukhari Book 10 Number 571-572).

how she imbues piety in her daughter by teaching her daughter to acknowledge the interweaving of space and time.

Moreover, what Afifa tries to induce in her daughter is disciplinary practices (Asad 1987:159, 164, 1993:125). Through bodily practices of *ṣalāt* Afifa aims to form moral dispositions in her daughter. By organising the physical and verbal practices of *ṣalāt* that constitute the virtuous Muslim self, and in particular the disposition to true obedience, the moral disposition of a pious Muslim will be achieved (see Asad 1987:164-165, 1993:135-139). Apart from teaching her daughter the prescribed sequence of gestures and words, the physical condition of purity, and the proper attire for *ṣalāt*, she demands that prayer be conducted within the scheduled time for each prayer. For every ritual prayer there is a time slot that begins and ends at specific times (see Henkel 2005:493). So, for example, *Zuhur* prayer starts at 1.07pm and ‘*Asr* prayer commences at 4.58pm today; this means that one can perform *ṣalāt Zuhur* anytime between 1.07pm and 4.58pm. Prayer time for each *ṣalāt* moves one or two minutes forward or backward everyday depending on the season. Table 2 shows the prayer times for 23 November 2010 for the Auckland region<sup>27</sup>, as published by The Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand (FIANZ) in its website.

**Table 2: Time-slots for the five obligatory *ṣalāt* performances (summer time)**

<i>Fajr</i>	<i>Zuhur</i>	‘ <i>Asr</i>	<i>Maghrib</i>	‘ <i>Ishā</i>
From 4.14am until just before 5.59am (sunrise)	From 1.07pm until just before →	From 4.58pm until just before →	From 8.16pm until just before →	From 10.02pm until just before <i>Fajr</i> the next day

Since the prayer time moves depending on the position of the sun, the time-slots in winter differ considerably from those of summer. Table 3 shows the time-slots for obligatory *ṣalawāt*<sup>28</sup> for 15 June 2010 for the Auckland region, as published in FIANZ’s website.

<sup>27</sup> Prayer times for different cities and regions may differ depending on their geographical locations and the position of the sun.

<sup>28</sup> *Ṣalawāt* is plural for *ṣalāt*

**Table 3: Time-slots for the five obligatory *ṣalāt* performances (winter time)**

<i>Fajr</i>	<i>Zuḥur</i>	<i>‘Asr</i>	<i>Maghrib</i>	<i>‘Ishā</i>
From 5.59am until just before 7.32am (sunrise)	From 12.21pm until just before →	From 2.53pm until just before →	From 5.11pm until just before →	From 6.44pm until just before <i>Fajr</i> the next day

What Afifa tries to instil in her daughter is the disposition to true obedience not only to formalised words and gestures, the physical condition of purity and the proper attire for *ṣalāt* but also to the prescribed time. Indeed, as Talal Asad (1987:167) suggests, the learning of appropriate forms is important because it is essential to the disciplined development of the self. The appropriate forms may include praying within the prescribed time for each *ṣalāt* as also explained by El Guindi (2008:136-138). Since *adhan* is never conducted loudly through an amplifier in mosques throughout New Zealand, unlike in other Muslim majority countries, Afifa and other Muslims rely on websites, like FIANZ’s, or other hard-copy publications available from mosques and Muslim businesses, such as *ḥalāl* butchers, to know the prayer times. Some people prefer to set the alarm on their mobile phone or with a special alarm clock sold at Muslim stores to alert them of prayer times. The clock that may take the shape of a mosque, makes an *adhan* sound every time the alarm is activated. Traditionally, in countries with Muslim majority population like Indonesia and Turkey (see Henkel 2005:494) a *muadhin*<sup>29</sup> announces the call to prayer by reciting the *adhan* loudly and stylishly through a loudspeaker from a *manāra* (minaret) of a mosque to announce the beginning of prayer time and to invite people to come to the mosque. The sometimes melodious chanting of the *adhan* can be heard from across the neighbourhood where the mosque is located and is conducted every day for each of five obligatory prayer times. With no *adhan* from Masjid e Umar, Muslims in Mt Roskill, including Afifa, have to rely on their own time awareness to be able to pray on time. Or in the case of Afifa’s daughter, she needs her mother to remind her when to do her *ṣalāt* within the time frame.

<sup>29</sup> *Muadhin* is a chosen person at a mosque who conducts *adhan* from the mosque’s minaret.

Through the above vignette I would like to assert that *ṣalāt* “can be understood as an act of total submission of the individual self to a larger power—to God but also to the community of believers and its conventional practices” (Simon 2009:265). In the practice of *ṣalāt* Muslims must be in the proper state of purity, must have the intention to pray, face the *qibla*, and perform the prescribed motions and words of the ritual in proper attire. Without the correct execution of the conventional practices the actions are not valid as actions of *’ibādāt* (Oestergaard 2009:3). The prayer is not only intended to convey the greatness of God, it is also embodied through bodily practices. As Talal Asad (1997:47-48) points out, rituals are not necessarily meant as symbolic activities but also function as techniques for self-development in order to achieve specific virtues (also Oestergaard 2009:4). The formal Islamic rituals, such as prayer and fasting, as explained by Oestergaard (2009:2), are distinguished from other more ordinary actions since they demand the imitation of explicit rules. As Bell (1992, 1997) suggests, rituals are unlike normal, everyday practices but rather entail distinguishing markers such as formality, repetition and rule-governance. However, Asad (1987:194) argues that ritual behaviour cannot be taken in opposition to ordinary or pragmatic activity because religious rites can be different at different times and places. Also, “in various epochs and cultures the domains of social life are variously divided and subdivided, *and each of them is defined by behaviour that is apt to it*<sup>30</sup>,” (1987:194). Thus, Asad (1987:194) explicates that such demarcation of ritual and non-ritual is unnecessary. Nonetheless, what I would like to underline here is the repetitive and rule-governed characteristics of rituals. *Ṣalāt* is also repetitive and has rule-governed characteristics. Rituals, like prayer and fasting, also involve bodily practices through which particular religious experiences are embodied. Asad (1997:47-48) points out that ritual actions as *habitus*<sup>31</sup>, contrary to Bourdieu’s (1977) view on *habitus*<sup>32</sup>, can be conscious, rule-governed and can function as self-development tools. I propose that these conscious, repetitive and rule-governed features of prayer are also used by the parents to teach ritual conduct of prayer in their children. Through explicit as well as implicit methods of learning, children start to observe and later to emulate

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<sup>30</sup> Italics are used in the original document

<sup>31</sup> Borrowing the concept from Marcel Mauss (1979) of *habitus* in which “it invites us to analyse ‘the body’ as an assemblage of embodied aptitudes not as systems of symbolic meanings” (Asad 1997:47).

<sup>32</sup> *Habitus* according to Pierre Bourdieu (1977) is the integrated potential for thoughts and actions that depends on one’s upbringing, position in the social system, and their available economic and cultural capital. For Bourdieu the *habitus* is simply the set of habitual dispositions through which people “give shape and form to social conventions” (Giddens 1986:301).

*ṣalāt*. As Mahmood (2001:832, 2005:136) proposes, it is through the repetition of actions of *ṣalāt* that virtues are embodied. Hence, by repeatedly attending, observing and later repeatedly conducting *ṣalāt*, and through a particular programme of disciplinary practices (Asad 1987:166, 1993:134) children are able to pray and will perform the prayer ritual regularly to aim for piety. As Asad (1993:63) and Mahmood (2005:31) point out, moral self is the product of specific religious practices, a series of cultural practices and procedures. Through various bodily movements in which religious practices, such as *ṣalāt* and wearing *ḥijāb* are performed, particular moral virtues and a more pious self will be developed and achieved. I suppose that learning Islamic rituals of prayer for children is to some extent similar to acquiring bodily attitudes for Muslim converts. Yet in the case of children acquiring bodily attitudes, what is involved is effort to direct the body's experience, whereas for converts is to reconvert the experienced body (Asad 1987:175-176, 1997:48).

As the above vignette suggested the invitation from Afifa to her daughter to pray together when she has not prayed sometimes does not work. Asad (1987:166, 1993:134) also shows that observation and imitation are important but not sufficient to induce moral dispositions. Asad points out that “the formation/transformation of moral dispositions...depended on more than the capacity to imagine, to perceive, to imitate—which, after all, are abilities everyone possesses in varying degree. It required a particular program[me] of disciplinary practices”. Mahmood (2005:54) suggests that “any kind of skilled practice requires a certain amount of reflection and deliberation on the specific mental and bodily exercise necessary for its acquisition...For example, in order for a child to learn to pray, the parent must make her conscious of her gestures, glances, and thoughts. When the child undertakes the act hurriedly, or forgets to perform it, her parents may present her with various kinds of explanations for why praying is important, what it signifies, and how it is different from the child's other activities”. This was also what Afifa tried to do to her daughter when she failed to remember her prayer. She explained why her daughter needed to do her prayer on time. Such reflection and deliberation, although not always successful in alluring her daughter to pray on time, are salient for the acquisition of the practice of *ṣalāt*. Furthermore, Asad suggests that a disciplinary programme will not simply evoke or release universal emotions, instead it is aimed to construct and reorganise distinctive emotions, which in Afifa's case are emotions of desire to pray of one's own will and

with humility in front of God, on which the central virtue of obedience to God depends (1987:166, 1993:134). For Huda *ṣalāt* has multiple meanings attached to it. These meanings are also imbued to her children. For her *ṣalāt* is a medium in which she could communicate with God and ask for God's help in a moment of distress. It is clear for Huda that the emotion of humility in front of God is crucial to sustain her and her children's obedient attitude to God.

In their home my informants teach their children about prayer that entails disciplinary practices of religious ritual, and interweaving of sacred and ordinary space and time. *Ṣalāt* may carry similar meanings for them pre- and post-migration but certainly their engagement with multiethnic Muslims around them may create circumstances in which their prior local religious practices come to the fore as they collide with the global Islamic discourse of the current migration context. The way they teach their children to do their prayer at home may not be entirely the same as the way it is taught in their children's *madrassa*, for example. In such a scenario, some may be comfortable with remaining loyal to their old way of doing *ṣalāt* for different reasons. Yet others may find that some adjustments need to be done to aim for the "proper" way of conducting the prayer. Consciously or not, Muslim mothers are constantly on the spot to figure out the "correct" practice of religious rituals.

For Zahra, Afifa and other Muslim mothers with whom I spoke, raising their children as Muslims is their aim and intention in childrearing. They are convinced that by instilling Islamic beliefs and practices in their children at home, they are keeping their children on the right path, both generally speaking and for Islam in particular. Yet they feel wary of what lies ahead for their children. Their children are still young and may face challenges outside the home to stay on the right path. Others' experiences have taught these mothers that Islamic teachings at home and *madrassa* may not be enough to conquer future predicaments. Are the challenges more pertinent for Muslim mothers because they are migrants in a secular country like New Zealand? Or, perhaps, their own Muslim community poses more 'threats' for them and their children?

Zahra, Afifa and a large number of Muslims may consciously ask themselves three kinds of questions, "What is my religion?" "Why is it important in my life?" and most important for my informants, "How do my beliefs guide my conduct as a Muslim woman and mother?" (see Eickelman 1992:643, 1996:38; D'Alisera 2004:69). The

answers to these questions shape their discourse and practice in their dealings with everyday activities and in how they perceive and negotiate challenges.



*Figure 4: Wall clock in a living room in Mt Roskill with an adhan alarm and “Allah” and “Muhammad” inscriptions.*

## *The challenges*

*“Islam is a highly diverse religion..., with many varieties. ...and sometimes [one who] claims to be ‘Muslim’ might be contested by other Muslims who consider some beliefs and practices heretical, perhaps not really Islam at all...for some Muslims, the ‘Other’ is a Muslim” (Grillo 2004:864).*

On my second visit to Zahra’s house, she told me how she anticipated that it would be difficult for her to educate her son, especially, to be a good Muslim because of the challenges he may face in his teenage years. Afifa also conveyed the same concern. These two mothers whose sons are very young are worried and wary of what they are going to deal with when their sons reach puberty. Afifa revealed a story of her friend who has a teenage son. The boy was a good Muslim who attended Islamic education when he was young but changed when he became a teenager. He did not finish his year twelve in college and did not want to do anything including work. He became disobedient<sup>33</sup> to his parents and that caused a stressful time for his mother. His mother was contemplating to Afifa that she would be better off to not wake up one morning so that she would be relieved of the tremendous stress she felt. Only a few days before I came to see Afifa, she had heard from this boy’s mother how pleased she was with her son’s latest progress. One day the young man suddenly came to his senses and told his mother that he was thinking of going to a trade school. This was better than nothing, his mother said to Afifa, because he has something to do and has no time on his hands for any misconduct.

This section explores how challenges in parenting come from different directions once the children explore the world outside the home. Inside the “safety” of home, Muslim mothers seek to create an Islamic environment as much as they find it necessary. Yet as soon as their children go to school and have friends outside the family circle, Muslim mothers are aware that other influences outside the home, including secular values, may distract and misguide their children into taking another path outside the path of Islam. In the narrative below, Muslim women with whom I

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<sup>33</sup> Obedience to one’s parents is obligatory in Islam and is demanded of every Muslim. Kindness and obedience towards one’s parents is strongly emphasised. A number of *āyāt* in the Qur’an denote the importance of obedience, kindness and gratitude toward parents (17:23, 31:14, 31:15).

spoke convey how they try to identify the challenges by exchanging stories with friends and how in the meantime they prepare to face such challenges at home.

The difficulty of imbuing Islamic beliefs and practices in their children is a frequent topic of discussion for some Muslim mothers I spoke with. This difficulty, often expressed in terms of childrearing, commonly centres on the daily conflicts they encounter while living in a non-Muslim society. Caught between a “traditional” Muslim understanding of the role of mothers as key persons who instil piety in their children, and the reality of how difficult it is to deal with multiple challenges around them, these mothers often hold on to the best possible scenario of parenting practices they are familiar with. Afifa expressed her concerns about what lies ahead for her when her sons get older. She assumed that while an extensive Islamic education for the children when they were young would give basic knowledge and practice in Islam, it might not necessarily guarantee that they would turn out to be good Muslims later in their lives. As she was not certain what caused such a change in attitude and conduct in teenagers, especially boys, she and her husband were trying their best to implant Islamic education at home. With Islamic knowledge and practices intact at least they could hope for the best.

Moreover Afifa is inclined to reduce as much as possible any temptations that she considers may distract her children from the Islamic path. As discussed in the *tafsīr* class led by *ustadha*<sup>34</sup> Fawzia, *ustadha* Fawzia cautioned her class participants to stay away from the boundaries of *sharī’ah*<sup>35</sup> and not to peek through the curtains of boundaries, because they never know whether they are strong enough to resist the temptations. Shaw and Stewart (1994:7) assert in their discussion of “anti-syncretism” that “agents [are] concerned with the defence of religious boundaries”. Similarly, Afifa utterly disapproved of some Muslim mothers who willingly take their daughters to the

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<sup>34</sup> *Ustadha* is a female *ustadh*. *Ustadh* is a teacher. It is an honorific title of respect popularly assigned to those who are widely recognized for their learning, especially religious knowledge.

<sup>35</sup> *Sharī’ah* is God's eternal and immutable will for humanity, as expressed in the *Quran* and Muhammad's example (Sunnah), considered binding for all believers; ideal Islamic law. The *Quran* contains only about ninety verses directly and specifically addressing questions of law. Islamic legal discourse refers to these verses as God's law and incorporates them into legal codes. The remainder of Islamic law is the result of jurisprudence (*fiqh*), human efforts to codify Islamic norms in practical terms and legislate for cases not specifically dealt with in the *Quran* and Sunnah. Although human-generated legislation is considered fallible and open to revision, the term *shariah* is sometimes applied to all Islamic legislation. This was supported by formal structures of juristic literature and many specific statements from the tenth through the nineteenth centuries. Modern scholars have challenged this claim, distinguishing between *shariah* and *fiqh* and calling for reform of *fiqh* codes in light of modern conditions (Esposito 2003). Yet Calder and Hooker (1999 cited in Mahmood 2005:81) suggest *fiqh* as the academic discipline by which religious scholars describe, explore, and debate the *sharī’ah*.

shopping mall and drop them off to go shopping with their girl friends because such activities are not productive and their daughters may be tempted by what they see in the mall.

As Gökarıksel (2007:67) points out “the space of shopping malls has been constituted as modern and by extension secular in the wider cultural context” of urban landscape. Even in Istanbul (2007:67) and Jakarta malls are strongly linked with the cultural context of modernity in which entertainment activities and celebrations of national and religious holidays (Muslim and non-Muslim) are held. The activities are far from religious and mostly resemble secular lives. It is this modern secular context of the malls that Afifa is mostly concerned about. The absence of stores that sell Muslim merchandise only confirms the secularity of malls. It is this site of secularity that Afifa is trying to avoid for her children.

Like what is cited by other researchers on Muslim migrants in a variety of disciplines (Barazangi 1996, Basit 1997, Eisenlohr 1996, Haddad & Lummis 1987, Kay 2006, Swanson 1996) for Afifa and some others the challenges come from outside the community of Muslims. They feel that they can counter the “threat”, the outside forces of the alien community in which their children are being raised, by drawing the curtains around them. As mentioned earlier, a few Muslim parents choose not to have New Zealand television broadcasts in their home and prefer to watch Middle Eastern television through satellite disk instead or to have no television whatsoever for their children. Others may seek a single gender school or a Muslim school for their children. However, how far can these parents prevent their children from “peeking through the curtains”? Do they consciously choose to live in Mt Roskill with its dominant Muslim community to safeguard their children from the outside forces of the alien community?

Contrary to what some other Muslim mothers believe (see Haddad et. al. 2006:133), Zahra felt that the biggest menace indeed lay within the Muslim community itself, although she echoed the feelings of many parents that the non-Muslim environment also poses some challenges. She witnessed a good Muslim boy who then became rebellious after mixing with other Muslim boys with poor conduct. He started to question his parents’ Islamic teachings as he mixed with Muslim boys who did not do what his mother said about Islamic behaviour. They also teased him for being “a good Muslim boy” who went diligently to the mosque to pray. So to be accepted by these boys, he then rebelled against what he was being taught by his

parents. Afifa's husband once told her of an incident during the fasting month of *Ramadān* when he saw what seemed to be Muslim teenagers dawdling in the neighbourhood outside Masjid e Umar when others were doing their *taraweeh* in the mosque. He had seen these boys in the mosque that night but they left early before the prayer finished. When he walked home he saw these teenagers hanging around on the street making noises. They also vandalised the mosque with rubbish and graffiti on the mosque wall and destroyed the mosque property, which upset the mosque's committee and community.

Zahra was also particularly concerned about the discrepancy between reality in Muslim countries and what she teaches her children about Islam at home. When Muslim children go for a visit to their home country and see people drinking alcohol, smoking cigarettes, and not wearing the *hijāb*, they become critical and question their parents about what Islam actually is. Is Islam what their parents teach them at home or what they see in this Muslim country? Indeed, there are a multiplicity of levels on which transnational Muslim parents are challenged. However, for Zahra teaching her children that there are good Muslims, who embrace *iman*<sup>36</sup> and practise their duties as Muslims, and bad Muslims, becomes her central point in her childrearing. Her children need to be able to make a distinction between these Muslims and need to be critical in order to stay on the right path.

For Zahra, the general disjuncture that emerges in Muslim society is expressed in her feelings about childrearing. Deeply disturbed by the influence of the-so-called bad Muslims on good Muslims, particularly on the impact of their lack of propriety, manners and their different sense (or lack) of *iman*, Zahra has decided to instil in her children a critical mind. Clearly the search for ways to imbue the notion of good and bad Muslims is important for Zahra. However, this is by no means easy for her. Recalling my own experience, only the other day my eight-year-old son asked me again why a good friend of his father, who is a Muslim, smokes<sup>37</sup> (he smokes a lot).

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<sup>36</sup> *Iman* is faith or belief. It suggests security for believers against untruth and misguidance in this world and punishment in the afterlife. It assumes belief in the oneness of God, angels, prophets, revealed books, the hereafter, and fate. Faith is a matter of free choice in Islam but is also considered a gift from God; no one is to be compelled to believe. The Qur'an establishes the close connection between faith and action, so that true faith manifests itself in right conduct. Believers are commanded to obey God, Muhammad, and authorities; fulfil their commitments; be truthful; perform ritual prayer; spend their wealth and struggle steadfastly to do the will of God; shun drinking, gambling, and exploitative business practices; and avoid treating people condescendingly.

<sup>37</sup> There are different rulings on smoking in Islam. Citing *āyāt* al-Baqarah [2:195] and an-Nisa [4:29] on the prohibition of killing or destruction of one self, some argue that it is *harām* on the grounds that it is

My son has seen him smoking cigarettes on several visits to his house with his father. Although his father and older brother do not smoke he still questions why some people behave differently from the way his family usually behaves. He also asked why I wear a *hijāb* outside the house while his older sister only wears a *hijāb* to go to a mosque, a communal prayer or to Muslims-only-gatherings. Responding to his questions I explained the rulings on smoking and *hijāb* in Islam but also mentioned that everyone makes his/her own decision on what he/she wants to do in his/her life. I told him that his father and I have been discussing about *hijāb* with his sister and we want her to make her own decision when she is ready to adopt a *hijāb* as her daily attire outside the home<sup>38</sup>. I told him that I had not worn a *hijāb* until recently not long after I gave birth to him at which time I was willing to accept *hijāb* as compulsory apparel for Muslim women.

Perhaps it is easier for children to accept non-Muslims as “the other” and it is comprehensible in the children’s mind that they may adopt different cultural systems than to acknowledge that Muslims come in a myriad of shapes, colours and sizes and vary in their conduct and piety. When they encounter Muslims outside the home, whom they consider as “us”, and these Muslims display disparate conduct or demeanour, they must think twice as hard to contest, renegotiate or reconstruct what they already know about Islam and Muslims. I remember how my first-born son, who was six years old at the time, was so surprised to find that no one in a mosque in Newcastle, Australia could speak *bahasa* Indonesian. Or a young boy of about ten years old outside the door of Masjid e Umar asked my husband, who was about to enter the mosque to pray, whether he is a Muslim. This was understandable, as my husband looks more like a Japanese/Chinese man with his slanted eyes than a South Asian or a Middle Eastern person, like most of the congregation of the mosque. It was also my son’s first encounter with non-Indonesian Muslims when we lived in New South Wales when he made the remark. Hence, it may be difficult for children to comprehend that Muslims, who may look like or unlike them, may behave differently from what they are taught about what Islam or a Muslim is by their parents at home.

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destructive to one’s health. As no *āyah* in the Qur’an or no *hadīth* mentions the prohibition of smoking, others say that it is permissible but disliked by *Allah* and the Prophet (*makruh*). So Muslims are encouraged to stay away from acts considered *makruh* as they will be rewarded if they abstain from these actions.

<sup>38</sup> She always wears decent clothes outside the house even without *hijāb*.

Faced with the multiple facts about Muslims, here and back home, Muslim parents construct a world that they so desire their children to be a part of in the hope that they stay on the right path of Islam. Metaphorically, they stitch different layers of meanings of being Muslims carefully so that the seams do not show. Through religious rituals, celebration and teaching at home, a sense of being a Muslim living in New Zealand is enacted to provide a sense of collective and individual identity as Muslims. At home, they try to inculcate religious belief and practice in their children as they see fit. As they perceive New Zealand, particularly Mt Roskill—at least at present—as their home away from “home”, they endeavour to bring “home” here to instil a sense of religious pride in their children who mostly were born in this country. Many of these children will embrace some, perhaps much, of what is imparted by their parents at home. Others, of course, will not (D’Alisera 2004:149). Parents can only hope that what they imbue in their children, both generally speaking and for Islam in particular, will have some benefit for the children later in their lives. In the mean time they embrace and enhance their religious understandings and practices through *tafsīr* and *tajwīd* classes.



***Figure 5: Muslim teenagers on the mosque veranda waiting for Zuhur communal prayer to start.***

***“Tafsīr” class, and great and little traditions debate***

*“Muslim communities are imagined, constructed through the vision, faith, and practice of their members. However, when the vision, faith and practice of community members transcend space, place, and time, similarities and differences of belief and practice are brought face to face” (D’Alisera 2004:12).*

Aisha had been telling me about a *tafsīr* class managed by a Muslim Trust in Mt Roskill that she attended regularly. The class was held fortnightly in a house owned by the trust. So on a Sunday morning I travelled to Mt Roskill to listen to the class. Barely knowing anyone who went to the class, I asked Aisha to keep me company for comfort. On my way to Aisha’s house I realised that I could not make it on time. Driven by guilt that I would make both of us late, I called her. She flatly rejected the idea of going without me. Unfinished housework still required her attention she said. It gave me a bit of relief, although some thoughts crossed my mind as to what would happen when I arrived at her house and she was still not ready; we would be so late. But lurking in my mind, I envied her for her passion and determination to always improve her knowledge in Islamic tenets while juggling her roles as a mother and a wife.

I parked my old green hatchback on the street in front of her house at five minutes past ten. I hurriedly went to the kitchen door where she used to greet her guests. The kitchen door was closed but I could hear her replying to my greeting as soon as I said “*assalamu’alaikum*”<sup>1</sup>. She opened the door and briskly turned back to the kitchen to finish her housework. She moved quickly and paced hastily from the kitchen to her bedroom back and forth several times to tidy up, to put on her ‘*abāya* and offered me her newly baked vegetable pies that I accepted willingly. In between she explained how she had been busy cooking breakfast and lunch since early morning for her husband and children who had already gone to children’s Arabic class in South Auckland. The aroma of the pies was so delicious and tantalising, lingering throughout

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<sup>1</sup> Peace be upon you

the kitchen. The pies were placed on a plate on the dining table covered with other dishes she had made for her family for lunch. I could taste the beautiful mixture of ingredients of mixed vegetables in flour and eggs as I savoured my first bite. The pies were still warm. She asked me to help myself to more pies to take home for my children.

When Aisha came out of her bedroom for the last time she was in her light brown *'abāya* and a matching *ḥijāb*. She was no longer in her training pants, a loose t-shirt and without a *ḥijāb* as I had seen her a few minutes before when she opened the door for me. She asked me whether I had brought a Qur'an to use in the class, otherwise she would lend me one. As I had no idea whether I could borrow a Qur'an from the class I had made sure I brought one from home with me.

This section explores *tafsīr* class as a Muslim space in which discourses of Islam are discussed. It is in this site that Muslim women come to realise that there are multiple meanings of religious belief and practice among the multiethnic Muslim community. Traditional Islam that they bring from back home collides with universalistic Islam from the Qur'an and the *ahādīth* that creates a sense of contrast—contrast with a past or contrast with the rest of society—that shapes their religious style. In this section I focus on the issue of music as it takes centre stage in discussion in the *tafsīr* class. As Muslim women encounter music in every aspect of their lives, including that of their children, and as they seek to be better Muslims, they are caught in debates about what is proper and improper.

We drove our own cars to the class. I followed her car through rather empty Richardson and Stoddard Roads in a cool mid-autumn breeze. The trust's house was located close to the mosque. It was a brick house with a newly built conservatory. There was another brick house on the same section. The section was quite small for two houses but the driveway was wide and long enough to park four cars, one in front of the other and side-by-side. The *tafsīr* class was held in the conservatory. The conservatory was unlike any other conservatory around my neighbourhood. It was made of heavy, thick, specially made off-white plastic sheets instead of glass and wood. It had a "door" made of the same material with a u-shaped zipper and a metal rod at the bottom to hold the door in place. The conservatory was warm and cosy with a wall-to-wall carpet and a wall-mounted heat pump. The living room of the house was filled with a long table and a few chairs. Along its long sidewall was a tall bookshelf

full of Islamic books. The books could be borrowed by anyone who was interested. A few books, like books on how to do prayer, could be obtained without charge.

When Aisha and I entered the class the teacher had already started her lecture on a *sūrah* from the Qur'an. It seemed that we were a bit late. But the teacher, a Middle Eastern woman, did not mind that we had not come on time. She was not even bothered when about five other women came later than us. About thirty women in their *hujub* and *'abāyāt*<sup>2</sup> from diverse ethnic groups<sup>3</sup> attended the class; most of them sat on the carpet, and all stayed until it ended. She seemed to know who was new to the class and who were the regulars as she said, "Welcome to the class" to the newcomers and "Please come in" to the regulars. Overall, she warmly welcomed everyone to join the class so new attendees like me felt comfortable and welcomed.

*Ustadha* Fawzia has a strong presence and a commanding aura about her. She spoke fluent English with a Middle Eastern accent in a firm tone but warm voice at the same time. The Arabic language was only used when she recited an *āyah*<sup>4</sup> from the Qur'an or she could not find the right term in English, in which case an Arabic speaking participant would assist her with an English term or a short explanation of the particular word. Aisha told me once that she had a Masters degree but not in relation to *fiqh*. She had acquired the necessary knowledge of the *tafsīr* from careful and extensive self-study of the material. As a native Arabic speaker her language ability is of great advantage to understand the Islamic texts. I also heard from Anissa, a regular participant who I have known for several years, that she has taught the class for about ten years.

Despite her imposing tone and the authoritative nature of her presence and presentation that was equally felt by Aisha and Fadilah, another regular at the class, there was no feeling on my part of being intimidated by how she conveyed the *tafsīr* and its content in the class. In fact it has prompted me to critically analyse the *tafsīr* she put forward. For Anissa the *tafsīr* class has incited critical thinking on her part as she has been renegotiating some previous values and behaviour that seemed to be uncontested and unproblematic in regard to religious norms. After exploring *ustadha*'s

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<sup>2</sup> Only one attendee wore *kerudung* that was not fully covering her hair. Apparently she was a new convert. She wore a long dress instead of an *'abāya*. Another young woman wore long trousers with a *hijāb*.

<sup>3</sup> The women were originally from South Asia, Southeast Asia, Middle East, South America, East Africa and Northeast Asia.

<sup>4</sup> *Āyah* is a verse within *sūrah* (chapter) of the Qur'an

arguments on the matter and researching on her own the issues mentioned in the class she has taken a different point of view.

It seems that the *tafsīr* class is a temporal locus where local traditions collide with the great tradition of Islamic discourse. Anissa and other class participants who bring their own understanding of Islamic practice are constantly appropriating the Islamic texts of the Qur'an and the *hadīth* put forward by the teacher. Yet *ustadha* Fawzia is not free from the influence of her own folk tradition. Each and every member of the class is, either consciously or unintentionally, juxtaposing their own religious understanding and practices against the Islamic texts since the *tafsīr* class is an arena where Islamic discourse is discussed, analysed and negotiated by women with a myriad of folk Islams. Similar to D'Alisera's analysis on Islamic Centre in Washington D.C., I suggest that the *tafsīr* class "becomes the stage upon which the production of meaning is filtered through a diverse set of discourses that claim authentic ownership of a proper Islamic understanding and practice and the many voices that challenge those claims" (2004:60). She further explains, "this ultimately produces a space in which strategies of appropriation and exclusion are employed to advance the special interests of some and silence those of others" (2004:60).

As Eickelman and Piscatori (1990:xv) suggest, Muslims who travel for religious purposes or to pursue further study outside their community and who encounter Muslims who speak different languages, who belong to various races, sects and embrace different customs and systems of knowledge become more aware of the commonality of faith and goals that ties them together as one *ummah*<sup>5</sup>. Yet it also creates, unavoidably, a sense of heightened ambivalence that may define boundaries between Muslims. Muslim travellers often return to a greater, universal orthodoxy due to their direct contact with Muslim "other" and their local customs have to be renegotiated (D'Alisera 2004:11). However, what about Muslim migrants in a transnational context? Are their local religious understandings replaced and reinvented to some degree as they are transplanted into a new setting? Has migration altered their religious thought and practices?

The Muslim women I worked with, by migrating to this country, have the opportunity to interact with Muslims from other parts of the world as illustrated in the *tafsīr* class. This encourages them to reflect on the ways that they understood Islam

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<sup>5</sup> *Ummah* is Muslim community or community of believers.

and practiced the religion in their country of origin. They conveyed their intentions to be better Muslims, perhaps more pious, than they used to be as a result of their encounters with a multiethnic and similarly displaced groups of believers. Conflicts of practice and understanding of religious tenets within the confines of the broader transnational community creates a sense of urgency to critically examine their prior Islamic practice and understanding.

The first morning I attended the *tafsīr* class *ustadha* Fawzia discussed the first four *āyāt* of the *sūrah* Al-Hadid<sup>6</sup>. The core of the verses declares the power of *Allah*<sup>7</sup> *subhanahu wa ta'ala*<sup>8</sup> as the almighty, the knower of hidden things, the cognizant of all things and He sees everything we do without exception. In her lecture, *ustadha* Fawzia emphasised the importance of submission to God's commands and acting accordingly as He is the one who gives life and it is only natural to obey His orders. She eloquently conveyed stories from the *hadīth* and examples from life experiences of improper conduct to the attentive audience, a few of whom were new converts. One of the issues she raised in her talk and reiterated a number of times to underline its importance, was about music and how music has been part of Muslims' everyday lives. The problem for her was to reconcile the Islam of Muslim women who pray diligently and recite the Qur'an regularly with the fact that they joyously dance to music in weddings they attend.

I remembered my husband and I being invited to the wedding of a Middle Eastern couple in Auckland. When we came to the venue I could hear Arabic music roaring from the hall. As we arrived in the foyer my husband went into the men-only room with our sons; I entered the adjacent women-only room with my daughter. It was no surprise to me that they used two separate assembly halls to seat men and women as I have attended other Muslim weddings in Auckland, although Muslim weddings in Jakarta never use separate rooms for their guests as such gender segregated

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<sup>6</sup> *Sūrah* Al-Hadid is the 57<sup>th</sup> chapter in the Qur'an. The translations are as followed (Shakir 1983): [57.1] Whatever is in the heavens and the earth declares the glory of Allah, and He is the Mighty, the Wise. [57.2] His is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth; He gives life and causes death; and He has power over all things. [57.3] He is the First and the Last and the Ascendant (over all) and the Knower of hidden things, and He is Cognizant of all things. [57.4] He it is who created the heavens and the earth in six periods, and He is firm in power; He knows that which goes deep down into the earth and that which comes forth out of it, and that which comes down from the heaven and that which goes up into it, and He is with you wherever you are; and Allah sees what you do.

<sup>7</sup> *Allah* is God in Arabic.

<sup>8</sup> *Subhanahu wa ta'ala* means be He glorious and exalted. The phrase, often abbreviated as "swt", appears after the name of Allah in the Qur'an and the *hadīth*. Saying the phrase is seen as an act of worship and devotion towards Allah among Muslims.

celebrations are unheard of in metropolitan Indonesia except in *masajid* and a few *pengajians*. The room was full of women, mostly of Middle Eastern origin and a handful of European guests, dressed in elegant yet lavish European-styled long dresses and tight mini skirts. As I did not notice any young Muslim women in mini skirts or older women in long dresses outside the auditorium I was wondering whether they were dressed in their *‘abāyāt* and *ḥujub* before coming in. Apparently they took them off as soon as they came into the room and put them on again when they left the room even when they only went to a toilet located in the foyer. The bride, who was dressed in white laced and embroidered European-designed wedding attire, was seated at the front of the hall on an especially made flowery decorated seat. The loud music was still blaring from the loudspeakers as some of the women guests, old and young, came forward and started chanting to the music and dancing around and circling the standing bride in uniform movements while clapping their hands. I noticed an acquaintance of mine, an Egyptian woman, dancing to the music and encouraging other guests to join in their joyful escapade. Lacking the desire and expertise to join in, I sat quietly and watched.

In a secular environment of New Zealand, music is regarded as harmless and even necessary. Not a day passes without music around us. We hear music on television, radio, at malls even at schools or from our hand phones’ ring tones. Yet not all Muslims approve of the use of music. Discussion on the propriety of music has taken centre stage among Muslims, including in the *tafsīr* class I attended. The argument for and against listening to music and playing musical instruments could illustrate how my informants are caught between various local meanings and universal belief and practice of Islam. In the space of the *tafsīr* class they experience self-examination and a sense of contrast between their previous and current understanding of music and how their view may not be similar to other Muslims and that of religious texts. They objectify the way they use music in their lives.

In *ustadha* Fawzia’s view, music is unacceptable for Muslims to engage in although it is part of the folk culture of many Muslim societies. As no *surāh* that explains the prohibition of music was mentioned in the *tafsīr* class I asked Anissa if she knew whether the *ustadha* had mentioned such *surāh*. She told me that since the teacher had spoken many times about the non-Islamic nature of music she had done

some personal research by googling<sup>9</sup> with key words “ruling of music Islam” on the Internet and by critically examining the stated Qur’an verses. She found different *āyāt* that proscribe music for Muslims. It took some time for her to amend her view on music because it was not an issue that was contested and problematic when she lived back home. Since then she and her teenage daughters, who also regularly attended the class, have begun their endeavour to minimise their use of music in their everyday lives.

Following Anissa’s suggestion I explored the key words, searched more articles on the ruling of music in Islam, juxtaposed a number of translations of the Qur’an, and discovered that three *suwar* are used as the foundations for prohibiting music and singing for Muslims, namely *surāh* Luqman [31:6], *surāh* Al-Najm [53:59-61] and *surāh* Al-Isra [17:64]. It is interesting to note that music and singing are not stated as the translation of the verses. Music and singing are part of interpretations (as opposed to translations) of some Muslim scholars of the verses as the words “music” and “singing” are written in brackets in some of the Qur’an translations (Mujahid 1999, Al-Hilali & Khan n.d.) and not mentioned in other translations (Yusuf Ali 1934, Shakir 1983). The phrases from which music and singing are derived are “idle talk”, “pastime and amusement”, “vanities”, and “*ash-Shaytān*’s<sup>10</sup> voice”<sup>11</sup>. It is worth noting here that the Qur’an is written in Arabic, recited and pronounced only in Arabic by Arabs and non-Arabs alike, as it cannot be rendered adequately in any other language. In the Muslim view no translation is perfect. While at best it helps to explain its original intention but at worst it could endanger its inimitable quality (Böwering 2003:348).

The moral arguments against music rest on the notions that some music destroys public morals through its degrading lyrics and its association with competing norms and lifestyles depicted in popular video clips and the lifestyles of its artists. Most music is also regarded as an evil distraction created by *ash-Shaytān* (al-Kanadi 1986, Otterbeck 2006:16). For Muslim scholars who are in favour of prohibiting it,

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<sup>9</sup> A number of websites on the ruling of music in Islam can be found by searching the key words on the Internet. Al Kanadi (1986), an eminent Muslim scholar who prohibits music also posts his text on the Internet free for access. His text is quite widely used by other scholars who support and oppose his view, e.g. Otterbeck (2006). Anderson (2002:300-305) conveys that the Internet, through numerous Websites, has been used as a pertinent venue of Islamic expression, including *fatāwā* (religious edicts) and contemporary Muslim conversation.

<sup>10</sup> *Ash-Shaytān* is the adversary of God

<sup>11</sup> See Martin (1982) for discussion on “validity of interpretation” of the Qur’an.

music is seen as idle talk that would lead Muslims away from God's path and as a medium associated with *ash-Shaytān's* activities (Otterbeck 2006:17). Music has undergone censorship in a few Middle Eastern countries like Saudi Arabia in which it is governed by different government bodies and by individuals in their capacities as members of the royal family. Yet this does not mean there are no music and no musicians in the country. There are a few musicians including women who are in demand to perform live on the female side of celebrations and wedding parties playing to all-female audiences in this gender segregated society (2006:4-5). While conservative Muslims including scholars like the *Salafis*, who are devoted to a very strict interpretation of Islam, prohibit music, there are some other Muslim scholars who have a more liberal view on music (Freemuse 2006). *Shaykh*<sup>12</sup> Ibrahim Ramadan Al-Mardini from Beirut Studies and Documentation Centre maintains that there is no Qur'anic text banning music and most of *ahādīth* used to prove music unlawful are *hadīth da'īf* or very weak (Reitov 2005). In fact there is also explicitly "Islamic" music with "Islamic" lyrics like Rhoma Irama's Indonesian *dangdut*<sup>13</sup> style songs with Islamic flavour (Lockard 1998:94), Muslim convert Yusuf Islam's (aka Cat Stevens) "Islamic" songs for children<sup>14</sup> or "Islamic" tunes by a group of African American Muslims called Native Deen, and many others. My husband told me about one of his discussions with an *imām* of a mosque in Auckland (not from the Mt Roskill mosque). In the midst of their discussions about culture and Islam the *imām* expressed his view on music. Like *shaykh* Ibrahim, he too, asserts that there is no ruling against music in the Islamic tenets. As long as music does not distract Muslims from God's path and contains no immoral lyrics it is permissible. Hence, there is no consensus on the ruling of music among Muslim scholars let alone among the Muslim populace. Although I did not know the opinions of most *tafsīr* class participants on music, Muslim women with whom I worked generally were not in favour of music and were struggling to negotiate it especially in their children's school context as it is used as a vital medium of learning.

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<sup>12</sup> *Shaykh* literally means elder. It is an honorific term to designate an elder of a tribe, a revered wise man, or an Islamic scholar.

<sup>13</sup> *Dangdut* is a genre of Indonesian popular music with a lead singer and music instruments of tabla, mandolin, guitars and synthesizers

<sup>14</sup> Some of the titles include "A is for Allah", "Bismillah I am a Muslim" and "Al-Khalik".

### **Religious Teacher's and Textual Authorities**

Through the above vignette on music I would like to illustrate that through multiple discourses available to them, Muslim mothers are able to make choices about how they will be Muslims and how they want their children to be Muslims. As D'Alisera suggests (2004:64) "the diversity of the Muslim community, the encounter with 'other' believers", gives Muslim mothers "a heightened sense of how they are Muslims and in what ways their understandings and practice of Islam may be inadequate, even inauthentic". The juxtaposition of multiple voices of religious discourse sharpens their awareness of differences in religious beliefs and practices. That prompts them to reshape their own religious beliefs and practices, or at least it triggers some thoughts for further consideration. What motivates these Muslim women to join the *tafsīr* class is not merely passing the time in their busy schedule as mothers and wives. Rather, they strive to redefine their own Muslim identity in relation to an authoritative definition of what it means to be a good Muslim. Aisha's and Anissa's engagement in the *tafsīr* class for a number of years confirm that they seek to be better Muslims and conflicting meanings of religious belief they encounter in this space encourage them to refashion how they embrace Islamic belief and practice.

In her lecture, *ustadha* Fawzia emphasized the importance of believing and upholding our faith as our identity as Muslims. No matter where we came from or whether we were born as Muslims or were new converts, as Muslims we must live our lives according to *sharī'ah* to aim for *jannah* (heaven), she explained. She further elucidated that *sharī'ah* defines our boundaries as Muslims. She portrayed *sharī'ah* as curtains that bounded us within our straight path of Islam. Beyond those boundaries is *harām*. Thus, she cautioned us to stay away from the boundaries and not to peek through the curtains, because we never knew whether we were strong enough to resist the temptations. She affirmed that we needed to know our *sharī'ah* from the only authentic sources available, namely the Qur'an and *ahādīth*, without relying on others', including *shaykh*. As Gellner points out "in principle, the Muslim, if endowed with pious learning, is self-sufficient or at any rate not dependent on other men, or consecrated specialists" (1981:1).

In her engagement with the Qur'an and *ahādīth*, *ustadha* Fawzia took any attempt to draw a firm boundary between folk Muslim practices and the scriptural tradition (Mahmood 2005:97). She acknowledged the reality of multiple

understandings and meanings of Islam in the midst of multiethnic transnational Muslims. Confronted with the many interpretations of Islam available to them, in the form of texts and discourses, Muslim women were encouraged by *ustadha* Fawzia to seek true knowledge from the authentic textual sources of the Qur'an and *ahādīth*. Yet even reading the Qur'an and *ahādīth* requires careful examination and a critical mind. Not all *ahādīth* are *hadīth sahih*<sup>15</sup>. Some are *hadīth da'īf*<sup>16</sup>. Although there is a longstanding tradition among some Muslim '*ulamā*'<sup>17</sup> who have justified the use of weak *hadīth* if they encourage or promote pious conduct (Mahmood 2005:97)<sup>18</sup>, more conservative Muslim scholars shun the use of weak *hadīth*. I do not suggest that *ustadha* Fawzia was familiar with this argument or that she used *hadīth da'īf* in her lecture to illustrate her points of view. Rather, I want to draw attention to my argument that *hadīth da'īf* also influence folk Muslim practices and religious beliefs. *Ustadha* Fawzia implicitly questioned our previous interpretations of Islam and cautioned her audience to be critical in their beliefs and religious practices. Her intention was to guide these women towards the correct practice. Meanwhile, these women, perhaps, are caught between the authority of the teacher, who is considered a religious authority, and their prior understandings and practices of Islam.

Coming back to my discussion on music, Anissa was in a dilemma in her search for proper religious practice. She was concerned with the propriety of music in her daily life. What was unproblematic and uncontested in her previous understanding of Islam became questionable and in need of critical examination. But how far she would go to comply with her understanding of ideal piety, remained to be seen. Would she eventually impose restriction on herself and her daughters of any type of music including ring tones for their mobile phones? Or is selective music in moderation acceptable to her?

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<sup>15</sup> *Hadīth sahih* is a correct, sound Prophetic tradition

<sup>16</sup> Methodologies for the study of *hadīth* have been developed over centuries by Islamic scholars and jurists and are commonly referred to as the science of *hadīth* study. Verification of *hadīth* as reliable, and the use of *hadīth* to verify or disavow Islamic practice, is left to '*ulamā*', or Islamic scholars, with a deep understanding of Islamic jurisprudence and history (CRCC: Centre for Muslim-Jewish Engagement, n.d.). Certain conditions applied to classify *hadīths* in terms of their validity and reliability that include good characters of all its narrators and good memory and precision on the part of the narrators with regard to what they are narrating (Al-Munajjid 2009:2, Islamic Awareness, n.d.). Examples of *hadīth sahih* are Sahih Bukhari, Sahih Muslim, ahadith in Sunan Abu-Dawud and ahadith in Malik's Muwatta (CRCC: Centre for Muslim-Jewish Engagement, n.d.).

<sup>17</sup> '*Ulamā*' are Islamic religious scholars

<sup>18</sup> One example close to home is a *hadīth da'īf* popular in Indonesia. The *hadīth* says, "Seek knowledge even if you have to go as far as China, for seeking knowledge is a duty on every Muslim". It is used to promote a knowledge seeking attitude in Muslims.

Like D'Alisera's Muslim informants in Washington, D.C. (2004:73-74), for Muslim mothers like Anissa, Aisha and others who have accepted the authority of the *ustadha*, other religious practices followed by their fellow ethnic groups are questioned. This holds particularly true for practices such as a celebration to commemorate the Prophet's birthday (*Mawlid al-Nabi*)<sup>19</sup>. They turn to the *ustadha* for validation of their doubts or stay away from other *tafsīr* classes in their own ethnic community<sup>20</sup>, conducted by their ethnic *ustadh/ustadha*, in order to pursue "pure Islam" that is not bounded by culture. A discussion in the *tafsīr* class I attended on *Mawlid al-Nabi* sparked by a number of participants who were in doubt about such practice followed by their acquaintances and were seeking validation from the teacher. *Ustadha* Fawzia confirmed their suspicion that such celebration is against the ruling of Islam because there is no mention in the Qur'an and *hadīth sahih* of the day being celebrated in the time of the Prophet. It is worth noting here that conservative Muslims tend to emulate the life of the Prophet (Muhammad) closely and put their best effort not to practise or do anything that is not mentioned in the Qur'an and *ahādīth*. Everything outside or against the teaching of the Qur'an and *hadīth* is considered *bid'a* (Grunebaum 2007:279), which is an error and a misguidance.

Reminiscing on the not so distant past, I know a number of Muslims who belong to a single ethnic group *tafsīr* class and celebrate *Mawlid al-Nabi* because in their home country such celebration is considered permissible in Islam and they see it as a praiseworthy event. For these Muslims belonging to this *tafsīr* class, to some extent, released them from some tensions of the conflict between adhering to folk Islam and the great tradition of textual authorities, and of the need to critically examine their prior Islamic practice and understanding. On a number of occasions the participants of this *tafsīr* class told me that belonging to this class felt more comfortable because every religious practice conducted was exactly the same as in

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<sup>19</sup> *Mawlid al-Nabi* is the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad, celebrated on the twelfth day of Rabi al-Awwal (the third month of the Islamic calendar). Popular celebration includes readings from the *Qur'an*, poetry recitation, singing of songs commemorating Muhammad's virtues, and preparation of food dedicated to the Prophet and distributed to the poor. It is also the occasion for state ceremonies, including in Indonesia, but not in Saudi Arabia. Some conservatives condemn the celebration since it was not celebrated during Muhammad's lifetime and is centred on a human being rather than God (Esposito 2003).

<sup>20</sup> In Mt Roskill there were a number of *tafsīr* classes. Some were organised and attended by a single ethnic group and others were attended by multiethnic Muslims. The choice of *tafsīr* class may convey how far Muslims were "comfortable" with multiethnic Muslims and its multiple meanings of Islam.

their country of origin. Their argument was based on the notion that the *ustadh* understood their “culture”.

Unlike some other *tafsīr* classes, the *tafsīr* class led by *ustadha* Fawzia required every participant to bring and open her own Qur’an. The woman beside me, a Fijian, read an Arabic Qur’an with English translation for each *āyah*, like myself. While the Chinese woman, who sat on my right side, opened a Qur’an in Arabic with Chinese translation and Roman letters transliteration of the Arabic characters. This kind of Qur’an is invaluable for people who are not yet proficient in reading the Arabic letters. I was fascinated seeing her Qur’an because that was the second time I had seen the Qur’an with a Chinese translation. The first time was when my husband brought me as a gift a Qur’an with Chinese translation from Nanjing, China after he attended a short course in traditional Chinese medicine a couple of weeks before. But the one I had from him has no transliteration. While still thinking of the transliteration, during break, Fadilah asked me whether I wanted to join her and others to put in an order for a word-for-word Indonesian translation of the Qur’an from Arabic, which she would organise to buy from Indonesia. Since I have in my possession a similar one in English, I politely refused her offer. She told me that she already had more than a couple of orders from Malaysian and Indonesian sisters<sup>21</sup>. This kind of Qur’an, she said, better served Indonesian and Malaysian<sup>22</sup> native speakers because it renders “perfect” translation per word from Arabic to the Indonesian language.

Access to the Qur’an in different translations of participants’ native language allows them to explore and discover the meaning of the Qur’an and consequently empowers them to find their religiosity on their own. As D’Alisera elucidates “the power of the texts lies in their ability to construct objectified knowledge and to make sacred knowledge accessible” (2004:71), particularly when the *ustadha* juxtaposed the *āyāt* from the Qur’an in front of them with examples from *ahādīth* and everyday lives. As Lambek explains “texts by themselves are silent; they become socially relevant through their enunciation, through citation, through acts of reading, reference, and interpretation” (1990:23). The translations in their native language or in a language that they comprehend are so important to generate and increase “understanding of what

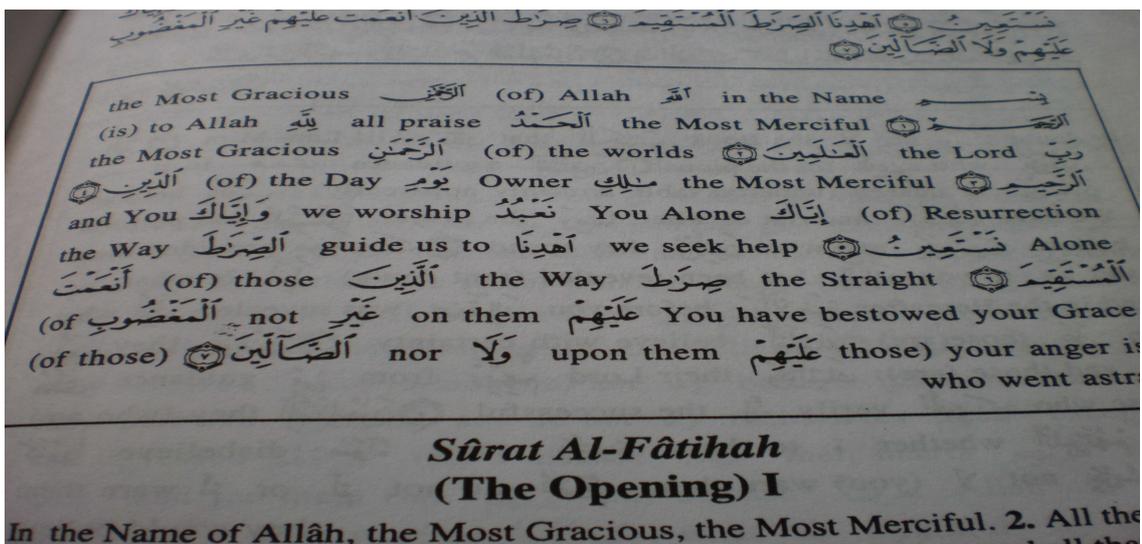
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<sup>21</sup> Sister is the term Muslims used to address Muslim women.

<sup>22</sup> Indonesian and Malaysian languages are very similar, and people from Indonesia can understand the language spoken by people from Malaysia, and vice versa.

God desires of man and fulfils one of those desires” (Lambek 1990:29). So “religious study is itself the quintessential act of piety” (1990:29).

Yet, the main challenge for the *tafsīr* class participants to their understanding of Islam would be how to incorporate their traditional interpretations of Islam into the universalistic principles of Islam as defined and elaborated in the class through religious text. Would they take a step away from their previous local Islam and work toward making a change in their understanding of beliefs and practices to pursue “a stable, uniform interpretation of Islam” (D’Alisera 2004:76)? Or is their traditional understanding becoming integrated with the universal Islamic practice and beliefs and forming a new way of understanding (2004:76)? It remains to be seen. Each participant would seek their own paths, as no guarantee of uniform response would ensue from a similar experience of the *tafsīr* class. Anissa’s “new” understanding of beliefs and practices might be different to that of Aisha’s, mine or other participants’. The *tafsīr* class is merely a space in which these women encounter and discuss multiple meanings of religious belief and practice that result in “objectification”. How they define, (re)define and negotiate their way of using (or not using) music in their everyday life depends on their own objectification on the propriety of music in Islam and the circumstances around its use. By living among multiethnic Muslims within the context of the wider non-Muslim society the issue of music will continuously transpire without simple resolution<sup>23</sup>.



**Figure 6: Word-for-word English translation of the Arabic verse of sūrah Al-Fātiḥah.**

<sup>23</sup> See chapter Six of this essay for discussion on the use of music in public schools attended by my informants’ children and how they negotiate it.

## *Tajwīd class and Qur'anic recitation*

“Of course, any act of piety, whether it be praying, reciting, or weeping, can become an empty gesture, and scholars warn against the danger of hypocrisy” (Nelson 2001:96).

Leaving home on a Sunday morning, I headed to Aisha's house. This time I was going to attend a *tajwīd* class organised by the same trust that manages the *tafsīr* class. I arrived at Aisha's house at a quarter to ten. Plenty of time for us to be at the class before it started at ten. Aisha had made plans with the teacher to arrive early that day so that she could learn to perfect her Qur'an recitation for a competition later in the year<sup>24</sup>.

Yet, when she let me into her kitchen she was still finishing her breakfast while looking for her socks. She called me to go to the dining table to help myself to her baked doughnuts and to take some home for my children. She had made them the day before for her son's school bazaar, an annual school event she participated in every year by making cakes and cookies to sell and donating the proceeds to the school.

After finding her socks, hurriedly we drove to the class in our separate cars. We arrived at a house located close to Masjid e Umar. The house<sup>25</sup> was also owned by the trust like the one used for the *tafsīr* class. The house was situated at the back section with three other houses, which were occupied by Muslim families.

When we entered the house, the teacher, a Middle Eastern woman, and two other women all in *ḥujub* and *ʿabāyāt* were there and they greeted us. The room that was normally used as a living room was full of tables and chairs. The tables and chairs were arranged in an L-shaped array in harmony with the shape of the room. At the end of the room there were tall glass bookshelves with many Qur'ans inside. The house was very tidy with blue carpet throughout and two bedrooms adjacent to the living room. The bedrooms were empty - no beds or any furniture. Only a few toys were scattered on the floor of one of the bedrooms.

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<sup>24</sup> The competition mentioned was the 7th Annual Women's Qur'an Competition 2010 sponsored by Sheikh Eid bin Mohamad Charitable Foundation in Qatar. The event venue was Zayed College in Mangere, South Auckland. At the previous year's event Aisha won one of the prizes.

<sup>25</sup> The house was later used to accommodate a Muslim family in need who had recently arrived from overseas. The *tajwīd* class was then moved to the house used for the *tafsīr* class.

As we were seated and had opened our Qur'an on the table *ustadha* Zalika, asked Aisha to start her recitation. From memory, Aisha recited *sūrah* Al Fajr<sup>26</sup> that she had chosen as the *sūrah* she was going to compete with in a few months. She recited it fluently but to *ustadha* Zalika's ears there were a few corrections to be made. The teacher corrected Aisha's pronunciations of a few words by giving her examples of how to do them. Aisha followed her way of saying the particular words. Although not yet satisfied with her progress, Aisha had to stop her private training as other women came in and joined the class.

About ten women from diverse ethnic groups<sup>27</sup>, all in their *hujub* and *'abāyāt*, attended the class. Three of the women were new converts who were in their very early stage of learning the Arabic letters. *Ustadha* Zalika started the lesson with writing on a white board and pronouncing the Arabic alphabet one by one from *أ* (alif) the first letter to *ي* (yaa) the last letter. Aisha told me that the teacher always started the lesson by reciting, with the participants following her, all the twenty-eight letters. The handouts she had given us earlier were really useful at this time. The handouts showed drawings and text descriptions of how to position the tongue and how to blow or hold the air through the wind pipe to produce certain sounds, especially for difficult letters like *ص* (sad), *ض* (thad), *ط* (taa), *ظ* (zaa), *ح* (ḥa), *ذ* (thal), *ع* (ein), *غ* (gayn), *ث* (tha) and *هـ* (ha)<sup>28</sup>. For my Indonesian native tongue, it was difficult to pronounce these letters properly, because there is no repertoire for such sounds in the Indonesian language. Yet I felt quite fortunate that I have the skill to read the Qur'an in Arabic albeit not as fluently as Aisha and Fadilah. It had taken me a few months to relearn the Arabic letters and how to read the Qur'an in Arabic a number of years ago as I had forgotten what I had learned in my childhood. I had been neglecting the skill and relying on memory or on Qur'an transliteration to say my prayers in *ṣalat* or in *du'a*<sup>29</sup>. Overall the skill level of the participants in the class varied considerably from new beginners like the three new converts to advanced level like Aisha and Fadilah.

In this section I explore *tajwīd* class as a Muslim space in which Muslim women embody piety through the practice of Qur'anic recitation. As Qureshi

<sup>26</sup> *Sūrah* Al-Fajr is the 89<sup>th</sup> *sūrah* of the Qur'an with 30 *āyāt*.

<sup>27</sup> The women were originally from South Asia, Southeast Asia, South America and none from Arabic speaking countries.

<sup>28</sup> It is not easy to transliterate the Arabic letters. For example *هـ* is deeper in the throat than *ح* although they appear to be similar in their transliterations. *ث* is similar to "thing" in English while *ذ* is similar to "this" in English. *غ* has gurgling sound in the throat.

<sup>29</sup> *Du'a* is supplication and invocation to God

(1996:49) suggests “engaging in the articulation of Islamic word and performing the relevant actions form the basis of individual Muslim identity; sharing that engagement links Muslims into a community”. Participation in a *tajwīd* class, like *ṣalāt*, also serves as a means to express not only Muslim identity but also piety (Nelson 2001:62). Yet Qur’anic recitation is constantly negotiated within the context of Qur’an competitions. Conflicting understandings of the propriety of Qur’an competitions within the multiethnic Muslim community create debate and hesitation for some to participate while not for others. The central theme of this section is an interplaying of multifaceted religious discourses and knowledge within the *tajwīd* class and Qur’an recitation in a transnational space. Through *tajwīd* class and the Qur’an competition I would like to explore how these Muslim women achieve a sense of piety and how the Qur’an competition is disputable in terms of its pious aim. While some Muslim women seek virtuous improvement in their devoutness through the Qur’an competition, others may question its intention. Public Qur’an recitation seems to incite underlying debate among multiethnic Muslim communities in Auckland.

*Ustadha* Zalika was admired by Aisha and Fadilah for her teaching method. Aisha and Fadilah, who also learn *tajwīd* with other teachers in Mt Roskill<sup>30</sup>, told me that *ustadha* Zalika was very meticulous and detailed in her explanations and reviews of her students’ pronunciation. She, apparently, had a good ear to listen to intricate details of sounds and could spot mistakes that for other teachers had gone unnoticed. With two years of comprehensive and extensive study of *tajwīd* at a university in her native country that was on a par with a Masters degree, *ustadha* Zalika has the necessary expertise and authority to teach the subject.

*Ustadha* Zalika explained that reading the Qur’an with its true and correct pronunciation (*tajwīd*) was crucial because mistakes in enunciation could alter the meaning of what was read or recited. Differences in elocution could change the meaning. Thus careful reading or recitation was needed to render its true meaning. “The system of *tajwīd*”, as Gade (2004:28) elucidates, “includes instructions of fixed rules such as the correct articulation of phonetic sounds, the assimilation of juxtaposed vowels or consonants, and the proper rhythmic duration of vowel sounds” (also Nelson 2001:xvii). The root of the word *tajwīd* carries meanings pertaining to “make correct” and “beautifying” (Gade 2004:28). The aim of *tajwīd* is to preserve the Qur’an

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<sup>30</sup> There is other *tajwīd* class in Mt Roskill besides the one I attended.

recitation in its authentic sound as it was first revealed in the time of the Prophet Muhammad. As *ustadha* Zalika explained, and also stated by Gade (2004:126), even the native speakers of Arabic “of any register and dialect” have to learn *tajwīd* because their language skills do not guarantee proficiency in the practice of *tajwīd*. It takes years of study and practice to master Qur’anic recitation because it is not simply a matter of repeating Arabic words (McAuliffe 2003:340).

For Muslim believers the Qur’an is literally God’s word, word for word, received by the Prophet Muhammad as its recipient through its intermediary agent, Gabriel, the angel of revelation. The Qur’an, according to normative Muslim views, was memorised with exact precision and was collected in book form by the Prophet’s followers after his death. Its authenticity is guaranteed through infinite care in a continuous oral transmission by means of recitation and textually as the Qur’an. “Muslims believe that the sound thus preserved is that of the actual revelation; it is the language of God. Whereas the written text preserves the words, syntax, and order materials, *tajwīd* preserves the sound, from the pronunciation of each phoneme to the length and timbre or voice quality of each syllable” (Nelson 2002:258). The Qur’an is always read and recited in Arabic and only pronounced in Arabic in Muslim ritual worship by Arab and non-Arab Muslims (Böwering 2003:348).

For Aisha and Fadilah, *tajwīd* class becomes a site in which piety is achieved through reciting the Qur’an. It is here that Muslim women of different Qur’an reading abilities and ethnicities met, learned and discussed under the guidance of an expert to recite the Qur’an and to acquire knowledge of Islam in general. I remember in one of the lessons one of the participants asked *ustadha* Zalika why two Qur’ans from different publishers were not exactly the same in the way the Arabic letters are written. *Ustadha* Zalika explained that both Qur’ans were correct, although the one from Fiji did not have a null sign on the top of the letter و (wa) to indicate a short “u” in the word “ulāika”, for example, while in the Qur’an from a Saudi Arabia publisher had one. For people whose Arabic was not their proficient language, *ustadha* Zalika told us, the Arab’s Qur’an was preferable since these people might not know whether to use short or long “u” without the sign for the word “ulāika”<sup>31</sup>. On another occasion a participant asked *ustadha* Zalika whether it was permissible to read the Qur’an when a woman was having her menstruation to which she answered it was acceptable to read

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<sup>31</sup> With the null sign the “u” is read “ulāika” with a short “u” while without the null sign “u” is read as “ūlāika” with a long “u”. The word becomes meaningless or has a different meaning to the one intended.

the Qur'an in a learning session, for example in a *tajwīd* class, but not for a reciting purpose per se. When one of the class participants was having her menstruation she read the Qur'an but had another woman helping her open the pages of the Qur'an to abide by the rule<sup>32</sup>.

As *sūrah* Al-Fātihah is the most frequent chapter recited by Muslims, one of the *tafsīr* class participants asked the teacher if we could recite the *sūrah*. So in the second session after a break we recited *sūrah* Al-Fātihah. This first chapter of the Qur'an is an essential *sūrah* as it constitutes the very minimum requirement of *sūrah* that need to be memorised in Arabic in order to perform ritual prayer correctly<sup>33</sup>. Practising Muslims recite the *sūrah* at least seventeen times a day in their daily prayers. The Fātihah is also recited on many occasions where individual or spontaneous prayer is conducted or in any circumstance in which prayer is appropriate, like weddings and funerals (Glassé 1989 cited in D'Alisera 2004:72).

Each of the participants had the opportunity to recite the Fātihah from the first verse to its seventh (last) verse on her own while the teacher corrected every inaccuracy. For me this session was helpful but also rather daunting. It was useful as I learned where my mistakes were and how to correct them. But it was also rather intimidating because the correct pronunciations were not easy to articulate. We were asked to repeat several times the correct sound production until we could pronounce it accurately, or at least very close to its correct pronunciation. The new converts were either reading the *sūrah* from its transliteration or from memory. Despite the fact that *ustadha* Zalika was supportive and patient with her students, the aura of the class was tenser than the *tafsīr* class. I supposed the way we were expected to participate in each of the activities in the *tajwīd* class, which was rather strenuous, made it more challenging in terms of the concentration that was demanded.

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<sup>32</sup> *Sūrah* Al-Waqi'a (57:77-80) states that none should touch the Qur'an but those who are clean. Thus, since a woman in a state of menstruation is regarded as unclean then she is not allowed to touch the Qur'an although she can recite it.

<sup>33</sup> Ubada b. as-Samit reported: The Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) said: He who does not recite Umm al-Qur'an (Al-Fātihah) is not credited with having observed the prayer (Sahih Muslim Book 004, Number 0772).

## **Qur'an Recitation versus Music**

When someone has mastered reciting a *sūrah*, like Aisha<sup>34</sup>, the melodious sound of Arabic words fills the room. As al Faruqi suggests in Qur'an recitation "musical cadences tend to coincide with points of literary accentuation, e.g. where rhymes, assonance, parallelism, repetition, and metric regularity occur" (1987:7). Coupled with controlled tempo and rhythm, and melodic movement and contour (al Faruqi 1987:9) the outcome is a melodious Qur'anic recitation. The style of recitation runs along a continuum from a conservative one that is similar to normal speech (known in Egypt as *murattal* style) to musically elaborate recitation known as *mujawwad* (al Faruqi 1987:8, Nelson 2001). Yet no Muslim regards Qur'an recitation as music and "no one in the culture would fail to maintain a mental and actual distinction and separation of the two", although if properly recited, Qur'an passage would engender musical characteristics (al Faruqi 1987:14, also Nelson 2001:153). *Ustadha* Fawzia from the *tafsīr* class also encouraged her class participants to learn *tajwīd* with *ustadha* Zalika despite her opposing stand on music, because she never viewed Qur'anic recitation within the same genre as music. As Nelson explains the ultimate distinction between Qur'anic recitation and music lies in the disparity of intent of performance of the two (2001:184). Furthermore Nelson asserts, "the intent of the recitation is to involve the listener totally in the meaning and significance of the Revelation"<sup>35</sup>, an intent which goes beyond entertaining, or stirring the emotions" (1982:43).

For Aisha learning *tajwīd* is encouraged by her intention to improve her skill in reading and reciting the Qur'an so that she can teach her children the correct pronunciation of the *suwar* that are used in the prayers and other religious practices. Her intent of recitation also goes beyond reciting it for the purpose of entering the competition or entertaining the audience attending the competition. Rather her main aim is for her own advancement and her children's acquisition of the skill, although recently on occasions her young son corrected her Qur'anic recitation with perfect utterances. Being taught in a *madrassa* since he was very young provides him with the skill and proficiency to recite the Qur'an, especially for *juz' Amma* with perfect elocution.

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<sup>34</sup> Aisha told me that when she recited the same *sūrah* to her other *tajwīd* teacher, the teacher approved of her recitation.

<sup>35</sup> The Revelation refers to the Qur'an.

Reciting the Qur'an is performed by faithful Muslims in private as well as public spaces. The tradition of Qur'an transmission is essentially oral. Children are first taught *sūrah* Al-Fātihah and *juz' Amma* orally by imitating aloud; even when they have acquired knowledge of the written text they usually read aloud. Meanwhile for many Muslims, recitation remains their only access to the Qur'an (Nelson 2001:xiv). The Qur'an is recited daily in canonical prayer, nightly in *taraweeh*<sup>36</sup> prayer during the fasting month of *Ramadān*, in special recitation sessions in mosques and special events convened by Muslim communities (also Denny 1989:5, Gade 2005:48). The oral tradition of the Qur'an is based on the revelation of the first *sūrah* revealed<sup>37</sup> to the Prophet. The first word of *sūrah* Al-Alaq is *iqra'* which literally means "read" but in this context means "recite" or "speak out" as the *sūrah* was revealed orally and the Prophet was unable to read. The Qur'an was then mastered by strenuous memorization and practice in oral performance that is fitting to the meaning of the Qur'an, which means "recitation" (Denny 1989:6-7, Graham 1984).

One Qur'an recitation that I witnessed and was very impressed by its rhythmic tone and good voice was when I attended *taraweeh* prayer during *Ramadān* in a mosque in Auckland. The young man, who led the prayer and was not even twenty years of age, recited from memory long *suwar* during standing position after saying the Fātihah<sup>38</sup>. It is a tradition in mosques in Auckland to complete reciting from Al-Baqarah, the second *sūrah* in the Qur'an, to An-Nas the last *sūrah* in continuation from the first *taraweeh* prayer on the first day of fasting to the last day of fasting which generally lasts for 29 days or at the most for 30 days. That night while standing on the prayer rug facing the *qibla* hearing the chanting of a controlled rhythmic tone of every *āyah* in melodious voice, a feeling of awe swept over me and gave me goose bumps. In the quietness of the night his beautiful Qur'anic recitation felt like a breeze of cool air on a hot dry night, very soothing.

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<sup>36</sup> *Taraweeh* is a special prayer done during the fasting month of Ramadan and is done after the 'Isha (evening) and before the fajr (dawn) prayers

<sup>37</sup> The first *sūrah* revealed was Al-Alaq, although Al-Fātihah was the first *sūrah* in the Qur'an. The *suwar* in Qur'anic text are not arranged in terms of time of revelation. Rather they are arranged according to the principle of decreasing length (see also Böwering 2003:351, al-Faruqi 1987:4). Some of the *suwar* were revealed in Makkah and others were revealed in Madinah. The *suwar* of the Makkah period are short whereas the *suwar* of the Madinah period are longer (al-Faruqi 1987:4-5).

<sup>38</sup> The Fātihah and the *sūrah* recited after the Fātihah are recited aloud only during communal prayer of *maghrib* (after sunset), *taraweeh* and Friday prayers. For other prayers like *fajr* (just before sunrise), *duhur* (noon), *asr* (afternoon until sunset) and *'ishā* (evening) no *sūrah* are recited aloud even in communal prayer.

In events organised by Muslim organisations Qur'an recitation is often part of the programme. Like the opening of FIANZ (Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand) first New Zealand Muslim Convention held at Mt Roskill a *sūrah* from the Qur'an and its translation were recited. A Muslim brother recited the *sūrah* in Arabic while reading from the Qur'anic text. His melodious voice filled the marquee, where the event was held. Another brother then read the translation in English.

Seen in a wider context, Qur'an recitation in the *tajwīd* class, a mosque, or public event becomes a unique and dynamic process in which the Muslim community creates its identity in the West. Its primary goal has been to express and articulate community identity to its own members, largely disregarding the presence of a larger society of outsiders (Qureshi 1996:61-62). Yet I would like to add that Qur'an recitation in the *tajwīd* class and a mosque is performed in order to achieve and embody piety. By contrast, recitation in public events, such as the opening of the Muslim Convention, which was attended by dignitaries from the New Zealand government and foreign embassies, was part of the creation of a Muslim space displayed to non-Muslims in the West (Qureshi 1996:62).

Despite the fact that in general there is no argument on Qur'an recitation being considered as music, a few debates on the propriety of certain technique, method of teaching and presentation of recitation transpire among Muslims and Muslim scholars. Cetin (1999) in his text on the debate on the rhythmic recitation of the Qur'an based on *āyāt* of the Qur'an and *ahādīth* points out that "the question of 'chanting' (*taghannī*) in Qur'an recitation is a question on which there is conflict; in other words, chanting the Qur'an in a rhythmic tone (*maqām*) has become a point of discussion" (1999:111). He affirms that reciting the Qur'an in a rhythmic tone (*maqām*) is permissible as long as one always abides by the rules of *tajwīd*<sup>39</sup>. *Sūrah* Al-Muzzammil (73:4) of the Qur'an expresses the need to recite the Qur'an in slow, measured rhythmic tones. It is not permissible, for example, to lengthen a short vowel or to shorten a long vowel; or to add or omit some letters where it is inappropriate (1999:115). The argument against *taghannī* is based on the notion that *taghannī* not only changes the pronunciation but also alters the meaning, and if *taghannī* were allowed there would be an endless liberty of melody resembling that of singing (1999:117). The Qur'an is exempt from melodious recitation, because it is not *ḥalāl* to recite the Qur'an with a melody and

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<sup>39</sup> From a number of sources Buhari (2008) writes a chart on rules of *tajwīd* that are basically classified into rules of letters, rules of stopping and places of articulation.

change of tune (1999:118). Yet Cetin argues that “a recitation which provokes listeners to break into tears, and is within the rules of *tajwīd*, is good and pleasant (*mustahab*)” (1999:118). As McAuliffe (2003:340) reiterates, “hearing the Qur’an properly and beautifully recited is, for most Muslims, a very moving experience”. In terms of *ḥalāl* or *harām*, Cetin asserts that by respecting the rules of *tajwīd*, embellishing and beautifying the recitation with a good voice and a rhythmic tone is *ḥalāl* because a good voice doubles the goodness of the Qur’an” (1999:118, 120). He cautions, though, that to make a show out of the recitation is not *ḥalāl*, because the recitation of the Qur’an is an act of worship (1999:120).

### **Qur’an Competition**

What about Qur’an competitions annually held in Auckland? How did participants feel about “showing off” their ability in reciting the Qur’an? What were their views on prizes given to the winners of the competition? What were the intentions in participating and organising these competitions?

As Gade explains in her ethnographic research on Qur’an recitation in Indonesia (2004), Qur’an recitation competitions to aim for prizes were once criticised in Indonesia, yet by the mid-1990s such contention was hardly heard of. Decreasing opposition to once-opposed practices was in part seen as an effect of the key idea of Islamic *da’wah* (2004:241). *Da’wah* literally means “call” to encourage others’ Islamic piety or deepen one’s own (Gade 2004:16) through preaching and propagation. It is a powerful and a versatile Qur’anic concept that is applicable in diverse circumstances including in a very mundane situation like a positive social interaction between a Muslim and his/her non-Muslim friend or client. A pleasant attitude from the Muslim is aimed at portraying the goodness of Islam to his/her non-Muslim friend or client. On his/her part he/she affirms that the intention of his/her demeanour is for *da’wah*<sup>40</sup>. In the Indonesian Qur’an competition setting, *da’wah* has been used in

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<sup>40</sup> When I visited a *ḥalāl* butcher in West Auckland with my husband one afternoon, a European teacher from a public school nearby came to buy some sausages for the school sausage sizzle. The owner, in his sixties, whom we called *chacha* (‘uncle’ in Urdu), asked us if he could attend to her first while we were waiting for our lamb chops. He then took out some sausages for the teacher. When she wanted to pay he refused and said “thank you for taking care of our Muslim children in your school” with a smile and bright sparkling eyes. She received the nice gesture happily and left the premises with a smile. After she left *chacha* told us that she is a regular customer in his shop and this was not the first time she had bought sausages for her Muslim students. He explained that he insisted that she did not have to pay because he wanted to express his gratitude for her understanding of the need for Muslims to eat *ḥalāl* meat as well as for taking care of our Muslim children at a secular school. Besides, he wanted to show

relation to “*syi’ar Islam*” (the glorification of Islam) and has diminished possible religious objections to the subjection of God’s speech to a contest (Gade 2004:241). Like in Indonesia, the annual Qur’an competition held in Auckland for Muslim children and women, and the Auckland University of Technology (AUT) Qur’an competition for male and female students, are viewed as energetic Qur’anic engagements in which the idea of *da’wah* and deepening of one’s own piety are the end goals (Gade 2004:241, see Nelson 2001:136-137 for description of an annual Qur’an competition in Cairo). Both competitions in Auckland include prizes for the winners in the form of money or objects.

The annual women’s Qur’an competition allows women and children eight years old and older to compete. The competition involves recitation of specific *sūrah* from memory. There are five categories of competition in terms of groups of *suwar* that the competitor can choose to compete in. The *suwar* are grouped according to level of difficulty in terms of *tajwīd* and length of the *sūrah*. The competitors are allowed to enter the category with a low level of complexity only if they have not mastered the higher one. Recitation and memorisation are judged on their *tajwīd*, clarity of voice and volume by a panel of judges. Aisha told me that the judges can pick any *sūrah* from the chosen category and the competitors are asked to recite the *sūrah* from memory on any *āyah* the judges wish them to recite. For long *sūrah* only several *āyāt* are recited.

Meanwhile the first AUT Qur’an competition involved reciting from memory the 27<sup>th</sup> *juz’* of the Qur’an which includes *suwar* At-tur, An-Najm, Al-Qamar, Al-Waqia, Al-Hadid and Ar-Rahman. Besides a certificate of participation, a sum of money of \$100 to \$200 was given to the first, second and third winners.

Both competitions were organised just before or during the fasting month of *Ramadān*. There is a tradition among Muslims of diverse ethnicities to recite the whole Qur’an in the month of *Ramadān* either individually at home or collectively at mosques. *Khatam Al-Qur’an* is celebrated as a means to deepen one’s own piety by reciting and understanding the verses read. This tradition is based on a *sūrah* (Al-Baqarah 2:185<sup>41</sup>) and *ahādīth* (Sahih Bukhari Book 61, Number 519-520<sup>42</sup>). The

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her that Muslims are kind and appreciative toward other people including non-Muslims. It was part of *da’wah* that Muslims and Islam were about kindness, he said.

<sup>41</sup> Ramadhan is the (month) in which the Qur’an was sent down, as a guide to mankind, also clear (Signs) for guidance and judgment (Between right and wrong). So every one of you who is present (at his home) during that month should spend it in fasting, but if any one is ill, or on a journey, the

*ahādīth* contain recommendations to study the Qur'an in *Ramadān*, increasing recitation of the Qur'an in *Ramadān*, and enhancing one's knowledge of Qur'an recitation with others who have better knowledge. So it is understandable that the competition events coincide with this tradition to engage competitors and audiences with an act of piety. As noted by the organiser of the annual women's Qur'an competition, citing a *hadīth* from sahih Bukhari, "the person who recites the Qur'an and masters it by heart will be with the honourable scribes (in Heaven)" (Sahih Bukhari Book 60, Number 459). Since it is regarded as "an aid of piety, correct understanding and awareness of its message, and memorisation of the passages from the Arabic Qur'an remain an important goal and accomplishment" (al-Faruqi 1987:3).

One day when I visited Aisha, in the middle of our conversation in her kitchen, she conveyed that she was pleasantly surprised that she had won a prize for her participation in the Qur'an competition last year. She entered the competition for the first time out of curiosity. Many of the competitors were of Fijian descent. The competition started early in the morning with children and women grouped according to their chosen categories and age. She thought that the competition would be more like the one in her home country in which the competitors perform recitation for a whole *sūrah*. Instead, she was asked to recite some verses from a particular *sūrah*. Not long after she finished her turn she went home, as she could not wait for the winners to be announced much later that day. Surprisingly the next day her friend, who also competed in the competition, came to her house with the prize. Although she was not the first winner, to be one of the winners among other excellent reciters was in itself an accomplishment for her. She showed no concern about "showing off" her ability to recite the Qur'an in front of many other women and children as her audience. As Nelson (2001:137) and Gade (2004:216) suggest, Qur'an competition is seen as a means to motivate Qur'anic participation and piety. Through competitions motivation

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prescribed period (should be made up) by days later. Allah intends every facility for you; He does not want to put to difficulties. (He wants you) to complete the prescribed period, and to glorify Him in that He has guided you; and perchance ye shall be grateful (Al-Baqarah 2:185 translation by Yusuf Ali – CCRC n.d.).

<sup>42</sup> Narrated Ibn 'Abbas: The Prophet was the most generous person, and he used to become more so (generous) particularly in the month of Ramadan because Gabriel used to meet him every night of the month of Ramadan till it elapsed. Allah's Apostle used to recite the Qur'an for him. When Gabriel met him, he used to become more generous than the fast wind in doing good (Sahih Bukhari Book 61, Number 519). Narrated Abu-Huraira: Gabriel used to repeat the recitation of the Qur'an with the Prophet once a year, but he repeated it twice with him in the year he died (Sahih Bukhari Book 61, Number 520).

to Qur'anic practice, including memorisation and particularly recitation in the *mujawwad* style, is enhanced (Gade 2004:216). Further Gade explains competitions are understood to encourage the study of Qur'an recitation through "the draws of inspiration (such as admiring of the abilities of others and desiring to emulate them), aspiration (such as wanting to win personal or group prestige, or perhaps for the prizes that are offered), and participation (often valued as an end in itself)" (2004:216-217). Yet a few others still question the propriety of Qur'an competition.

Thus, the main challenge for Muslim women regarding their participation in Qur'an recitation would be how to balance Qur'anic practice as an act of worship without the intention of "showing off", and keep maintaining the ideal recitation of the Qur'an. Would their intention remain purely as an act of piety? Or is there an intention, even a glimpse, of wanting to win for personal or group prestige, or perhaps for the prizes offered if they participate in a competition? For Aisha, *tajwīd* class and Qur'an competition are her stepping-stones to acquire better knowledge and skills in Qur'an recitation that are imperative as an act of piety for herself as an individual and as a mother to imbue piety in her children. Yet the perception of the art of Qur'anic recitation as unique and distinct from musical art and not as an act of "showing off" depends on how the reciter and listeners approach recitation. While the reciter should approach recitation as an act of worship, listeners should approach Qur'anic recitation with the proper intent and expectations (Nelson 2001:136). Whether or not they respond to it as musical sound or only respond to the significance of the message, only they know.

For Aisha, Fadilah and other women involved in Qur'anic recitation, whether privately at their home or publicly in a competition, aiming for piety is the core of their conduct. Yet with no proper intent the pious self they so desire may be questioned. Although Qur'an recitations in private homes or in communal prayers are deemed salient, reciting *āyāt* Qur'an in other public events and the way they recite the Qur'an may provoke different views amongst the Muslim community. Hence amidst multiple discourses of Islamic understanding and practices, these women seek the best possible scenario that they know of how to be pious Muslims. However, consciously or not, intentionally or not, they become part of the underlying debate of the politics of piety among the Muslim community in the urban landscape of Auckland. Indeed, piety

politics become more prevalent in public space and particularly more apparent in communal prayer like Friday prayer and *ṣalāt Eid-ul-Fitr*.



*Figure 7: A living room in Mt Roskill with calligraphy on the wall and a Qur'an with tajwīd on the mantelpiece. The Qur'an is specially designed with letters of different colours to help recitation with proper tajwīd.*

## Communal prayer

*“Multiple voices of religious discourse are incorporated into the everyday practice of religion, lending substance to a search for, and validation of, an authoritative definition of what it means to be a Muslim” (D’Alisera 2004:59).*

On a Friday I drove to Mt Roskill to observe the prayer at Masjid e Umar<sup>1</sup>. I arrived just after twelve and parked my car opposite the mosque. The weather was fine and sunny but not too hot so I felt quite comfortable sitting in the car. As I parked my car at Stoddard Road I could see people coming from another road off the main road, also from the direction of Richardson-Stoddard Road junction and from May-Stoddard Road junction behind me.

It was unfortunate that I could not attend the *ṣalāt al-Jum’ah* (Friday prayer) because this mosque does not cater for women praying on the premises. As far as I know Masjid e Umar is the only mosque in New Zealand that does not have a women’s section in their building. I have been performing *ṣalāt* (prayer) in many mosques in Auckland and other cities in New Zealand when I visited the urban centres with my family. However when my husband and I happened to be at Mt Roskill at the time for prayer, I just waited in the car, and prayed later at home, while my husband performed his *ṣalāt* in the mosque. The Muslim women I spoke with usually go to other mosques, like Blockhouse Bay mosque close by, when they want to pray at a mosque.

This chapter explores communal prayer as a space in which Muslims interact with each other and embody piety. While many communal prayers around Auckland cater for Muslim women in their gender-segregated space, the mosque in Mt Roskill is the only venue in New Zealand where women are not part of the congregation. The mosque seems to create an imagined cultural practice of homeland. In this chapter I also explore how communal prayer of *Eid-ul-Fitr* becomes a space in which Muslim women define, (re)define and negotiate their religious practice as they engage with

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<sup>1</sup> It is compulsory for men to perform *Zuhur* prayer on Friday with other worshippers (*jama’ah*) at a mosque but not mandatory for women. The *ṣalāt al-Jum’ah* is two *raka’at* instead of four like *Zuhur* with a *khutbah* (sermon) prior to the prayer in which an *imām* conveys readings from the Qur’an and *ahādīth* and relates them to everyday lives.

other Muslim women from diverse ethnicities. In this space multiple local religious understandings and practices are collided and contested within global Islamic discourse of the current migration context, and consequently accepting dominant discourses of Islam (D'Alisera 2004:10-11). Different ways of dressing, greetings and doing prayer create a sense of ambivalence and uncertainty of the “proper” religious practices and motivate a sense of urgency to examine previous experiences. Communal prayer is also a space in which Muslim parents imbue religious belief and practice in their children. Yet being a good Muslim has to be negotiated in two ways, namely in relation to all the different cultural inflections of Islam and in relation to the wider non-Muslim society.

That Friday I saw many Muslims young and old walking in groups of twos, threes or more toward the mosque or they came in cars that they parked in the mosque grounds or around the vicinity. As it was school holidays some fathers came with their young sons and daughters, pre-schoolers and school-aged children. Some of the boys were wearing *shalwar kameez* or *thobe*<sup>2</sup> and the girls were in their frock and *hijāb*. One father held his daughters' hands on each side. Other young children were walking hastily to keep pace with their father's big footsteps. A boy was walking in front of his father and sister to lead the way. A few teenagers walked either with their peers or younger brothers or their fathers. They were talking and laughing, perhaps, at jokes made by their friends. After these teenagers came a grandfather walking beside his grandson. Some Muslim men came out from their business premises and walked to the mosque. Many of the people looked like South Asians and Middle Eastern people adorned in their best *shalwar kameez* or *thobe*. A young man, who had just emerged from his car, looked more stylish with his dark sunglasses and white *shalwar kameez*. A few were Africans, presumably Somalians, and even fewer were Southeast Asian, Chinese or Western looking. Most of the old men had beards but they kept their beards short. Only a few of them wore their beards long. Most of the young men were clean-shaven. Hundreds of people came to the mosque to pray that Friday afternoon.

Masjid e Umar has become a centre in which Muslims in Mt Roskill express their Islamic identity and embody piety. Although the mosque is visited by a Muslim community of diverse ethnicities it is still distinctly South Asian in terms of its religious and sociocultural facets. This is evidenced primarily in the way they do not

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<sup>2</sup> *Thobe* is an ankle-length tunic typically worn by Middle Eastern men

allow women to pray in the premises. Although the mosque provides *tafsīr* class for women and *madrassa* for girls the two classes are placed in a different building. As Qureshi (1996:59) points out mosques in the South Asian region are attended only by men. The reality of gender exclusion creates a sense of contrast—a contrast with their past—for Muslim women and Muslims of minority ethnicities who live in Mt Roskill and its neighbouring suburbs. Some Muslim women, like Zahra, consequently, pray at a mosque in Blockhouse Bay that caters for women when they want to perform their prayer outside their home. Or like the Middle Eastern Muslim community around the area, they have established a new mosque in Mt Albert<sup>3</sup> that welcomes both genders to pray on its premises. As Qureshi (1996:59) explains, the participation of women in mosque worship is a standard practice of Arab Muslims, which is maintained in a transnational context. In *Eid-ul-Fitr* many Muslim families in Mt Roskill prefer to conduct their *ṣalāt* at the Trust Stadium in Henderson where they can bring the whole family.

*Eid-ul-Fitr* is the quintessential event in which one celebrates the triumph of fasting for a whole month in *Ramadān*. The morning of *Eid-ul-Fitr* begins with a communal prayer at designated places around Auckland. I started early that day and after performing the ablutions at home I drove with my husband and sons along the rather empty Albany-Hobsonville motorway to the Trust Stadium in Henderson where many Muslims, including some from Mt Roskill, performed their *ṣalāt Eid-ul-Fitr*. It was only after seven o'clock when we arrived there. My daughter who usually asks permission from her school if the *Eid* falls on school days could not leave school as she had an exam that day. In the car park I met Fadilah who had come with her family. When we entered the stadium, we saw that it was the same as last year<sup>4</sup>; there was a huge partition that divided the stadium into two sections, for men and women. The partition was hanging from the ceiling to the floor so it was impossible for women to see men on the other side, or for men to see women on our side. My youngest son went with his father and brother to the men's section. As I came into the women's section with Fadilah, we immediately lent a hand to help with spreading big blue plastic sheets

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<sup>3</sup> Before the Middle Eastern trust bought a house in Mt Albert that served as a mosque, the trust rented a hall nearby on a regular basis for its activities including Friday prayer for men and women.

<sup>4</sup> The Trust Stadium was also used as one of the venues of *ṣalāt Eid-ul-Fitr* in Auckland last year. The *ṣalāt Eid-ul-Fitr* in 2009 and 2010 at Trust Stadium in Henderson were organised by NZMA (New Zealand Muslim Association), which manages several mosques in Auckland, including the Ponsonby mosque, the Ranui mosque and the Avondale mosque, and is affiliated with the Mt Eden mosque.

on the floor so that we all had a clean surface to put our *sajadah* to pray on. We positioned ourselves behind a few other women. Not long after Maryam, who I have known for years, joined us and sat beside me. Many other women came to join the congregation. Most of them were of South Asian descent in their colourful and sparkling ‘*abāyāt* (full with tiny colourful beads) or *shalwar kameez* and *hujub*. Some who were of Middle Eastern origin were comfortable in their ‘*abāya* in shades of black, grey or dark blue and *hijāb* of the same colour or white. Meanwhile, women from Africa, presumably Somalian, were wearing colourful ‘*abāya* (some of them in big flowery designs) with matching *khimār*<sup>5</sup>. A few who had not adopted a *hijāb* as their daily attire were trying to fit in by wearing a *hijāb* or a loose shawl to cover part of their hair. Even fewer were wearing *niqāb*<sup>6</sup>. I was wearing a black ‘*abāya* with grey and dark red stripes from traditional East Nusa Tenggara<sup>7</sup> cloth with a dark red *hijāb*<sup>8</sup>. Most Indonesian women put on their white *mukena*<sup>9</sup> on top of their ‘*abāya* and *hijāb* as soon as they were seated. Many *jama’ah* came with their toddlers and babies in strollers or young children. The children were dressed in their best clothes; some, especially school-aged girls and teenagers were in their *hujub*. The few who had not had their ablutions at home performed their *wuḍū* in the toilets located close to the stadium door.

Loud *takbīr*<sup>10</sup> was continuously heard from the loudspeaker. The sound of the *takbīr* came from the men’s side. When I was listening to others talking while reciting the *takbīr* silently, suddenly a Fijian-looking woman came to the front and in an audible voice asked all of us who were already sitting quietly on the floor, to rearrange our *sajadah* because we were not facing the *qibla*. So we moved about forty-five

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<sup>5</sup> *Khimār* is a very long *hijāb* that covers the head and extends to the thighs

<sup>6</sup> *Niqāb* is a veil that covers the face and worn by some Muslim women as a part of a *hijāb*

<sup>7</sup> My ‘*abāya* is made of *tenun ikat* (ikat cloth) from East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), which I bought ready-made from an Indonesian Muslim friend in Auckland.

<sup>8</sup> *Hijāb* worn by Muslim women may differ in styles. Many Indonesians prefer to wear a ready made *hijāb* that is already sewn into a close-fitting *hijāb* (Jones 2007) while South Asian (Osella & Osella 2007) and Middle Eastern women tend to don a wrapped *hijāb* from a rectangular or a square shawl. African women prefer a *khimār* to a *hijāb*.

<sup>9</sup> *Mukena* is two-piece garment especially made to be used as prayer attire in Indonesia. It includes a white (or other colour) sarung/sarong (a large tube or length of fabric, often wrapped around the waist and worn as a kilt by men and as a skirt by women) and a white *khimār* (usually with white embroidery or laces).

<sup>10</sup> *Takbīr* is saying of “Allaahu akbar, Allaahu akbar, Allaahu akbar, laa ilaaha ill-Allaah, Allaahu akbar, Allaahu akbar, Allaahu akbar, wa Lillaahi’l-hamd” (Allaah is Most Great, Allaah is Most Great, Allaah is Most Great, there is no god except Allaah, Allaah is Most Great, Allaah is Most Great , Allaah is Most Great, and all praise be to Allaah) was repeated again and again until just before the commencement of *ṣalāt Eid-ul-Fitr*.

degrees to the right. It seemed that someone from the men's side had informed the woman that we were facing the wrong direction. As some of us remembered the *qibla* we faced last year tended toward the left side we rather hesitated but still complied with the request. With the new technology of iPhone with its built in compass apps one can find the direction of *qibla* more precisely to its minute degrees than with a conventional compass. Due to this new arrangement my friends and I were sitting in the first row instead of the second or third row as we had intended before. Maryam was concerned because the way we perform *ṣalāt Eid-ul-Fitr* is not exactly the same as in Indonesia. The *takbīr*<sup>11</sup> in Indonesia are always performed before the al-Fātihah, whereas in New Zealand the *takbīr* are not always performed prior to reciting the al-Fātihah in each *raka'at*, despite the fact that the *takbīr* are of the same number<sup>12</sup>. In one of the *raka'at*, the *takbīr* are said after the al-Fātihah. *Ṣalāt Eid-ul-Fitr* at the stadium that was organised and attended mostly by South Asian Muslims seemed to follow local religious practice back home<sup>13</sup>. But I assured Maryam that the *imām* would tell all his *jama'ah* about the prayer proper before the *ṣalāt* began. Her concern was heightened because we stood in the first row with no one to imitate in front of us.

As the time for *ṣalāt* approached, one of the brothers from the men's side came to the opening of the partition and asked whether one of the sisters would like to stand and pray close to the opening of the partition so she could see the *imām* and become the guide for the other women in the room. This brother seemed to understand that some women might get confused with the *takbīr* and needed some guidance from the *imām*. So a Fijian woman in black *'abāya* and *ḥijāb* came forward. She asked other Fijian women, who seemed to be her friends or family, to accompany her to pray at the spot close to the gap in the partition. One of the women who followed her was my acquaintance whom I knew from seminars and workshops for Muslim women. With these women taking position close to the gap, other women behind them could follow

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<sup>11</sup> The *takbīr* in prayer is saying *Allahu akbar* – Allah is the greatest – while raising the hands to the side of the ears and then folding them on one's chest) for the first and second *raka'at* (which is seven and five *takbīr*, respectively)

<sup>12</sup> Sahih Abu Dawud denotes that *takbīr* for *ṣalāt Eid-ul-Fitr* and *Eid-al-Adha* are seven and five for first and second *raka'at*, respectively. All *takbīr* are recited prior to saying the Al-Fatiha (Book 3 Number 1145, 1148).

<sup>13</sup> I would like to make a note here that at *ṣalāt Eid-al-Adha* later this year at the North Shore Event Centre the *takbīr* in the first and second *raka'at* was recited seven and five times, respectively and all were said before al-Fātihah, like in Indonesia. The congregation was mainly of Middle Eastern background unlike at the Trust Stadium.

their prayer movements. *Salāt Eid-ul-Fitr* is unlike daily ritual prayer in terms of *takbīr*, hence some Muslims tend to feel uncertain about the movements involved.

For Maryam, Fadilah and other Muslims who attended the *ṣalāt Eid-ul-Fitr*, this prayer is a particularly special event in which the community displays its identity to itself (D'Alisera 2004:68) and in which they can come together as a community to celebrate the end of the fasting month. It is a space and time in which they can join other Muslims from a diverse congregation of believers (*ummah*) to perform a religious ritual. However, traditions are manipulated and cultural forms are negotiated among other local traditions and the larger community's perceived mastery of correct practice (D'Alisera 2004:68). *Ṣalāt Eid-ul-Fitr* is a time and a site in which they question and juxtapose their previous way of ritual prayer against the larger community's particular way of praying. What seems proper according to the *ahādīth* is modified in line with the cultural understanding of the majority ethnic groups.

*Eid-ul-Fitr* in a transnational context also means negotiating the time and space within the wider non-Muslim society, especially when the ritual falls on weekdays when the majority of people go to work or school. For instance, my daughter chose her exam over the *ṣalāt*, whereas my friend preferred to have a week's leave from her office to prepare and celebrate the *Eid-ul-Fitr*. This is different from *Eid-ul-Fitr* in countries of majority Muslim populace which is celebrated throughout the country by having a day off from work and school. At this time Muslim migrants seem to negotiate what is more important for them. Hence, *Eid-ul-Fitr* does not simply imply a continuity with the past, but actively claims that continuity exists by (re)enacting the ritual within the constraint of a transnational framework.

*Eid-ul-Fitr* is also a site and time in which Muslims from multiple backgrounds with their own local traditions wonder if their way of dressing is not entirely correct. They may question whether their previous way of praying is incorrect, their *'abāya* is too bright in contrast to other sisters from the Middle Eastern background, their *ḥijāb* is too short, whether they need to put on their *mukena* on top of their *ḥijāb* and *'abāya* or they need to wear (or to take off their) *niqāb* or to put on (or not) a *ḥijāb* to comply with the rulings of Islam in terms of women's dress. As Oestergaard (2009:6) suggests, prayer and outward appearances such as the way of dressing, can be used to position oneself in relation to others in the Muslim milieu. To have a beard or not, or the way Muslim women dress is always used as a marker to position oneself in relation to other

Muslims. For Huda, after residing in Mt Roskill for a few years, the decision to take off her *niqāb*, but not her *‘abāya* and *ḥijāb*, was necessary for her to be able to live comfortably in her new “home”. She thought that wearing *niqāb* was necessary when she lived in Somalia because with it she felt safer in the environment where all women<sup>14</sup> wear *niqāb* as she looked the same as other women. In her view *ḥijāb* is compulsory for Muslim women<sup>15</sup>, although *niqāb* is not. She even put off her decision to move to a suburb on the North Shore because Middle Eastern women (from a particular ethnicity) in the area tend to take off their *ḥijāb* once they live in this country. She explained that these women no longer wear *ḥijāb* because they were pressured by their family back home to wear it and had no proper understanding that wearing a *ḥijāb* is *fard* in Islam. For Aisha, adopting earthy coloured *‘abāya* and *ḥijāb* like Muslim women from the Middle East is more proper. Aisha who I first knew as an unmarried woman who was not wearing a *ḥijāb* has changed into the “new” Aisha who is married and dresses more like a Middle Eastern Muslim woman; it was such a transformation. It seems that these women are caught in discussions with themselves, consciously or not, or with others to figure out the discourse of correct practices. As Eickelman (1992:643-644) suggests, for religion to be objectified in people’s minds it must be discussed with an expert, like in the *tafsīr* class, or is enacted by people whose behaviour is seen as commendable and as more authentic, like those from the Middle East. Yet other Muslims who feel more comfortable in their own ethnic environment, are likely to organise their own communal prayer on this day. The Indonesian Muslims organised the *ṣalāt Eid-ul-Fitr* among their own community at a venue in the Auckland City this year and have been doing so for the past five or more years. For the people who prefer to attend this prayer, perhaps to some extent it released them from

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<sup>14</sup> The population in Somalia is Sunni Muslim. I asked a number of my Somali acquaintances about Muslims in Somalia and they answered that one hundred percent of Somalis are Muslims. They were used to an environment where everyone performs a uniform religious practice in Somalia. For them migrating to a different country outside Somalia means having to acknowledge multiple discourses and practices of Islam (and ways of non-Muslims). One of my acquaintances said that it was nearly impossible for people in Somalia to adhere or practice religion differently than most of the population due to sanctions imposed by the government.

<sup>15</sup> Bullock (2002), from her research with Canadian Muslim women, discusses multiple meanings of *ḥijāb* including from historical and modern stereotypes. Her book looks at the negative Western stereotypes rooted in the colonial past as well as offering a positive theory of veiling. Tarlo (2010), based on her ethnographic research, examines how different ideas of fashions, politics, faith, modesty and cultural diversity are used by young British Muslims to express their identities. See also El Guindi’s (1999) research on the veil and how it is connected with the notions of the self, the body and community. Shirazi’s (2001) and Ida’s (2008) work with particular focus on the role of *ḥijāb* in popular culture, including the use of the veil in films and advertisements.

some tensions of facing the multiple realities of religious adherence among Muslims in a transnational space, and from some dilemmas about questioning their prior discourse and practice. For some to deal with the predicament of negotiating multiple worlds – “our” way of being Muslims, “their” way of being Muslims and New Zealand way of being “the other” – maybe is confusing, painful, and may even be infuriating.

We were about to start the *ṣalāt Eid-ul-Fitr* and everyone in the room was standing up and facing the *qibla*. Children and teenagers not far from me were straightening their clothes and getting ready to perform prayer beside their mothers and families. Babies were in their strollers and young children were playing with toys that their mother had brought with them or playing with each other. When the prayer started as I heard the *imām* saying the al-Fātihah and *takbīr* one or two infants began to cry for the attention of their mothers who prayed next to them. Meanwhile, a toddler was quietly walking in front of me on the *sajadah* going the opposite direction from her mother who stood praying not far from me. She calmly picked her up and slowly put her down between her and her other daughter<sup>16</sup>. By the time the *ṣalāt* was closely approaching the end, more babies and toddlers were crying and calling for their mothers. The crying seemed to be contagious. Yet a few were still sleeping in their stroller or quietly playing with their toys when the prayer had ended. The mothers then were patiently soothing the crying infants and toddlers.

For some, perhaps, the above vignette does not convey an ideal picture of a circumstance in which learning can occur. Some may wonder why these mothers with young children and babies do not stay at home and leave their husbands and older children to have peace and quiet for prayer with other *jama‘ah*. Why do they devote time in the early morning to preparing their young children to go to *ṣalāt Eid-ul-Fitr* that is not compulsory, unlike the daily ritual prayer. For these women, *ṣalāt Eid-ul-Fitr* is an event in which their children can observe Muslims from diverse cultural backgrounds, including their own, pray to express gratitude to God and celebrate an important event of triumph of having conquered their own thirst, hunger and sexual desire in the day time and restraining from misconduct as well as striving to do good deeds<sup>17</sup>. For Aisha to take her five-year-old son to an event like *ṣalāt Eid-ul-Fitr* was

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<sup>16</sup> Sahih Muslim Book 4 Numbers 1107-1109 explain the permissibility of carrying children in prayer.

<sup>17</sup> Bamford and Lagattuta (2010) through their psychological experiments conclude that by the age of four, children with regular exposure to conversations, rituals or settings related to religious practices are able to comprehend the basic knowledge of God and of prayer.

crucial as it was an important event in which her son could learn about the meaning of *Eid-ul-Fitr*. Also, Aisha would not miss *ṣalāt Eid-ul-Fitr* for any reason whatsoever, including looking after her infant daughter at home, as she wanted to do her prayer with other Muslims. So taking her young daughter to the communal prayer was the only alternative available since no one could take care of her at home. Even women who could not pray due to having menstruation<sup>18</sup> that day were keen to come and sat in the back row watching others praying. Old women, who were unable to pray standing up, performed their prayer sitting down on chairs provided by the organising committee. Indeed, *ṣalāt Eid-ul-Fitr* is not compulsory yet Muslim women are eager to attend it. Reflecting on what she had seen on television<sup>19</sup> in her home regarding the meaning of *ṣalāt Eid-ul-Fitr* for Muslims, Aisha recalled two *suwar*<sup>20</sup> that were often conveyed in conjunction with the meaning of *ṣalāt Eid-ul-Fitr* as the event of triumph for Muslims who had successfully performed their fasting.

At the end of the prayer and *khutbah* all of us in the stadium shook hands and embraced friends, acquaintances and families while saying “*Eid Mubarak*”<sup>21</sup>. When the *ṣalāt* and *khutbah* had finished all the women came towards people they knew and congratulated each other on an eventful day. I embraced friends who sat beside me during *ṣalāt* and said “*Eid Mubarak*”. Meanwhile, my Indonesian friends were saying or replying either with “*minal 'aidin wal-faizin*”<sup>22</sup> which is incorrectly understood by many Indonesians as “forgive me for my physical and emotional (wrongdoings)” or with “*ma’af lahir batin*”, which has the meaning “forgive me for my physical and emotional (wrongdoings)”. Indonesians have been misled for many years for believing that “*minal 'aidin wal-faizin*” is the Arabic phrase for “*ma’af lahir bathin*”. Only very recently people are trying to bring back the true meaning of the phrase. Before and just after the *Eid-ul-Fitr* I received several emails and postings on Facebook regarding the

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<sup>18</sup> While *du’a* is permissible at all times, it is prohibited for a woman to pray while she is having her menstruation. See Rasmussen (1991) for a discussion on prayers and menstruation among Muslim women from anthropological perspectives.

<sup>19</sup> Like some migrants in Auckland, Aisha installed a satellite disk that enables a long-distance TV reception at her house. In her case, her home TV is able to pick up programmes from the Middle East. Some Indonesian migrants with their satellite disk installed can view TV channels from Indonesia.

<sup>20</sup> The two *suwar* she mentioned were *sūrah Al A’la* and *sūrah Al Ghasiyah*. Both *suwar* explain about how good deeds and restraining oneself from misconduct are rewarded on the Day of Judgement (CCRC n.d.).

<sup>21</sup> The phrase translates into English as “blessed festival”, and can be paraphrased as “may you enjoy a blessed festival”. Muslims wish each other *Eid Mubarak* after performing the *Eid* prayer.

<sup>22</sup> Its actual meaning is “may you be part of the people who return to purity and part of the people who are granted glory”.

matter. Meanwhile, with Muslims from South Asia and the Middle East my “Eid Mubarak” greeting was always replied by another “Eid Mubarak” greeting. For these Muslims there is no obligation for them to ask forgiveness at a time of *Eid-ul-Fitr* because asking forgiveness for one’s misconduct or past-misspoken words should be done immediately after such misdemeanours, unlike with Indonesian and Malaysian Muslims.

I quickly went toward an old Indonesian woman who sat on a chair, whom my family and I consider as family, a “mother” at home away from “home”. I extended my hand and clasped her hand and brought it back to my lower cheek (*cium tangan*) to show my respect. She embraced me while whispering in my ear to come to her daughter’s house with my husband and children for a festive breakfast to celebrate the *Eid*, which I gladly accepted. As I was about to go to look for my shoes that had been put aside with other shoes and sandals alongside the stadium wall I noticed *ustadha* Zalika was talking to a couple of Middle Eastern women who greeted her. I went over to greet her. Yet I could not find Zahra among thousands of worshippers that day. She had told me when I visited her house that she usually prays at the stadium for the *Eid* since Masjid e Umar only caters for men *jama’ah* for *Eid* prayer. For Aisha, who usually prays at the stadium with her husband and children, *Eid* this year was a celebration in her native village back home with her mother, children, brothers, sisters, nieces and nephews. While for some Muslims celebrating the *Eid* means celebrating the festivity with friends, for many South Asian Muslims the celebration is a family event where they gather with their family and relatives.

Communal prayer at an event like *Eid-ul-Fitr*, in all its guises, has become a stage for imparting religious practices and traditions to a new generation as well as for affirming one’s own moral self. To be a good Muslim and to lead one’s children to become good Muslims means to negotiate within the current migration context of dealing with the wider society and with the multiethnic Muslim community. In this case *Eid-ul-Fitr* acquires new meanings within transnational setting. Celebrating *Eid-ul-Fitr* does not simply mean continuing with the past. Rather it is (re)enacting the ritual within the constraint of a transnational framework. Also, communal prayer is an arena in which rooted traditions of Islam from homelands are confronted with the realisation that there are other ways of practising Islam. But which ritual format is more appropriate and correct? Does *takbīr* in *ṣalāt Eid-ul-Fitr* need to be recited

before the al-Fātihah like “the practice of the Arabs and the Indonesians” or after the al-Fātihah like “the practice of the Fijians”? Is it proper to ask forgiveness after *ṣalāt Eid-ul-Fitr* as a ritual or more appropriate to do it immediately after misconduct because it shows intent and true meaning? Which way of dressing is more appropriate for Muslims — long or short *ḥijāb*, colourful or plain earthy colour *‘abāya*, with or without *niqāb*, with or without *mukena* for *ṣalāt*, with or without a beard? Indeed, ritual has become a site in which traditional and global interpretations of Islam collide, where belief and practice are negotiated, defined and (re)defined. Some, no doubt, attempt to draw thicker and more impenetrable boundaries between “our” way of being Muslims, “their” way of being Muslims and the New Zealand way of being “the other”. But some others may seek solutions by critically examining their old way of practising Islam and allowing greater accommodation in a larger community of Muslims and the wider society. On a smaller scale of community engagement, like in *madāris* in Mt Roskill, the sense of “us” and “them” in terms of religious practices is also very much felt and experienced.



**Figure 8: Men walking to Masjid e Umar for *Zuhur* communal prayer. A number of cars are parked on the mosque grounds as the occupants wait inside for the prayer.**

## Schools for Muslim Children

I came too early to Afifa's house that morning. Our appointment was at ten o'clock but as there was no traffic jam on the Harbour Bridge on my way to Mt Roskill from the North Shore I arrived in front of Afifa's house not long after a quarter past nine. The usual traffic congestion on city bound motorways every morning made me wary of the traffic and I decided to drive to Mt Roskill as soon as I had dropped my children off to school. I did not mind, though, waiting in the car with my book, a cup of tea and field notes to keep me occupied. It was better than being stuck in the traffic and arriving late.

While I was writing up my field notes I noticed from my car wing mirror a woman in a black *'abāya*, *ḥijāb* and *niqāb* going out from the direction of Afifa's house. But I was in doubt whether this woman was Afifa as I had not met her in person. She was talking to a girl dressed in a *ḥijāb* who was pushing a stroller with a toddler inside and walking towards the main road. I thought there was a possibility that she might be the woman I would like to see today because Aisha, who also knew her, told me that Afifa was wearing a *niqāb*.

When I went to Afifa's house at ten o'clock, the house was empty and all the windows were closed. This confirmed my initial conjecture that the woman in a black *niqāb* was Afifa. So I waited in the car until she came back. She came back home with her son in the stroller. When we finally met she apologetically explained why she had had to go out before ten o'clock to take her daughter to see a doctor and then to school. She thought that since her daughter was complaining about her state of health that morning, she would stay at home. Instead, her daughter pleaded to go to school to which she agreed only after her doctor gave her the nod.

As soon as she opened the front door and invited me to sit on a sofa in her family room, she took off her *niqāb* but not her *ḥijāb*. I could see her beautiful face. She smiled a lot during our meeting. With an open gesture and amiable attitude she answered my queries while her young son observed our conversation from a couch nearby while playing and skipping from one couch to the other.

Like Huda's, Nabila's and Aisha's children, Afifa's children have been educated both at secular schools and *madāris* (plural of *madrassa*). Afifa's daughter

who was in senior year at a primary school also attended a *madrassa* every afternoon. Her son went to a different *madrassa* close to their home on a daily basis except weekends while in the morning he went to a kindergarten. Meanwhile, Huda's, Nabila's and Aisha's children were studying at different *madrassa* to the ones that Afifa's children went to, but they were all enrolled in the same public school<sup>1</sup>. There are at least five or six *madāris* around the Mt Roskill neighbourhood. Some are specifically established to cater for children from certain ethnic groups, while others are used by multiethnic Muslim children. For Muslims living in Mt Roskill public schools and *madāris* have become the most significant places of education for their children. Zahra told me that aiming for worldly education as well as religious education was what she pursued for her children. Other Muslim women with whom I spoke also mentioned the importance of religious education in the midst of the ubiquitous secular schools that their children have to attend<sup>2</sup>. It seems that for these women *madrassa* works complementarily with public school in providing a comprehensive education for their children outside the home.

In this chapter I explore the ways education becomes a site in which my informants constantly negotiate and seek to define themselves as Muslims within their current contexts. As Muslims in a transnational space within the larger non-Muslim community, they engage with multiple discourses and practices of Islam as well as disparate values of the non-Muslims. What seems to be a commonplace educational tool in which lessons are imparted in a public school becomes a point of negotiation between Muslim parents and their children's public school. Also, I would like to convey how gender-segregation is contested and practised in a multi-gender school and *madrassa*. The chapter focuses firstly on *madrassa* as a quintessential form of education for Muslim children, particularly in terms of socialising religious discourse and the embodiment of bodily practices through which Muslim mothers endeavour to impart appropriate understandings of particular discourses and practices. I also hope to demonstrate that for these women there are some issues in the secular school that are reconfigured and redefined while others provide no room for change. These issues,

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<sup>1</sup> My informants' children who were enrolled at a primary school went to the same public school but their younger children went to different kindergartens.

<sup>2</sup> Only very few Muslim families that I know of have their children home-schooled with the New Zealand curriculum and religious education taught simultaneously. See Westra and Jansen (2009) for stories of Asian Muslims in New Zealand, including a story on a mother who has her children home-schooled (2009:88-89).



## ***Madrassa***

*“They are the social sites for the reproduction of Islamic orthodoxy. Hence, to say that the ideological orientation of madrassa education is conservative is to state the obvious: they are supposed to be conservative, as their very raison d’être is to preserve the integrity of the tradition” (Ahmad n.d.:102).*

When I visited Zahra, she told me that having younger children who have not enrolled in a public school was easier than when they have already been exposed to other values outside the home. Keeping them on the right path of Islam, especially after they enter the secular school system, is a much more complex problem. That was why Zahra preferred to have her children sent to kindergarten later rather than earlier so they would be imbued as much as possible with what their parents teach them at home about Islam. However, for other Muslim parents like Aisha, Huda, Nabila and Afifa a *madrassa* or an after-school Islamic education has been part of their children’s daily lives as soon as their children were old enough to go to kindergarten.

Having children who were born in this country or who migrated when they were still very young, Muslim parents seek to weave their pre-immigration past into their children’s transnational space. They try to knit the reality of living in a secular country with their homeland experiences. Through the construction of everyday lives and educational experiences of *madrassa* and public school, parents create for themselves and their children an environment that could sustain their longing for religiously and culturally embedded lives.

In this section I explore *madrassa* as a Muslim space in which children’s religious belief and practice are enforced outside the home. The choice of *madrassa* reflects how religious authority is constructed and empowered by the formality and schedule of the school, the ethnicity of the teacher, the language used in the classroom, and the culturally based curriculum. There seems to be a tendency to pick a *madrassa* with a Middle Eastern teacher or a teacher from one’s own ethnicity with a curriculum close to home. Gender segregation practised in *madrassa* is culturally appropriate although has little significance for my informants.

For Aisha, Afifa, Huda and Nabila *madrassa* has become an important place in which their children learn a myriad of religious practices and knowledge. It is here that their children formally learn to read the Arabic alphabet and to recite the Qur’an with

*tajwīd*, memorise various *suwar* of the Qur'an and *du'a* for different occasions, learn the history of the prophets, study the basic knowledge of *akhlaq*<sup>3</sup> and *fiqh*, and perform Islamic practices like *wuḍū* and *ṣalāt*.

Aisha's, Afifa's, Huda's and Nabila's children attend different *madrassa* although all of these *madāris* are located in the Mt Roskill neighbourhood. A few of the *madāris* are organised and managed formally, just like a proper school. They have good websites in which Muslim parents can browse their curriculum, rules and regulations. Some *madāris* rule that their students must wear a prescribed uniform of a *kurta*<sup>4</sup> with a suitable *topi*<sup>5</sup> for boys or a *ḥijāb* and an *'abāya* for girls, while others, although not stated explicitly, also require the participants to don proper Muslim clothing. Other *madāris* in Mt Roskill are run informally and traditionally just like some other *madāris* attached to mosques back home in Muslim majority countries. In no way do I regard the "informal" *madāris* to be less equipped in terms of the teacher's Islamic knowledge and the school's facilities; rather they may not have clearly written rules and regulations, and do not have uniforms or a written student's progress report. Yet the parents of the "informal" *madrassa* can see their children's progress by witnessing their children's improved knowledge and skill in religious discourse and practice, like their ability in memorising and reciting several *suwar* of the Qur'an and *du'a*, and in performing *wuḍū* and *ṣalāt*. It is worth noting that the focus of *madāris* that Afifa's, Aisha's and Nabila's children attend is on reading the Qur'an and memorising *suwar* and not on writing, besides understanding Islamic basic knowledge and practising *wuḍū* and *ṣalāt*. As many of their participants are non-native Arabic speakers, understanding of what the children read in Arabic, in a *sūrah* for example, does not come naturally to the children.

Comparing the *madrassa* that her daughter and son attended, Afifa told me that she actually would like to move her daughter from the *madrassa* she has enrolled her in for the past several years to a more recently set-up *madrassa* where her son went. Her son's *madrassa* is the one that we would call formal in terms of its organisation and management while her daughter attends an informal one. Like many other *madāris* in Mt Roskill these two *madāris* are gender segregated. The one that her daughter goes

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<sup>3</sup> *Akhlaq* is an Arabic term, which means the practice of virtue, manners and morality.

<sup>4</sup> *Kurta* is traditional clothing from South Asia in the form of a long loose-fitting shirt just above or below the knees. It is traditionally worn with a loose-fitting trouser but now can be worn with a pair of jeans.

<sup>5</sup> *Topi* is Hindi for hat.

to is for female students only, whereas her son's *madrassa* caters for both boys and girls of school age up to teenage years but boys and girls learn in different classrooms. Yet she was rather reluctant to move her daughter because her daughter has good friends from the public school who go to the same *madrassa* and shifting her to another *madrassa* would mean losing dear friends who can support her daughter. Although Afifa could see the progress that her daughter made in this *madrassa*, the informality of the management seems to lack the proper nature of a "school" and its informality seems to undermine religious authority.

In one of our many phone calls I asked Aisha why she had enrolled her son to a particular *madrassa* since I knew that there were other *madāris* in the neighbourhood. The main reason for Aisha and her husband choosing this *madrassa* was the fact that it is taught by a native speaker of Arabic. I enquired further why they chose this particular *madrassa* and not another, a larger *madrassa* close by. She said that her husband did not approve of the other *madrassa* because from what he had heard from other Muslim parents this *madrassa* has a number of children who behave improperly during the class, besides the fact that the *madrassa* is attended by many more students than the one where Aisha's son is enrolled. Aisha's husband was reluctant to send his son to this *madrassa* as he did not want his son to be influenced by the bad manners and misconduct of other children in this *madrassa*.

For Aisha and her husband<sup>6</sup>, a native Arabic speaker is unquestionably salient to provide the "right" religious education for their son. Arabic fluency in a teacher of non-Arab descent is not sufficient for them as a religious authority figure for their son to look up to and learn from. Although Aisha's husband is also most concerned about the propriety of other children's conduct at the other *madrassa*, the Arabic native speaker quality of the teacher takes priority for him and his wife. It seems that this couple believes that as a native Arab, the teacher has embodied a more profound Islamic stature than other teachers of non-Arab ethnicity. Indeed, the authority of Islamic scholars for Aisha and her husband comes largely from the teacher's religious knowledge. But merely being able to recite the Qur'an or having an educational religious background from a country other than the Middle East is not good enough for this couple to entrust their son to. Being an Arab<sup>7</sup> who is educated in the Islamic

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<sup>6</sup> Aisha's husband is a Middle Eastern Muslim.

<sup>7</sup> It does not necessarily mean that an Arab is one who comes from Saudi Arabia but this person originally comes from an Arabic speaking country.

spiritual and educational centre<sup>8</sup> of the Middle East is paramount for Aisha and her husband. They seem to have internalised a perspective that regards non-Arabs as being on the lower end of a centre-periphery axis in the Muslim world (see Eickelman & Piscatori 1990b:12-15, Kresse 2010:82). In other words, Arab ethnicity and Middle Eastern educational background appear as more “trustworthy” in terms of providing the best possible Islamic education for their son. I suspect that for Middle Eastern and non-Arab Muslims to learn religion from a Middle Eastern teacher is plausible, whereas the contrary, that is for Middle Eastern Muslims to study religion from a non-Arab, would be unlikely<sup>9</sup>. Yet such conjuncture needs to be investigated further. At the moment from what I observe in Auckland a Middle Eastern religious teacher usually attracts Muslim students from diverse ethnicities, including Arabs, to learn while a non-Arab teacher has no Middle Eastern students except students from his/her own ethnicity or other non-Arabs. I would suggest that this has something to do with the Middle East being regarded as the centre of the Muslim world where Islam originated. Thus religious authority is constructed and empowered by the ethnicity of the teacher in order to search for “correct religious interpretations”.

A few *madāris* in Mt Roskill are attended by Muslim children from a single ethnicity, while others are more mixed. The single ethnicity *madāris* are usually managed and taught by a teacher or persons from the same cultural background. For example, some Somali parents prefer to enrol their children in a weekly Somali *madrassa* or some Indonesians of Arab descent favour the weekly Indonesian *madrassa* over other *madāris*. Meanwhile other Somali and Indonesian parents choose a daily multi-ethnic *madrassa* because they can see different advantages that their children can gain from these mixed-culture *madāris*. The preference for one *madrassa* and not the other may be based on the language used in class, the cultural environment, the culturally based curriculum, teacher with Arabic native fluency and/or the number of times the class is held every week. Some parents, like Huda, prefer to send their children to a daily, Monday to Friday, programme rather than a weekly class. She explained that she used to go to a *madrassa* every afternoon when she was young in her country. So in the morning she went to a public school and in the afternoon she

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<sup>8</sup> See Eickelman and Piscatori (1990b:12-15) for discussion on centre and periphery in terms of sacred place for Muslims.

<sup>9</sup> It is worth noting here that such circumstances do not happen in Friday prayer at a mosque. Most mosques in Auckland are managed by South Asian Muslims, many with South Asian *imāms*, but Middle Eastern Muslims go to these mosques for prayer.

learned at a local *madrassa*. Hence she wanted her daughters to have a similar schooling experience to what she had had back home.

The imagined pasts of parents' own childhoods in their home country is used to inform and shape contemporary circumstances. As Cohen (1985:99) explains "the past is being used here as a resource, in a number of ways. The manner in which the past is invoked is strongly indicative of the kind of circumstances which makes such a 'past-reference' salient". For Huda a happy childhood experience of daily *madrassa* education coupled with a secular education, and acquiring religious knowledge and practices along the way has shaped her into a pious Muslim woman. And she felt that such experience could also have the same affect on her daughters in the hope that they become devout Muslims. As Ganguly (1992:36) suggests "narratives of the past inflect the construction of identity in the present in various other ways". Huda's past has also affected how she perceives Muslim identity construction for her children that may be ascribed and affirmed by attending a daily *madrassa*.

For Nabila, a traditional *madrassa* taught by a teacher of the same ethnicity as her seems to suit her son better. With the language of instruction in English and her native tongue the weekly *madrassa* is sufficient in her view to familiarise her son with Islamic teachings and practices in the way that she was accustomed to back home. The way Arabic letters are introduced to children, for example, may differ from one ethnicity to the other. Indonesian, Malay, Singaporean and Muslims from Brunei Darussalam use a similar teaching method to teach Arabic letters for beginners, based on a system first introduced in Indonesia in a six volume text called *Iqra': Cara cepat belajar membaca Al-Qur'an (Iqrā'<sup>10</sup>: Fast technique to learn how to read the Qur'an)* invented by an Indonesian *ustadh Ḥajjī'<sup>11</sup>* As'ad Humam (1986), Malaysian and other Southeast Asian Qur'an educators have followed suit and use the same method (Humam 2005:iii-vi)<sup>12</sup>. Meanwhile the *madrassa* that Afifa's son is enrolled in uses a different teaching method to familiarise new beginners with Arabic letters that is close to the way Qur'an is taught in Afifa's home country. Cohen (1985:86) argues that "the imported structure provides a new medium for the recognition and reassertion of the community's boundaries" and "the reconstruction of 'tradition' and the cultural

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<sup>10</sup> *Iqrā'* is an Arabic term meaning "read"

<sup>11</sup> *Ḥajjī'* is an honorific title given to a Muslim who has successfully completed the *Ḥajj* (annual pilgrimage) to Mecca.

<sup>12</sup> See Gade (2004) for a full account of how *Iqra'* technique is used in Makassar, Indonesia.

boundary through the use of symbolic devices – specifically by re-rendering structures and forms of behaviour which have originated elsewhere in such a way that they are made congruent with the proclivities of indigenous cognition”. Thus, the *madrassa* for these mothers confirms and strengthens their social identity and sense of social location (1985:50). The remaking of the past, then, serves as a tool to reaffirm one’s identity as a Muslim of a certain ethnic group. As D’Alisera (2004:136) points out, the challenge for migrant parents is to construct “an alternative context in which their children – at least so they hope – can absorb what parents believe to be appropriate understandings” of their identity. Islamic education in Muslim communities in the West, as echoed by Ahmad (2009:51), is deemed to be a means for second-generation children to preserve their religious and cultural identity. In Nabila’s and Afifa’s case, the *madrassa* they chose for their children reflect how they as parents want their children to grasp a certain Muslim identity that they believe is more suitable for their children.

One day I received a call from Aisha and we talked for an hour. She told me how happy she was that the *madrassa* that her son regularly attends was celebrating his achievement by having a party. He had finished reading *juz’ amma*, which is the first milestone of reading and memorising the whole Qur’an. The party was held especially for him and three other children who had also achieved the same milestone. Although all the mothers were asked to bring a plate of food to share, Aisha was keen to cook more than one dish. The *madrassa* room was decorated with colourful balloons and ribbons. She said her son was very happy with the party and his accomplishment. As Strauss (1992:14) suggests, life experiences are remembered along with feelings associated with them. Powerful feelings that are associated with specific life experiences like learning to read the Qur’an that precede and also follow from practice (Holland in Strauss 1992:14) will motivate the persons. Hence the party (to celebrate achievement in Qur’anic reading) and the happy feelings associated with it would definitely motivate Aisha’s son to learn to read the Qur’an, in particular, and to gain knowledge of the Islamic cultural system in general. Indeed, the goal of some *madāris* in Mt Roskill is to produce a *ḥāfidh*, one who has completely memorised the Qur’an (see for example Masjid e Umar n.d.). To achieve this aim that may take years to complete such positive experiences during training in the *madrassa* then become salient.

Ensuring proper gender segregation is practised in many of the *madāris* in Mt Roskill. These *madāris* simultaneously provide education for both male and female students, but they are catered for in different buildings or in the same building but in different rooms. Ahmad (2009:22) points out from his research in Bangladesh that *purdah* is enforced in *madāris* to protect the good reputation of the female students. *Purdah* (curtains in Urdu) that refers to various concepts ranging from segregation between sexes to women's dress (Huq 2010:104) may entail the practice of seclusion of women in their home, separation and limitation of public and private sites for women and men outside well-defined categories<sup>13</sup>, to veiling (Papanek 1971, 1973). The system of secluding women in terms of physical segregation of living space is widely used in much of South Asia (Papanek 1971:517, 1973:289)<sup>14</sup>. Strict *purdah* observance may be strongly present in parts of the Middle East and Africa (VerEecke 1989:59) but it is particularly weak in Indonesia (Papanek 1973:305). *Purdah*, which is observed before the onset of puberty (Brieland & Brieland 1957:348, Papanek 1971:519, 1973:289), is very much linked to the concept of a family's *izzat* (honour) (Weiss 1985:867, VerEecke 1989:59), chastity<sup>15</sup> (Papanek 1973:299, Salway et. al. 2005:320) and shame (VerEecke 1989:59). Also, for many *madāris* in which *purdah* is enforced, physical separation between female and male students and observance of Muslim dress for both genders are particularly important to preserve high standards of female honour and modesty. However, for the women with whom I spoke gender segregation at *madrassa* and public school is of little concern to them. It only becomes salient when certain circumstances arise in which gender segregation seems to be paramount, for example in an adult (or teenager) Islamic class or a swimming lesson where they feel that there is no compromise for a mixed gender space. I would like to assert here that the practice of *purdah* is very much influenced by traditional values of what constitute proper "mixing and blending" between gender (Mahmood 2005:100). Mahmood suggests that the rules of conduct that govern interactions between men and women who are not related by immediate kin ties are arguably complex (2005:100-113). There are even disputes between '*ulamā*' on the propriety and impropriety of

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<sup>13</sup> Muslim *purdah* restrictions do not apply to the immediate kin ties but only outside them (Papanek 1973:289)

<sup>14</sup> The system is not exclusive to the Muslim community in South Asian countries but also exists among various Hindu groups (Papanek 1971:517, 1973:289)

<sup>15</sup> There are several verses in the Qur'an pertaining to modesty and chastity that are usually linked to the concept of *purdah*, namely *sūrah* An-Nur verses 30-31.

conduct and mixing between genders. Events attended by Muslim young and adult men and women in Auckland, including religious meetings, are not always gender segregated. Some are gender mixed. Public physical segregation (or not) between genders significantly depends on the organising committee of these events.

The fact that there are a number of *madāris* in Mt Roskill with their own different features in terms of language used in the class, the ethnic origin of the teacher and the management, and culturally based curriculum provides Muslim parents in the area the opportunity to choose the *madrassa* that in their view is most suitable for their children. The choice of *madrassa* reflects how religious authority is constructed and empowered by the formality and schedule of the school, the ethnicity of the teacher, the language used in the classroom, and the culturally based curriculum. *Madāris* in Mt Roskill have become sites in which multiple discourses and understandings about Islam and how to learn Islamic knowledge and practice are defined and negotiated. It is in this space that Muslim parents seek the “correct religious interpretations” for their children. For their part, the providers and management of the *madāris* try to meet their traditional values of what a *madrassa* should be and how Islamic discourses and practices should be imparted to the Muslim children in the community. In some way or another a sense of homeland is constructed and authenticated through learning in a *madrassa*. On the other hand Muslim parents in the neighbourhood seek to impart Islamic knowledge and practices in ways they know best. Romanticised or imagined past of the homeland is enacted through sending their children to a traditionally and culturally based *madrassa*. They hope that their children will embrace much of what is imparted although there is no guarantee. At least at present, they feel that the religiously symbolic shelter of *madrassa* could protect their children from the unfamiliar “temptations” of the outside forces of “the other” around them. Yet Muslim families do not live in isolation. Many of their children go to public schools and like it or not they have to deal with secular values that seem alien to them.

## *Public school*

*“In order to attract young people and their parents, schools therefore have to develop different strategies and profiles... Some schools develop a multicultural profile, whereas others rely heavily on more specific and elaborated pedagogies” (Johansson 2008: 374).*

On a Sunday afternoon after I had attended the *tafsīr* class at a house not far from Masjid e Umar I drove to where Huda has been living for a number of years. When I knocked at the glass ranch slider at the back of the house I could see her with her daughters giving a bath to their lovely well-fed yellow cat. The sliding door was opened a little so when I said my *salām* they could hear me. Huda hurriedly greeted me while at the same time grabbing a rectangular black shawl and wrapping it around her head without a pin. Wearing a shapeless long pink blouse<sup>16</sup> over a loose long skirt in a big abstract African design that did not really seem to match her shirt in colour and print design, yet looked fine on her, Huda asked me to sit on the couch. She told her daughters to finish what they were doing and to give the cat a good dry with a towel. Not long afterwards her young daughters, who were both wearing printed cotton skirts played together on their terrace and both talked in English. In the privacy of their home these girls were comfortable in their summer dresses without *hujub*. In the middle of our conversation Huda’s eldest daughter came into the room where we sat. She was asking her mother in their native language for permission to go to her university friend’s house to study. I noticed that she was wearing a brown patterned *hijāb* with a dark brown loose-fitting long skirt and a milky cream long shapeless blouse. She warmly greeted me in fluent English and asked me about my research.

In this section I explore how Muslim mothers in Mt Roskill negotiate their way through secular policies of public schools. School uniform and music, among other issues, take centre stage in this debate. Religious belief and practice are defined, negotiated and (re)defined to adapt to the reality of living in an urban transnational landscape. On the other side of the fence, the secular school tries to accommodate religious practices of its Muslim students as much as possible. Some issues are negotiable, like school uniform, *halāl* food and gender segregated swimming lessons,

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<sup>16</sup> The long blouse was about knee-length so it covered the buttocks.

while others, like music, are not. The core of this section is that being a pious Muslim works in two directions simultaneously. Not only that they engage in relationships with the wider non-Muslim society and seek to weave their religious belief and practice into the dominant secular values, but they also need to negotiate with all the diversity of ethnic, cultural and doctrinal interpretations within the Muslim community. Public school then becomes a space in which both forces of multiethnic Muslims and secular values of the dominant society collide.

While readjusting her loosened *hijāb* from time to time, Huda told me how she was considering different alternatives of where her young daughter would go next year for her intermediate school. She was keen to send her daughter to a certain public intermediate school in Mt Roskill. But Huda was quite uncertain about this at the beginning, although her daughter would have her good Muslim friends from the same primary school attending this particular intermediate school. Her concern was based on the fact that this school was known to have mostly “white” students<sup>17</sup>. Indeed, this school was well known in Mt Roskill for its academic achievement and good reputation. Yet she was hesitant because the school management and its students might not understand her daughter’s needs and priorities as a Muslim student as they were not accustomed to having Muslim students. In the end, after talking to other Muslim parents, she decided to send her daughter to this school. Apparently through her conversation with other Muslim parents she found out that two years before, a number of Muslim students from her daughter’s primary school had gone to this intermediate school after graduating from the primary school. It reassured her that the school now has Muslim children as their students so she was convinced that they would meet the needs of their Muslim students. She also made her decision on the fact that this school allowed Muslim female students to wear a long skirt and *hijāb* as their uniform and not like other schools that only accepted a pair of long trousers and *hijāb* as Muslim female uniform. She would not be happy about having her daughter wearing a pair of long trousers in public especially in a mixed gender school. Fortunately the school she intended her daughter to go to could meet their need.

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<sup>17</sup> The majority of its students are of European ethnicity according to the Education Review Office website (2010) in contrast to the students in her daughter’s primary school that is not predominantly European. I am not sure whether she conflates “being white” as “being non-Muslim”. But the fact is that this intermediate school is predominantly European in terms of its students’ ethnicity composition.

For Huda wearing a *hijāb* and a long skirt to school for her daughter are pertinent as they represent her daughter's piety as a young Muslim. Wearing a *hijāb* that is *fard* is not sufficient to convey an embedded pious body. For Huda and other women with whom I spoke a *hijāb* has to be complemented by a shapeless long skirt or *'abāya* to be considered proper attire for Muslim women and young women. As Huda's daughter would be a teenager when she entered intermediate school, wearing a shapeless dress and a *hijāb* became a focal point of identifying herself as a good Muslim. Indeed as posited by Tarlo (2010:5) "there is no such thing as a clear-cut category of Muslim dress". What is worn by Muslims in Bangladesh, for example *saris* or *shalwar kameez*, are also popular amongst Hindus and Sikhs in India and Pakistan. Also, what constitutes Muslim dress for Muslims from certain parts of the world may be classified as "un-Islamic" by other Muslims from different corners of the globe (2010:7). Yet Arthur (1999:1) elucidates "while a person's level of religiosity can not be objectively perceived, symbols such as clothing are used as evidence that s/he is on the 'right and true path'". As the central point for religious understanding of Islamic dress is the Qur'an and *ahādīth* and given that contemporary understandings of Muslim dress for women adopted by Muslim women to a certain degree are based on the Qur'an and *hadīth*, it is worth taking note of these *suwar* and *hadīth*. *Sūrah* An-Noor (24:30-31)<sup>18</sup> conveys a command for Muslim women to guard their modesty and to cover their bosoms by drawing a cloth (*khimar*) across the bodice. While *sūrah* Al-Ahzab (33:59)<sup>19</sup> is more concerned with covering women's bodies so that they will be more proper (see also Tarlo 2010:8, El Guindi 1999:141, Bullock 2002:51, 232). *Hadīth* Abu Dawud (Book 32 Number 4092) reveals a story of the Prophet who encouraged the daughter of Abu Bakr (the Prophet's companion) not to show her body except her face and hands<sup>20</sup>. Different websites on Muslim women's

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<sup>18</sup> Say to the believing men that they cast down their looks and guard their private parts; that is purer for them; surely Allah is Aware of what they do. And say to the believing women that they cast down their looks and guard their private parts and do not display their ornaments except what appears thereof, and let them wear their head-coverings over their bosoms, and not display their ornaments except to their husbands or their fathers, or the fathers of their husbands, or their sons, or the sons of their husbands, or their brothers, or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons, or their women, or those whom their right hands possess, or the male servants not having need (of women), or the children who have not attained knowledge of what is hidden of women; and let them not strike their feet so that what they hide of their ornaments may be known; and turn to Allah all of you, O believers! so that you may be successful (Shakir in CCRC n.d.)

<sup>19</sup> O Prophet! Say to your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers that they let down upon them their over-garments; this will be more proper, that they may be known, and thus they will not be given trouble; and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful (Shakir in CCRC n.d.).

<sup>20</sup> Narrated Aisha, Ummul Mu'minin:

dress code state that (1) clothing must cover the entire body with only the hands and face remaining visible, (2) the material used must not be so transparent that one can see through it, (3) the clothing must hang loose so that the shape of the body is not apparent, (4) the clothing must not resemble man's clothing, (5) the design of the clothing must not resemble the clothing of the non-believing women, (6) the design must not consist of bold designs which attract attention, and (7) clothing should not be worn for the sole purpose of gaining reputation or increasing one's status in society (Islamic Boutique n.d., Hijaab n.d.). Interestingly, the dress code is usually conveyed in relation to the *suwar* and *hadīth* mentioned above in which no specific designs of clothing are prescribed<sup>21</sup>.

Preference for a long shapeless skirt over a pair of pants for Muslim women has sparked a few controversies in other countries. Wearing "unsuitable" clothing in public has made headlines in different news media across the world. For example, a group of Somali Muslim female workers in New Brighton was dismissed because they refused to wear their company's uniform of pants and shirt to work (Serres 2008), or women in Aceh, Indonesia were caught by *sharī'ah* police for wearing tight pants and were given long skirts even though they all were fully clothed with a *hijāb* (ChinaDaily 2010)<sup>22</sup>. Or a report on a Sudanese journalist, Lubna Hussein, who was fined by a court for wearing pants in public (Wagner 2009) despite the fact that she was not wearing a fully covered *hijāb*<sup>23</sup>. Being dressed in a long shapeless skirt is not only considered proper for some Muslim women but is imperative. It seems to some, individuals or states, wearing a long loose-fitting skirt has become as important as, if not more crucial than, wearing a *hijāb*.

In the case of Huda, influenced by her traditional practices of Islam and her own culture she has been looking for schools for her daughters that could provide for and satisfy her needs and those of her daughters as pious Muslims. Faced with a multicultural environment including the rise of the Muslim population in Mt Roskill, the schools in this vicinity try to provide a better service for Muslim students and their

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Asma', daughter of Abu Bakr, once came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) wearing thin/transparent clothes. The Apostle of Allah (peace be upon him) turned his attention to her. He said: O Asma', when a woman reaches the age of menstruation, it does not suit her that she displays her parts of body except this and this, and he pointed to his face and hands (CCRC n.d., see also Bullock 2002:232).

<sup>21</sup> See discussion about these *suwar* in relation to *hijāb* and *jilbāb* in Ruby (2006).

<sup>22</sup> The new rules of prohibition of wearing pants in public for Muslim women only applied in Aceh, a devoutly Islamic district, and not in other parts of Indonesia.

<sup>23</sup> The point I would like to make here is that she was fined for not wearing a long skirt but was not penalised for not wearing a "proper" *hijāb*.

parents by accommodating some Islamic practices into their policy. Appropriate school uniforms for female students is one issue that some Muslim parents are not willing to compromise on and some schools in Mt Roskill are prepared to accommodate this. For Huda, re-drawing Islamic boundaries to allow greater accommodation in a larger community, particularly in terms of school uniform, is impossible, although she could accept the fact of a mixed-gender public school for her daughters.

Meanwhile, for some other Muslims “proper” Islamic dress may not involve wearing a long skirt. Being fully clothed in a pair of long baggy pants or a *shalwar kameez* with a *hijāb* for other Muslims is sufficient to meet the Islamic dress code for women. I remember seeing two Muslim female students of Middle Eastern origin at my daughter’s school a number of times who were dressed in a school uniform of a pair of long trousers and a *hijāb* and they have been wearing long pants to school since they were in intermediate school. Yet for Huda her choice of dress forms part of her public enactment of a pious disposition, her religiosity and her understanding of religious virtue that revolves around female modesty and submissiveness to God (Schulz 2007:253). Indeed, the lives of transnationals are marked by accommodations to social norms and religious duties as well as by affirmation of rooted traditions of homeland that are always hovering above their heads wherever they go. As Ruth Mandel (1989:45) explains “the decision to wear a scarf or not to wear one impinges on the encompassing social relations as it expresses specific preference for affiliation and differentiation with or from social groups; it states decisively where one stands on an ‘us versus them’ continuum”. In light of this account I would like to assert that for Huda the decision to wear a *hijāb* and a shapeless long skirt convey her preference for her affiliation to belong to a “certain” group of Muslims and for her differentiation from “other” groups of Muslims and the larger society of non-Muslims. The ways she and her daughters wear their clothes signify not only their relations with their religious views but also their region of origin (1989:30).

In my conversations with Afifa and Zahra they mentioned their concern that music was used extensively at their children’s schools and was considered an important learning tool. Not only were children taught to learn to play at least one musical instrument but singing and music CDs were utilised as a medium of learning for teaching other subjects. Afifa said that so far her daughter has been able to

“escape” from music lessons by telling her teacher that she has no desire to play a musical instrument which was agreed to by her teacher without too many questions. For Zahra whose children were in their early stage of school life in which music was used practically every day at their schools, she felt helpless about repudiating music and reasoning with her children’s teachers. Zahra told me that music at school was similar to Qur’an recitation for her family in terms of their necessity. However, for her music was not Islamic and not vital for her children to gain access to other worldly knowledge. She could not understand why music was so important for her children’s school while other methods of learning could be used if the aim of learning was not teaching music per se. Despite her expressing her point of view to the school, they have no intention of modifying the way they use music in their teaching strategies, so Zahra just has to accept it as part of her children’s academic life.

To understand the ways these Muslim mothers negotiate their lives in the midst of the larger non-Muslim community is to recognise the ways their lives are encoded with multiple meanings and how they seek the best possible solutions to their challenges living in the current transnational setting. For Afifa and Zahra, accommodation in this context is not without gain in different areas. It moves both ways. While Afifa and Zahra struggle to accept different values within the school, the school also endeavours as much as possible to accommodate Muslim practices and styles of life that may seem foreign. The often wide gap between “the other” and Muslim values is bridged by negotiation and accommodation in many aspects of school life. Confronted with a different way of dressing, the public school tries to accommodate by having a special policy for their school uniform by allowing their Muslim female students to wear a *hijāb* and a pair of long pants or a long skirt. In the context in which gender segregation is needed, like in swimming lessons at the school swimming pool, this mixed gender school tries to follow the correct practice by having single gender swimming sessions. During this allocated time male and female Muslim students can comfortably swim in their swimming togs without having to worry about the opposite sex. With many Muslim children at the school *halāl* food is served in many of the school functions and events. Likewise, a weekly “religious” studies class that in other schools teaches about ethics and basic religious (Christian) values, in this public school it is tailored to suit Muslim students. A special Muslim teacher conducts a weekly meeting with Muslim students to explain about Islam and its teaching. Mt

Roskill Grammar School even provides a facility for its Muslim students to perform their Friday prayer in one of its classes.

Yet, no doubt, not all Muslims in the area embrace the same Islamic understandings and practices as Huda, Afifa and Zahra. Other Muslim parents may not dispute the use of music in the classroom or highlight the importance of wearing a long loose-fitting skirt in public. Indeed, “it is the struggle between multiple understandings of Islam, the fluctuations between similarity and difference, and the continual negotiations of these understandings that give transnational social space its fluidity” (D’Alisera 2004:94).

Public schools in Mt Roskill that Muslim children attend have become the focal point in which multiple Muslim discourses and practices collide with secular values. Muslim parents continuously and consciously seek a middle ground where they can define, negotiate and (re)define their religiosity. Whatever discomfort may have been entailed by having their children educated at secular schools, Muslim parents have agreed to make some adjustment in some areas but not all. They feel that the schools also have to meet their needs halfway. The outcome is a more or less harmonious chorus of different voices of common interest as they all have the best interests of the children at heart.





*Figure 10 and 11: Moshim's Plaza on Stoddard Road accommodating different Muslim shops including a ḥalāl supermarket, ḥalāl meat shop, ḥalāl food court, Muslim clothing store and Christian aid and development organisation. Moshim's Plaza was opened on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2009 under the management of Moshim's Discount House Group of Companies owned by a Muslim entrepreneur. The group owns 24 stores throughout New Zealand and two stores in Australia (Indian Weekender June 21, 2009). It is a unique and a pleasant sight to see that Muslim and Christian organisations work side by side.*

## Conclusion

Many Muslims from different parts of the world have made New Zealand their home away from “home” over the past many decades. Although Fijian Muslims are a lot greater in number than Muslims from other ethnicities, the reality remains that all Muslims in New Zealand live in a diverse multiethnic Muslim community amongst an unfamiliar larger non-Muslim society.

This study focused on how devout Muslim mothers from different ethnicities strive to live their lives as pious Muslims in Mt Roskill, a suburb in Auckland that is known for having the highest Muslim population in New Zealand. Diverting from my previous intention to study how Muslim mothers lead their children to be good Muslims, particularly how they inculcate the practice of *ṣalāt* in their children, I embarked on a more general notion of piety as there were other pressing issues that my informants wanted to share with me. It became clear almost immediately that these mothers were concerned with their roles as pious Muslims that were enacted through their endeavour to improve themselves in terms of understanding and practising Islamic tenets in the midst of multiple discourses and practices of Islam available to them. Also, they were most concerned with their role as mothers who tried to bring up their children as good Muslims in a diverse, multicultural, increasingly global Muslim community within the larger scale of a non-Muslim urban landscape.

Mt Roskill, a suburb in which informants in this research intentionally chose to reside, seems to provide the religiously symbolic shelter that can protect them and their children from the unfamiliar “temptations” of the outside forces of “the other”. Multiple facilities for Islamic goods and services, including Islamic education, provide them and their children with a security blanket to stay on the right path of Islam and away from the foreign non-Muslim way of life. They sought religious teachings and knowledge to improve themselves as Muslims. Their children were imbued with informal religious teachings at home and more formal *madrassa* education in the vicinity. Through disciplinary programmes in which religious practices, such as *ṣalāt* and wearing *ḥijāb* were performed, particular moral virtues and more pious selves were developed and achieved within themselves and their children. Yet they were not immune from other influences that seemed to be familiar but actually might not be so

familiar. The core is that they have to deal with multiple worlds of “our” way of being Muslims, “their” way of being Muslims and the New Zealand way of being “the other”. Muslim women in my study were caught in discussion, consciously or not, with themselves and with others to figure out the discourse of correct practices. *Ṣalāt* at home or at an event like *Eid-ul-Fitr*, the way they dressed, *madrassa*, *tajwīd* class, their children’s public school, *tafsīr* class and Qur’an competition, all of these have become platforms for imparting religious practices and traditions to a new generation as well as for affirming one’s own moral self. They are arenas in which rooted traditions of Islam from homelands are confronted with the realisation that there are other ways of practising Islam.

Similar to the findings of previous studies, particularly D’Alisera’s (2004) ethnographic research on Sierra Leonean Muslims in Washington D.C., my fieldwork also shows that Muslim women negotiate, define and (re)define the multiple discourses of religious belief and practice in their interaction with a diverse, multicultural, increasingly global Muslim community in the larger non-Muslim society in their search for piety. However, there are two points in which my study is different from D’Alisera’s research that need to be taken into account. Firstly, D’Alisera’s work mainly focuses on Muslim identity, while the core of my study is piety politics. Although these two core topics may overlap at some points, they are not totally identical. Secondly, in terms of issues discussed, D’Alisera’s ethnographic research emphasises issues of homeland and memory, spiritual centres of mosque and religious teacher, religious commodities and sites of inscription, female genital mutilation, and Islamic school. My study’s focal issues are more on music, clothing, gender-segregated space, greetings, and the “proper” way of doing *ṣalāt*, which are discussed within “Muslim spaces” of home, religious classes, schools and communal prayer venues. Indeed the findings from my research are similar to that of D’Alisera’s at some points, such as the romanticised homeland of cultural past that characterised some children’s *madrassa* and participation in a culturally diverse congregation which created an awareness of the multiplicity of voices of Islam in which Muslims sought to find the “proper” interpretations of Islamic belief and practice in their current transnational context.

In the case of clothing, my findings are similar to Tarlo’s (2010) ethnographic research on different ideas of Muslim clothing, faith, and cultural diversity of young

British Muslims. Her focus is on Muslim clothing as a means to express one's identity and faith, and on the wider social and political effects of Muslim clothing choices on the development of transnational cultural formations and multicultural urban spaces. Meanwhile my study merely emphasises Muslim clothing as a school uniform and the reality of diverse Muslim clothing, and how Muslim women's dress signifies not only their relations with their religious views but also their ethnic origin. In this light my argument is similar to D'Alisera's (2004) in which Muslim women are constantly debating with themselves about what are the "correct" Muslim clothes for women.

Yet there are other issues that have not been discussed in other studies, at least ethnographically, like music, greetings and the "proper" way of doing *ṣalāt*. My study discusses how Muslim women in their commitment to be pious Muslims and to lead their children to become good Muslims consciously negotiate music in their daily dealings with their children's public school and in their day-to-day lives as a whole in which multiple understandings of Islam and disparate secular values of non-Muslims have to be dealt with and negotiated. I also highlight how greetings during *Eid-ul-Fitr* and the way of performing prayer at home and communal prayer, in terms of *niyya* and *tabīr*, reflect diverse religious practices within a multiethnic Muslim community. Regarding the issue of gender segregation, my research provides a new perspective on how this is practised in a transnational context, compared with previous studies that were conducted in majority Muslim countries (Ahmad 2009, Huq 2010, Papanek 1971, 1973, VerEecke 1989, Weiss 1985). To my surprise, some Muslim women I worked with felt that the biggest threat indeed lay within the Muslim community itself with its diverse religious understandings and levels of piety, although the non-Muslim environment also posed some challenges. This finding seems to deviate from earlier research on Muslim migrants that have no such mention of the Muslim community as a threat. Many other studies on Muslim migrants seemed to focus on the non-Muslim society with its alien values seen as threats for Muslim parents and their children. Meanwhile my study has confirmed that other Muslims with their multiple understandings of Islam in fact significantly pose more problems for Muslim parents in their engagement to imbue Islamic values in their children. Teaching children that other Muslims may embrace different religious understandings and may embody disparate conduct and piety is not as easy as teaching them that non-Muslims adopt a

different cultural system. This new finding is in need of further and more thorough investigation.

All my findings only confirm that the fluctuations between similarity and difference of multiple meanings of religious belief and practice, and the continual negotiations of these understandings reflect that transnational social space is fluid in nature. The reality of transnational Muslim women living in New Zealand is complex and diverse. By migrating to this country they have the opportunity to interact with Muslims from other parts of the world and became more aware of the multiple realities of Islam as well as the dissimilar values of non-Muslims. This has encouraged them to reflect on the ways that they understood Islam and practised the religion in their country of origin and to negotiate the best way possible to live amidst the larger non-Muslim society. Large number of Muslims may consciously ask themselves three kinds of questions, “What is my religion?” “Why is it important in my life?” and most important for my informants, “How do my beliefs guide my conduct as a Muslim woman and mother?” The answers to these questions shape their discourse and practice in everyday activities in their dealings with the multiethnic Muslim community and the wider non-Muslim society, and in how they perceive and negotiate challenges.

It was about a week after the end of *Ramadān* when one night my eight-year-old son came to my bedroom before he went to sleep in his own bedroom. Snuggling against me he asked me out of the blue about the fasting month next year. The topic of discussion that night was when it will start and whether he has to fast again until ten o'clock in the morning like this year's *Ramadān*. Realising that the month of *Ramadān* always moves forward around ten days every year, he questioned me whether he needs to perform his fasting when *Ramadān* falls in the summer months. I assured him that it won't be for ten years or so by which time he will be a teenager and will be able to fast from before sunrise until sunset with little difficulty. He was mostly concerned because it would mean no eating and drinking from around four o'clock in the morning up to nine o'clock in the evening. Again, I comforted him by telling him about his father's and my experiences on the first years we migrated to this country long before he was born. At the time we carried out our fasting during the hot summer *Ramadān* months. *Alhamdulillah* (praise to God) I said to him, we went through the fasting

month without too many problems. As I did not want to conceal the reality that some days were better than others I told him that when we could not go through a day or two because we were not feeling well we substituted those days with fasting after *Eid-ul-Fitr*. He was silenced for a minute or two, which was unusual for him since he was known by his older siblings as a chatterbox, especially during a discussion at home. Then, to my surprise, he declared that being a Muslim is hard, is not easy. I was taken aback by his comment and was looking for the “right” advice to put the issue to rest and to give him the “proper” understanding about Islam and being a Muslim. Finally I got the answer. I said to him, “I know that becoming and being a Muslim is hard. But becoming and being a good person is also not easy. You have to follow certain rules of conduct. You must behave in the right way and avoid misconduct”. He was silenced again, occupied with his own thoughts but finally accepted my justification, for now. I am sure this will not be the last of his inquisitive questions about Islam. There will be others in years to come. I am also certain that I am not the only Muslim mother who deals with the everyday discussions with their children about Islam and being Muslim in a transnational urban landscape of Auckland. It was simply a metaphor of what some Muslim mothers may face in their everyday lives in Mt Roskill.

## Questions for Participants

1. How long have you been in New Zealand? Where did you come from?
2. How long have you lived in Mt Roskill? Why did you choose to live in Mt Roskill?
3. How many children do you have? How old are they?
4. What schools do they go to?
5. What have been your experiences with your children school?
6. What are your parenting goals?
7. What is the meaning of *ṣalāt* for you and your family?
8. When do/did you start teaching them religious practices, e.g. praying, fasting, etc?
9. How do you teach your children to pray? Method? Parenting style?
10. What kind of resources you use as parenting tools to teach your children to pray, e.g. prayer mat, *ṣalāt* books, *tasbeih*, especially designed calendar/clock, special clothes, CDs, DVDs, computer software, etc?
11. Do you teach your children using different method/style in accordance with their developmental ages?
12. What are your experiences on mosques, Muslim gatherings (*pengajian*), Qur'an classes (*madrassa*), Arabic language classes, etc as parenting tools to teach your children about Islamic rituals? Do you take your children to the mosque, Muslim gatherings (*pengajian*), Qur'an classes (*madrassa*), Arabic language classes, etc? If yes, what are the reasons of taking them to these places?
13. What do your children learn from *madrassa*, etc? How do these religious schools teach your children about Islam and religious practices?
14. Do you go to the mosque, Muslim gatherings (*pengajian*), Qur'an classes (*madrassa*), Arabic language classes, etc? What do you learn from these religious teachings?
15. How do your children feel about learning to pray in New Zealand? Have they faced any challenges to observe praying thus far?

16. How do your children feel about praying among their non-Muslim friends?  
(e.g. attending Friday prayer, praying at school or outside home and at mosques)
17. How do you find the reality of being a Muslim migrant parent in New Zealand?  
What kind of challenges have you faced or may face as a Muslim mother?
18. Do you teach them differently before and after migration? (If applicable)
19. What do you think of the outcome of your teaching? Are your children as pious as you want them to be?
20. Would you like to change anything from the way you have taught your children to pray? Would you do anything differently? Please explain.

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In general, *Arabic-English Dictionary: The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic* (Cowan 1976). Cowan (1976), Esposito (2003) and <http://www.islamic-dictionary.com/> are used to translate the meaning of the Arabic words used in the text. Most words in this glossary are Arabic unless they are mentioned otherwise.

<i>'Abāya/ 'abāyāt</i> (plural)	A shapeless full-length cloak or over-garment that covers the whole body and usually worn by women in the Middle East
<i>Adab</i>	Refers to prescribed Islamic etiquette: "refinement, good manners, morals, decorum, decency, humaneness".
<i>Adhan</i>	The call to prayer recited before prayers commence. It is done to make people aware that the prayers are about to start.
<i>Akhlaq</i>	The practice of virtue, manners and morality
<i>Al-baligh al-'aqil</i>	A person who has reached maturity or puberty and has full responsibility under Islamic law
<i>Alhamdulillah</i>	"Praise to God" or "all praise is due to Allah. This phrase is said in thanks to God.
<i>Allah</i>	God
<i>'Aqīdah</i>	The belief system that is based upon a firm conviction in all the fundamentals of faith and the Oneness of Allah, i.e. creed.
<i>Ash-Shaytān</i>	The adversary of God
<i>'Asr</i>	A daily obligatory prayer conducted from afternoon until sunset
<i>Assalamu'alaikum</i>	Peace be upon you
<i>Āyah/āyāt</i> (plural)	Verse within <i>sūrah</i> of the Qur'an
<i>Bahasa</i>	It is language in Indonesia and Malay language
<i>Bid'a</i>	Innovation
<i>Bismillāhir raḥmānir raḥīm</i>	It means "in the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate". This phrase is recited before each <i>sūrah</i> and is used in a number of contexts by Muslims. It is recited several times as part of Muslim daily prayers, and it is usually the first phrase in the preamble of the constitutions of Islamic countries. Generally also the first phrase taught in Qur'an recitation and in Qur'anic schools. Often used to open speeches.

<i>Burqa</i>	It is usually understood as a loose full length outer garment for women that includes a <i>hijāb</i> and a <i>niqāb</i>
<i>Da'wah</i>	Literally means "call", and in this sense it refers to calling to the Truth (Islam) through preaching and propagation
<i>Dīn</i>	Way of life for which humans will be held accountable and recompensed accordingly on the Day of Judgment. The word is the root of the Arabic terms for "habit," "way," "account," "obedience," "judgment," and "reward," and is often translated as "religion." It implies that living in obedience to God is an obligation owed to Him, for which people will be taken to account, judged, and recompensed. <i>Dīn</i> can refer generally to any path that humans follow for their lives or more specifically to Islam as the comprehensive way of life chosen by God for humanity's temporal and eternal benefit. <i>Dīn</i> encompasses beliefs, thought, character, behaviour, and deeds. Thus, if these aspects of life are derived from God's guidance, as originally taught by the prophets, then they comprise Islam.
<i>Dhikr</i>	Involves repetitive utterances of short sentences glorifying God
<i>Du'a</i>	Supplication and invocation to God
<i>Eid-al-Adha</i>	A festival celebrated every year on 10 <sup>th</sup> Dhul Hijja of the Islamic calendar to commemorate the willingness of the prophet Ibrahim to sacrifice his son, the prophet Ismail, for the sake of Allah
<i>Eid-ul-Fitr</i>	A festival celebrated at the end of the fasting month of Ramadān
<i>Eid Mubarak</i>	The phrase translates into English as "blessed festival", and can be paraphrased as "may you enjoy a blessed festival".
<i>Fajr</i>	Prayer performed before just sunrise
<i>Fard</i>	It is an Islamic term, which denotes a religious duty (obligatory)
<i>Fatwā/fatāwā</i> (plural)	A religious opinion concerning Islamic law issued by an Islamic scholar.
<i>Fiqh</i>	Islamic jurisprudence based on the Qur'an and the <i>ahādīth</i> . It refers to the legal rulings of the Muslim scholars, based on their knowledge of the <i>shari`ah</i> ; and as such is the third source of rulings.
<i>Hadīth/ahādīth</i> (plural)	The recollections of individuals, including the <i>sahabah</i> (closest companions of the Prophet), about the Prophet's spoken words and deeds and that of other early Muslims. It is read in conjunction with the Qur'an. The <i>hadīth</i> is the implementation on how to do the Islamic tenet stated in the Qur'an. <i>Ahādīth</i> were collected, transmitted and taught orally for two centuries after the prophet Muhammad's death and then began to be collected in written form and codified. Compilers were careful to record <i>hadīth</i> exactly as received from recognised transmission specialists. Traditionally, the body of authentic <i>hadīth</i> reports is considered to embody the <i>Sunnah</i> of the Prophet Muhammad. Muslim reformers

	encourage Muslims to be more discerning in acceptance of <i>hadīth</i> .
<i>Hadīth da'īf</i>	A weak Prophetic tradition
<i>Hadīth sahīh</i>	A correct, sound Prophetic tradition
<i>Hāfidh/huffādh</i> (plural-male), <i>hāfidha</i> (plural-female)	It literary means guardian but it is used as one who has completely memorised the Qur'an in Arabic
<i>Hajj</i>	Pilgrimage to Mecca as fulfilment of one of the five pillars of Islamic ritual practice
<i>Halāl</i>	That which is permitted
<i>Harām</i>	That which is forbidden and prohibited
<i>Hijāb/hujub</i> (plural) ' <i>Ibādāh</i> '/' <i>ibādāt</i> (plural)	A Muslim women's head covering, also known as a veil Acts of worship or devotion (religious obligations) which include the five pillars of Islam
<i>Iftar</i>	The evening meal when Muslims break their fast during the Islamic month of Ramadān
<i>Imām</i>	Someone who leads a congregational prayer in a mosque, such as Friday prayer
<i>Iman</i>	Faith or belief. Suggests security for believers against untruth and misguidance in this world and punishment in the afterlife. Assumes belief in the oneness of God, angels, prophets, revealed books, the hereafter, and fate. Faith is a matter of free choice in Islam but is also considered a gift from God; no one is to be compelled to believe. The Qur'an establishes the close connection between faith and action, so that true faith manifests itself in right conduct. Believers are commanded to obey God, Muhammad, and authorities; fulfil their commitments; be truthful; perform ritual prayer; spend their wealth and struggle steadfastly to do the will of God; shun drinking, gambling, and exploitative business practices; and avoid treating people condescendingly.
' <i>Ishā</i>	A daily obligatory prayer done about an hour after sunset through the rest of the night
<i>Islam</i>	Signifies complete submission to the will of God
<i>Jama'ah</i>	Congregation
<i>Jannah</i>	Heaven
<i>Jilbāb</i>	A generic term for a full-length women's outer garment, including shawl, cloak and wrap covering the heads and hands worn in public by some Muslim women
<i>Juz'</i>	Part
<i>Juz' Amma</i>	It is the 30 <sup>th</sup> <i>juz'</i> (part) of the Qur'an. It contains short <i>suwar</i> from <i>surāh</i> 78 through 114, the shortest <i>suwar</i> in the Qur'an; these are the <i>suwar</i> typically read during regular prayer, and <i>juz' Amma</i> is generally taught first to children.
<i>Ka'bah</i>	A small shrine located in the middle of the Great Mosque in Mecca. It is a building that Muslims from all over the world face toward in every prayer and where the hajj is conducted every year
<i>Keraton</i>	Palace (Javanese language)

<i>Khimār</i>	It is a very long veil that covers the head and extends up to the thighs
<i>Khutbah</i>	A speech given by an <i>imām</i> prior to every congregational prayer
<i>Kurta</i>	It is a traditional clothing from South Asia in a form of a long loose-fitting just above or below the knees. It is traditionally worn with a loose-fitting trouser but now can be worn with a pair of jeans.
<i>Ma'af lahir bathin</i>	An Indonesian phrase for “forgive me for my physical and emotional (wrongdoings)”
<i>Madrassa/madāris (plural)</i>	Islamic religious school
<i>Maghrib</i>	A daily obligatory prayer conducted from sunset until about an hour later
<i>Manāra</i>	A minaret attached to a mosque.
<i>Mawlid al-Nabi</i>	Birthday of the Prophet Muhammad. Celebrated on the twelfth day of Rabi al-Awwal. Popular celebration that includes readings from the Quran, poetry recitation, singing of songs commemorating Muhammad's virtues, and preparation of food dedicated to Muhammad and distributed to the poor. Also the occasion for state ceremonies except in Saudi Arabia. Some conservatives condemn the celebration since it was not celebrated during Muhammad's lifetime and is centred on a human being rather than God.
<i>Masjid/masajid (plural)</i>	Mosque
<i>Mimbar</i>	A small set of steps in a mosque from which the <i>khutbah</i> is delivered
<i>Minal 'aidin wal-faizin</i>	May you be part of the people who return to purity and part of the people who are granted glory
<i>Muadhin</i>	He is a chosen person at a mosque who conducts <i>adhan</i> from the mosque's minaret to announce the beginning of <i>ṣalāt al-Jum'ah</i> and the five times daily prayers.
<i>Niqāb</i>	A veil that covers the face and worn by some Muslim women as a part of a <i>hijāb</i>
<i>Niyya/niyyāt (plural)</i>	Proper intent is necessary to make an act meritorious, so ritual action carried out without proper intent is believed to be meaningless in the eyes of God. Affirmation of intent is required prior to canonical prayers as well as all other ritual observances in Islam. Intention is defined simply as someone intending to perform the activity he or she is performing, as opposed to doing it accidentally
<i>Pengajian</i>	<i>Tafsīr</i> class (Indonesian language)

<i>Purdah</i>	Curtain (Urdu)
<i>Qalb</i>	Mind/heart
<i>Qibla</i>	Direction of Mecca, more specifically the Ka'bah, towards which each Muslim must turn in order to perform the <i>salāt</i> validly.
<i>Qur'an</i>	The book of Islamic revelation, which serves as the guide for Muslim community
<i>Raka'at</i>	Ritual cycle of <i>salat</i> from standing to sitting
<i>Ramadān</i>	A special month (the ninth month) in the Islamic calendar in which Muslims conduct their fasting
<i>Shahāda</i>	A verbal declaration of the oneness of God and acceptance of Muhammad as God's prophet
<i>Sajadah</i>	A prayer rug
<i>Salām</i>	It is the Islamic greeting " <i>Assalamu alaikum</i> ", which means peace be upon you
<i>Ṣalāt/ṣalawāt (plural)</i>	Ritual prayer
<i>Ṣalāt al-Jum'ah</i>	Congregational Friday prayer required of all Sunni men but not generally of women
<i>Samosa</i>	It is a stuffed pastry filled with spiced potatoes, peas, lentils, coriander and onions. It is a popular snack in South Asia, Southeast Asia, Central Asia and Arabian Peninsula.
<i>Ṣawm</i>	Fasting
<i>Selir</i>	It is a second, third or fourth wife of the Javanese king (Javanese language)
<i>Shalwar kameez</i>	It is a Punjabi-Urdu term (it is originally from a Persian word " <i>salwar</i> " and an Arabic word " <i>qamis</i> ") for a traditional dress of South Asian women and men of loose pyjama-like trousers and a long shirt or tunic
<i>Sharī'ah</i>	God's eternal and immutable will for humanity, as expressed in the Qur'an and Muhammad's example ( <i>Sunnah</i> ), considered binding for all believers; ideal Islamic law.
<i>Shaykh or Sheikh</i>	It literally means elder. It is an honorific term to designate an elder of a tribe, a revered wise man, or an Islamic scholar.
<i>Sirah</i>	The study of the Prophet Muhammad's life and activities
<i>Subhanahu wa ta'ala</i>	It means be He glorious and exalted. The phrase, often abbreviated as "swt", appears after the name of Allah in the Qur'an and the <i>hadīth</i> . Saying the phrase is seen as an act of worship and devotion towards Allah among Muslims.
<i>Sunnah</i>	Established custom, normative precedent, conduct and cumulative tradition, typically based on the prophet Muhammad example. <i>Sunnah</i> complements and stands alongside the Qur'an, giving precision to its precepts. It fosters self-identity and enhances the private moral lives of Muslims.
<i>Sunni</i>	Traditionalist, orthodox branch of Islam, whose followers are called Ahl as-Sunnah ('People of the Path'). It is followed by 90% of Muslims. Sunnis accept the <i>hadith</i> , the body of orthodox teachings based on Muhammad's spoken words outside the Qur'an. The Sunni differ from the Shi'ite sect in that they accept the first four caliphs (religious leaders) as the

	true successors of the Prophet Muhammad.
<i>Sūrah/suwar (plural)</i>	Chapter of the Qur'an
<i>Tafsīr</i>	Qur'anic exegesis. Elucidation, explanation, interpretation and commentary carried out to understand the Qur'an and its commandments
<i>Takbīr</i>	Saying of "Allaahu akbar, Allaahu akbar, Allaahu akbar, laa ilaaha ill-Allaah, Allaahu akbar, Allaahu akbar, Allaahu akbar, wa Lillaahi'l-hamd" (Allaah is Most Great, Allaah is Most Great, Allaah is Most Great, there is no god except Allaah, Allaah is Most Great, Allaah is Most Great, Allaah is Most Great, and all praise be to Allaah) that is repeated again and again until just before the commencement of ṣalāt Eid-ul-Fitr and ṣalāt Eid-al-Adha. Another meaning of takbīr is saying Allahu akbar – Allah is the greatest – while raising the hands to the side of the ears and then folding them on one's chest during prayer.
<i>Tajwīd</i>	Elocution of the Qur'an which entails proper pronunciation during recitation
<i>Taraweeh</i>	A special prayer done during the fasting month of Ramadan and is done after the 'Isha and before the Fajr prayers
<i>Tawhīd</i>	The concept of monotheism in Islam. It holds God as one and unique.
<i>Thawb/thobe</i>	An ankle-length tunic typically worn by Middle Eastern men
<i>Topi</i>	It is Hindi for hat.
<i>'Ulamā/'alim (singular)</i>	Islamic religious scholar
<i>Ummah</i>	Muslim community/ community of believers
<i>Ustadh</i>	Teacher. Honorific title of respect popularly assigned to those who are widely recognized for their learning, especially religious knowledge.
<i>Ustadha</i>	Female <i>ustadh</i>
<i>Wa'alaikumsalam</i>	And may peace be upon you
<i>Wuḍū</i>	It is known as 'ablution' in English. <i>Wuḍū</i> is a ceremonial act of washing and wiping the hands, face, arms, head and feet before praying or touching the text of the Qur'an. Without <i>wuḍū</i> those activities would be void and unlawful.
<i>Zakāt</i>	The giving of alms
<i>Zuhur</i>	A daily obligatory prayer performed from noon until afternoon