

Policing Intensity

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Policing and Passing in East Malaysia

Qualifications admit of a more and a less; for one thing is called more pale or less pale than another, and more just than another. Moreover, it itself sustains increase (for what is pale can still become paler)—not in all cases though, but in most.

—Aristotle, *Categories*

Every voyage is intensive, and occurs in relation to thresholds of intensity between which it evolves or that it crosses. One travels by intensity.

—Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*

In Tawau—a town in the East Malaysian state of Sabah situated only a hop, skip, and a jump from the Indonesian border—two plainclothes policemen sit drinking coffee at a busy intersection. They’re not on traffic duty, but their eyes are nevertheless cast upon the traffic of bodies across the street. Both watch the hustle and bustle of comings and goings unfolding at a nondescript harbor, where men, women, and children from nearby Indonesia disembark from schooners, luggage in tow, sidestepping official immigration channels in the process.

“They’re the same, but different” (*Mereka sama, tapi berbeza*), the first man says in Malay, referring to the disembarking passengers. “We’re the same, but different” (*Kita sama, tapi berbeza*), the second corrects him. “We’re more-or-

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less the same” (*Kita lebih kurang sama*), the first one replies. “The same, but not the same” (*Sama tapi tidak sama*), the second one laughs, as if delivering the punchline to a shared joke. “We’re virtually the same” (*Kita hampir sama*), the first man adds.

The two men watching the passengers unload their cargo are self-identified Malaysians of Bugis descent, and the disembarking passengers are undocumented Bugis migrants from Indonesia. Far from “street-level bureaucrats” (Lipsky [1969] 2010) or “petty sovereigns” (Butler 2004: 56) seeking to police an area in which so-called illegal immigrants do not belong, our two plainclothes policemen look upon these disembarking passengers with a curious sense of hospitality, despite state-level efforts to “cleanse” (*membersihkan*) Sabah of their kind. They are “fellow Malays” (*sesama Melayu*), one notes. They are “family.”

The Bugis are renowned as a mobile, seafaring people who consider the contemporary Indonesian province of South Sulawesi to be their *tanah air*, or “homeland,” but have migrated throughout archipelagic Southeast Asia and beyond over the course of several centuries.¹ More than a century ago, Bugis migrants from Sulawesi began traveling to Tawau, where, under the auspices of British colonial rule, they became “the most energetic and successful cultivators” of coconuts and came to “own nearly all of the large and valuable land . . . East and West of Tawau town” (*British North Borneo Herald* 1912, cited in Sintang 2007: 31). In 1963, British North Borneo was incorporated into the independent postcolonial state of Malaysia as “Sabah,” and the Bugis—a bilingual Muslim people who speak Malay in addition to their Bugis ethnic language—came to be assimilated as “Malay” members of the newly formed Malaysian nation, a place where “Malay” people are constitutionally defined as Muslim speakers of Malay and practitioners of “Malay custom.”² In the decades following Malaysian and Indonesian independence, Bugis migrants from Indonesia continued traveling to Tawau and greater Sabah, availing themselves of a “diasporic infrastructure” (Carruthers 2017b: 128) linking their homeland in the Indonesian island of Sulawesi to the East Malaysian state of Sabah. And for almost forty years following Sabah’s incorporation into Malaysia, undocumented Bugis migrants from Indonesia were welcomed as migrant laborers, readily assimilating among their coethnic Bugis-Malaysian counterparts as Malay-speaking Muslim members of the “Malay race.”

Recent state-level sociopolitical and economic developments, however, have

1. For foundational overviews of the Bugis, see Mattulada 1985 and Pelras 1996.

2. See “Malaysian Federal Constitution, As at 1 November 2010,” article 160, clause 2.

cast these undocumented immigrants as an unwelcome, elusive, and parasitic force in need of expulsion. Sabah's indigenous stakeholders—non-Malay Christian groups like the Kadazandusun or Murut peoples—have dwindled demographically in the decades following Malaysian independence. This erstwhile majority of indigenous Christian people has been displaced by a growing Malay population, and they're crying foul. The East Malaysian state's indigenous people allege that undocumented Bugis immigrants have been mobilized by Malaysia's founding race-based Malay party, the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), to reengineer Sabah's ethnic and political demography and are the beneficiaries of Malaysian national identity cards that enable them to illegally vote for UMNO at the political polls. Sabah's indigenous peoples allege that undocumented Indonesians, by virtue of their ascribed status in Malaysia as Malay-speaking Muslim members of the greater "Malay race," have been mobilized as "phantom voters" (*penghundi hantu*) by UMNO, turning out to the polls in droves in support of a party that "genuine Sabahans" (*Sabahan tulen*) would otherwise never vote for.

These concerns culminated in a 2012 Royal Commission of Enquiry on Illegal Immigrants (Shim et al. 2014: 3) in Sabah:

Sabah is often referred to as the "Land below the Wind," a kind of paradise on earth. It is endowed with great beauty, both in terms of land and people. It is rich in natural resources. Tourists flock to see its natural wonders and heritage. They are in awe of its multi-racial, multi-cultural, and multi-religious settings. . . . Sabahans should have good reason to feel contented. And yet . . . there is, at least from one perspective, a sense of gloom. For decades, Sabahans have been plagued and haunted by an insidious problem which has turned out to be an all-consuming nightmare. It is endemic. It has grown into a crisis of humongous proportions. . . . It is, of course, the lingering problem of illegal immigrants in Sabah.

Despite the Commission's efforts to assuage indigenous Sabahans' concerns, many feel like they face an insurmountable challenge: how might they police undocumented immigrants who look and talk like local Malays and who carry identity cards marking them as Malaysian citizens? "It's hard to know the *border* [*sempadan*] between them," one told me.

With an eye to these ongoing developments in East Malaysia, this article asks the following: How might a focus on intensities—provisionally understood as those perceptible yet seemingly prequantitative variations in the more-or-lessness of things—help us better understand the borders (qua thresholds) between nation-

states, people, languages, and much else besides?³ How might intensity as an orienting object for ethnographic inquiry revise or reshape our understandings of policing across thresholds of belonging? I explore these questions with tacit reference to Jacques Rancière's (2004: 12) conception of policing as that which regiments "system[s] of self-evident facts of sense perception," and I address these issues in two expository steps that trope on the idea of the threshold.

First, and in a longer sketch stretching across interactional and infrastructural time scales, I examine how intensive processes (Deleuze [1968] 1994; Delanda 2002, 2005)—those "anexact yet rigorous" flows, crossings, and coalescences (Deleuze and Guattari: 367; see Delanda 2002)—have come to shape the extensive, "virtual idea" of a contested border or threshold in continuous flux between nation-states: Malaysia and Indonesia. Here I attend to the curious case of Sebaitik, an island situated off the eastern coast of Borneo cleanly bisected by the Indonesia-Malaysia international border.

Second, and in an abbreviated ethnography of sensible intensities, I shift focus to certain constellations of signs that distinguish Malaysian citizens from noncitizens, examining how Malay(sians) and Indonesian(s) are contrastively evaluated in Sabah's shifting sociopolitical scene. I do so by channeling linguistic anthropological approaches to intensity gradients. Qualities (e.g., hotness, coldness, hardness, softness) vary in their intensity or "more-or-lessness" across spatiotemporal contexts and are in turn subject to grading—a process prior to measurement or counting whereby we discern, evaluate, and regulate such intensities (Sapir 1944; Carruthers 2017b; Kockelman 2016). Grading processes effectively demarcate intensive deviations from semiotically salient and experientially grounded thresholds, which serve as "point[s] of departure," in Edward Sapir's (1944: 94) parlance, for determining what "counts" (so to speak) as "more" or "less." Put differently, these presupposed thresholds or points of departure reflect and shape the ways we—like Goldilocks or Alice in Wonderland—differentially weigh and react to the "mores" or "lesses" of sensuous experience, from the relative hotness or coldness of porridge, to the largeness or smallness of chairs, to the hardness or softness of beds. In Sabah, a place where citizens and noncitizens are widely cast as "more-or-less the same" with respect to the bodily and behavioral signs they are assumed to evince, everyday grading practices are, I argue, central not only

3. The "thing" in "the more-or-lessness of things" is a hypernym or superordinate, enveloping or extending to any entity or event whose contents admit of a "more" or a "less" in some context. For genealogical approaches to the issue of intensity or intensive magnitudes see Mader (2014) and Solère (2001). For a foundational critique of the notion of intensive magnitudes see Bergson ([1889] 1910).

for policing but also for “passing” (see Garfinkel [1967] 2006; Goffman [1963] 1986).

I conclude with a discussion of what I mean by “policing intensity,” while bringing the foregoing issues to bear on Rancière’s problematic yet curiously enduring distinction between “politics” and “the police.”

Policing Virtual Thresholds I: Space

A “surface” is not simply a geometric composition of lines. It is a certain distribution of the sensible.

—Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*

In the Indonesian village of Aji Kuning, Hasidah—a middle-aged Bugis seamstress—rises from a chair in her living room and glides toward the kitchen to prepare coffee for her guests visiting from Malaysia. “Lots of folks have already visited here,” one guest asserts in Malay. Hasidah replies, explaining in her Bugis-inflected Malay that “lots of reporters, lots of all kinds of people [have come here],” owing in no small part to her home’s putatively “unique” location. As she approaches the threshold dividing her living room from her kitchen, one of her visitors alerts her to the danger of border crossing “without documents” (*tanpa surat*). This tongue-in-cheek warning elicits a chuckle and a knowing smile from Hasidah as she moves toward her kitchen. Only briefly pausing before the strip of wood dividing her living room and kitchen, she makes a dramatic show of stretching out her foot and confidently planting it on the kitchen floor. Having crossed the threshold, Hasidah looks back at her guests assembled in the living room, declaring that she has safely reached Malaysian soil. She later explains that although she “uses a passport” (*pakai paspor*) to visit Tawau proper, she can safely “cross” (*limpas*) between Indonesia and Malaysia in the comfort of her own home.

Hasidah’s house has become something of an international spectacle, straddling as it does the Indonesia-Malaysia border on Sebatik Island. As is so often pointed out by the Indonesian and Malaysian journalists or curious dignitaries who flock to her home, Hasidah’s “kitchen is in Malaysia,” while her “living room is in Indonesia” (*Dapur di Malaysia dan ruang tamu di Indonesia*) (*Utusan Melayu* 2014). Standing over the threshold dividing her kitchen and living room, Hasidah drives this point home, remarking that she has “one foot in Indonesia” and the “other in Malaysia” (see fig. 1). One of the guests begins what for Hasidah is a by-now predictable line of inquiry, asking, “What does it feel like cooking in Malaysia and . . .,” only to be cut off by their Bugis host, who, anticipating where



Figure 1 Threshold crossing(s).

the question was going, laughingly explains that she feels “just the same” (*sama sahaja*) whether she’s cooking in her “Malaysian” kitchen or sitting down in her “Indonesian” living room.

Sebatik Island is a study in thresholds. Located only one kilometer from the eastern coast of Indonesian Borneo, Sebatik is cleanly bisected by the international Indonesia-Malaysia border. The island’s northern half lies within the East Malaysian state of Sabah, with its southern half falling within the Indonesian province of North Kalimantan. Aside from a sequence of inconspicuous stone border markers that dot the island’s diameter, and notwithstanding the presence of a small Indonesian army border station adjacent to Hasidah’s house, the thirty-nine-kilometer border is unfenced, unmarked, and relatively unpatrolled. And yet, this unenforced, putative threshold between nations has a kind of “world-configuring function” (Balibar 2002: 79) for Sebatik’s residents, especially those like Hasidah, who imagine themselves to be dwelling on both sides of an invisible fence.⁴

4. For definitive accounts of life on Sebatik, see the important work of Ramlah Daud (2010).

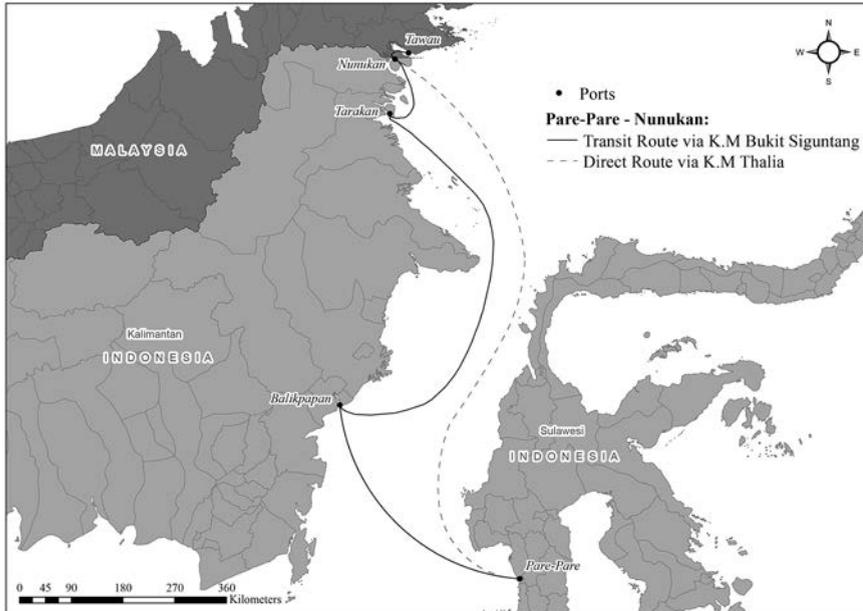


Figure 2 Channels of movement. Map provided by ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.

On the one hand, the everyday salience of this invisible, virtual threshold stems from Sebatik's positioning as a kind of "zone of intensity" (Delanda 2005: 80), one in which ongoing flows and crossings between the places we today call "Indonesia" and "Malaysia" came to shape the extensive boundaries of an island-based community over the course of a century. Since the late nineteenth century, Sebatik has served as one of many penultimate way stations on Bugis migration trails leading from Sulawesi to Sabah. Indeed, and beginning in the late nineteenth century, intensive flows between these places gave rise to an extensive, self-regulating Bugis diasporic infrastructure linking Tawau to the Bugis homeland of Sulawesi. Today, Bugis migrants in search of new lives in Malaysia continue along these well-trodden paths or channels (Carruthers 2017b, 2017c) (see fig. 2).

On the other hand, this ostensibly arbitrary border that shapes and constrains contemporary movement across national thresholds is a curious artifact of colonial-era cartographic imaginaries. The 1824 Treaty of London between the British and Dutch empires divided the geographical expanse of an imagined "Malay world" between the two colonial powers. The treaty carved a line across

the Johor-Pahang-Riau-Lingga Malay Sultanate, and, while distant territories like Borneo went unmentioned in the treaty, it nevertheless “signaled to other European powers the possibility of future British and Dutch accommodation in this area as well” (Andaya and Andaya 2016: 124). The virtual idea of a transcendental, transregional border meandering eastward across Borneo—carving out the borders of Sarawak, Brunei, and Sabah—and slicing through Sebatik at exactly 4°10' N was established in 1912 as a threshold between empires (Trocki 2000). This border was later inherited by postcolonial Indonesia and Malaysia.

After the constitutional incorporation of Sabah, Sarawak, and Singapore into Malaysia in 1963, the salience of this arbitrarily chosen line was keenly felt by Bugis communities on Sebatik, who suddenly found themselves divided in ways they hadn't experienced before. Immediately following northern Sebatik's incorporation into Sabah (and by extension, Malaysia), the island became a volatile crucible of violent engagements and interactions during the Indonesian-Malaysian *konfrontasi* or “confrontation”—an undeclared war in East Borneo stemming from Indonesian President Sukarno's opposition to the formation of Malaysia. “Konfrontasi was because Sabah wanted to be part of Malaysia,” recounts one sixty-five-year-old inhabitant of the Malaysian side of Sebatik. “Konfrontasi was scary. We were afraid to go to the jungle to tap our rubber trees or to the sea to catch fish because Indonesian soldiers would disguise [themselves] as farmers or fishermen and they would catch us” (*Star Online* 2012). He recalled how Malaysian troops (accompanied by British forces) appeared in his village not far from the newly demarcated border. “The troop[s] set up a camp about two hundred meters from the village's perimeter. They told us to dig a 2.4 by 1.2 meter hole under our stilt houses. They told us to jump into the hole if there was shooting,” he remembers. One skirmish came too close for comfort, with Indonesian and Malaysian troops shooting across Sebatik's invisible border that had by that time reached a kind of “critical point” (Delanda 2005: 80) of intensive tension. “We were scared as bullets were flying. You could not see the enemy. They were at the other side of the border,” he noted, explaining that villagers had to withdraw from their homes and move to jungle areas more far afield until the neck and neck conflict's formal resolution in August 1966 (*Star Online* 2012).

The *konfrontasi* dispute testifies to the tempestuous, topological nature of borders and boundaries that meaningfully materialize across zones of intensity. So, too, and nearly half a century later in 2005, bilateral disputes between Indonesia and Malaysia regarding their respective borders once again focused both countries' joint attention on Sebatik's islandwide invisible fence. Both countries were contesting an international maritime border in the Ambalat sea block directly east

of Sebatik in the Celebes Sea. Perhaps tacitly reopening older, *konfrontasi*-era wounds, the Indonesian army began actively policing the Indonesian side of the border, establishing a barracks adjacent to Hasidah's house and the invisible fence that cuts across it.

The fence (qua threshold) dividing Hasidah's living room and kitchen is invisible—but clearly not qualitatively insensible—and virtual—but definitely not un-“real” (see Balibar 2002; Delanda 2002; Deleuze [1968] 1994; Kockelman 2017; Massumi 2002). On the one hand, the virtual idea of the border (or Hasidah's invisible fence) is real insofar as it acts as a “structure of a space of possibilities” (Delanda 2005: 83) for certain trajectories, mobilities, and becomings. So, too, it is “fully real” (Deleuze [1968] 1994: 208) insofar as it materializes or “actualizes into extended spatiality” (Clisby 2015: 139) in the form of the wooden threshold that divides her kitchen from her living room, or the *batu* or “rock” border markers that dot the diameter of the island. As Kockelman (2017: 131) puts it, “the best way to ‘intuit’ the virtual is to inhabit it,” and our everyday, tacit intuitions are closely linked to habitus and “sense” (2017: 177).

Hasidah and other inhabitants of Aji Kuning Village have common-*sense* intuitions as to where the virtual border lies: it is congruent and coextensive with a variety of materially sensible thresholds, from strips of wood dividing kitchens from living rooms, to sequences of stone markers. That they jointly orient toward the same markers suggests how Hasidah and her neighbors share the same “map” as they navigate this virtual border. Here a “map” might be thought of as a set of assumptions about the places that populate a given terrain, and a “terrain” might be considered not only a physical space but also a meaningful ensemble of enactable mediations between selves and others (e.g., Indonesian versus Malaysian) and “here's” and “there's” (e.g., Indonesia and Malaysia) across imagined thresholds (e.g., the Indonesia-Malaysia border) (see Kockelman 2012: 183).

Sebatik's fence is not a strict, impenetrable border but a prototypical “threshold” in one of the word's classic senses: it is a point of departure. Consider Hasidah's home: as she gestured toward the wooden threshold dividing two rooms of her house, she characterized it as a kind of *pintu masuk* or “entry door” or “point of entry” linking not only her kitchen to the living room but also Indonesia to Malaysia. In this sense, (in)visible or indexically sensible thresholds are affordances (Gibson 1977). Just as George Herbert Mead's chair “invites us to sit down” (1962: 280; see Keane 2016), thresholds invite certain actors to transgress or cross them. Thresholds do not simply “block or obstruct” intensive flows (Mezzadra and Neilson 2012: 64) but instead serve as “essential devices for their articulation” (64).

For those Indonesian Bugis migrants seeking new lives in Malaysia, Seba-

tik's imaginary fence is considered one such threshold qua clandestine point of departure. Some Bugis migrants travel by way of "official channels," taking ferries from Nunukan Port in Indonesia to the immigration department in Tawau, Malaysia, at a cost of IDR200,000 (\$14.05 at the time of this writing), accompanied by an additional IDR15,000 (\$1.05). However, many Bugis migrants avoid officially sanctioned channels of movement to Malaysia, considering them to be costly with respect to time and money, and potentially disastrous given mandatory document checks and frequent boardings by Malaysia's maritime police. Instead, they cross a different, so-called clandestine threshold widely known to migrants and Malaysian police alike. These migrants take a speedboat from Nunukan to Sebatik Island's Aji Kuning Village. Once there, and only a few meters from Hasidah's house, they walk confidently past a more-or-less indifferent Indonesian border barracks, crossing the island's invisible fence, and descend into a winding, narrow river populated by Bugis speedboats, and characterized by migrants as a "mouse path" (*jalan tikus*). Speedboat captains navigating the snakelike river will "smuggle" (*somokol*) and deposit these migrants at "safe zones" along Tawau's coastline (see fig. 3).

For undocumented Bugis migrants, Sebatik's porous borders enable emancipatory lines of flight. This is not to imply that smooth sailing awaits those undocumented migrants who cross this threshold. Migrants are aware of Malaysia's "necropolitics" (Mbembe 2003) of detection, detention, deportation, and sometimes death—a necropolitics that has itself become the focus of popular songs written by well-known Bugis singers and frequently sung by itinerant migrants en route to Malaysia.⁵ What concerns undocumented Bugis migrants today is the felt intensity of these policing practices, practices that many Bugis migrants characterize as having increased in their scope and scale of brutality. One former Bugis migrant I met in one of Nunukan's karaoke bars told me that cross-border surveillance has intensified to such a degree that many Bugis migrants no longer consider traveling to Sabah. "It's not like it was before," he told me, explaining Sabah's agenda to "cleanse" (*membersihkan*) itself of "illegal immigrants" has become "too cruel" (*terlampau kejam*).

On the other hand, and for Sabah's state officials, the intensity of these policing practices is causally and necessarily linked with the imagined intensity of cross-border clandestine flows. Sabah state officials have sought to police this intensity by homing in on particular thresholds.

5. See the songs of Ansar S., "TKI Ilegal" ("Illegal Indonesian Migrant Worker") in particular.

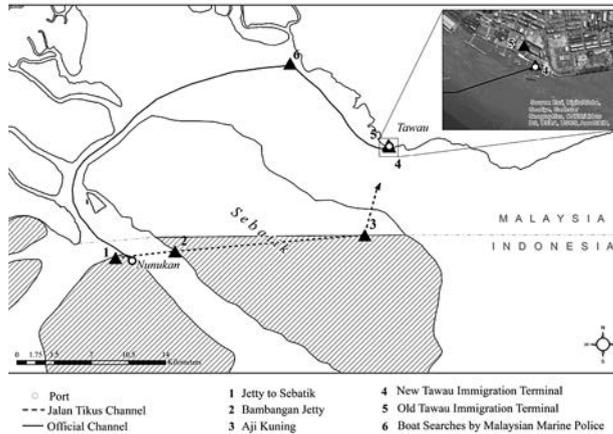


Figure 3 Official and clandestine threshold crossing(s). Map provided by ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.

In 2016, as a temporary salvo, Sabah imposed a two-week interregnum on cross-border barter and movement between Nunukan (especially Sebatik) and Tawau, which had entailing effects on the socioeconomic well-being of inhabitants living on both Indonesian and Malaysian sides of Sebatik Island. The attempt was widely considered a failure. As one Malaysian of Bugis extraction told me, these effects indicate how cross-border clandestine barter and movement are inextricably linked to the well-being of the island's whole, and suggest how the inhabitants of both sides of Sebatik “mutually shape” (*saling membentuk*) and depend on one another.

Sabah state forces have intensified crackdowns on *jalan tikus* or “mouse paths” and those thresholds that Hasidah characterized as *pintu masuk* or points of entry. This has been no easy feat for Malaysian forces fatigued by the prospect of policing Sabah's notoriously porous borders, where clandestine “mouse paths” and points of entry weave and wander along narrow waterways and circuitous jungle paths. The chief representative of the Indonesian Consulate in Tawau once described the sheer impossibility of policing these clandestine channels, estimating cross-border clandestine paths to be around one thousand in number, and

saying, “There aren’t just a thousand roads to Rome, but there are also a thousand roads to Tawau” (*Pro Kaltara* 2015).

Malaysian security forces have attempted to redress this seemingly insurmountable problem by targeting widely known clandestine paths and points of entry. These activities (and the responses to them) reaffirm the ontological status of borders as “necropolitical sites par excellence” (Mezzandra and Neilson 2012: 64). These activities have shaped the trajectories of those migrants who—having found their go-to channels and threshold crossings figuratively plugged by Sabah security forces—must reorient themselves toward tempestuous terrains with which they are unfamiliar, with potentially devastating results. In January 2017, for instance, a boat ferrying forty undocumented Bugis Indonesian migrants departed for Sebatik Island. Rather than traversing closely monitored Tawau-Nunukan channels, the ferry departed from an undisclosed location in Tawau under the cover of darkness. Due to overcrowding, stormy conditions, and an alleged lack of familiarity with points of entry outside the gaze of the Sabah surveillance state, the ferry capsized, and all but one passenger drowned. Uncensored images of dead women and children floating in the sea off Sebatik Island circulated on messenger applications and social media, provoking an uproar among Indonesians who interpreted the event as diagnostic of the lengths that undocumented migrants will go to avoid intensifying state surveillance.⁶

Amidst ongoing crackdowns on cross-border clandestine channels of movement and illicit points of departure and entry, the ideological and geopolitical salience of one particular threshold—the one that served as the topical point of entry for this expository section—has intensified. Sebatik’s invisible fence has become an object of joint attention among Malaysians and Indonesians alike. An article published in a major East Malaysian newspaper highlighted the invisible fence’s renewed ideological salience for Sabah state forces and noted various remedies currently under consideration by the Malaysian state:

Over the years, Sebatik has gained notoriety as the entry and distribution point for goods smuggled from Malaysia. . . . Untold billions of Ringgit are believed to have flowed out of Malaysia through this illegal channel. . . . A recent two-pronged government strategy in the form of removal of some subsidies and tighter enforcement by Marine Police and Customs have helped minimize the problem somewhat. [But] then there is the problem of immigrant arrivals as well as human and drug trafficking. Just like United States President-elect Donald Trump who envisions building a wall among

6. For a review of these recent events, see Carruthers 2017a.

the Mexican border to keep illegals and would-be criminals out, [Malaysian] Sebatik Assemblyman Datuk Abdul Muis Picho thinks only something similar would tackle the problems once and for all. (*Daily Express* 2016)

Assemblyman Muis has allegedly long dreamed of building such a wall, one that would dramatically actualize “into extended spatiality” (Clisby 2015: 139) the virtual idea of the geopolitical border that bisects Sebatik cleanly in two. Here his efforts to construct a wall to police an extensively demarcated border must be read as an effort to define “an organizational system of coordinates that establishes a distribution of the sensible or a law that divides the community into groups, social positions, and functions,” one that “separates those who take part from those who are excluded, and . . . therefore presupposes a prior aesthetic division between the visible and the invisible” (Rancière 2004: 3).

The assemblyman, however, has hit a wall of his own. Malaysian and Indonesian inhabitants of Sebatik use competing and conflicting “system[s] of self-evident facts of sense perception” (12), “common imagined perceptual ground[s]” (Bebout 2016: 204), ontologies, or maps for determining the “actual,” extensive spatiality of a “virtual” border. For Indonesians like Hasidah and the barracks officers stationed adjacent to her home, the border’s location is commonsense—it materializes in the form of wooden thresholds, planted flags, or rock markers. These landmarks constitute a coordinating infrastructure or common perceptual ground for reckoning thresholds between nations.

In contrast, Muis’s perceptual grounds, ontologies, and maps conflict with those of his Indonesian counterparts to such a degree that he and his Malaysian colleagues allege that houses like Hasidah’s are fully within Malaysian soil. The assemblyman alleges that the stone markers that serve as key landmarks for Sebatik’s Indonesian residents “were being removed and thrown away by folks on the Indonesian side so that they can open up farms, plantations, and settlements” (*Daily Express* 2016), and that “records from the Surveying and Mapping Department confirm these areas that are being encroached [upon] are [Malaysian]” (*Daily Express* 2016). Colleagues of Assemblyman Muis suggested using GPS technologies to determine whether his claims are “out of bounds,” so to speak (see fig. 4). For the assemblyman, wall building is a method to forestall a loss of sovereignty, in which the idea of “loss” itself presupposes certain assumptions about intensity gradients: “We need integrated enforcement badly in these villages and I suggest the area be occupied, especially by military and assisted by police. . . . [We] must coordinate to look after our border and minimize the illegal activities.”

The curious case of Sebatik Island—a zone of intensity and site of policing

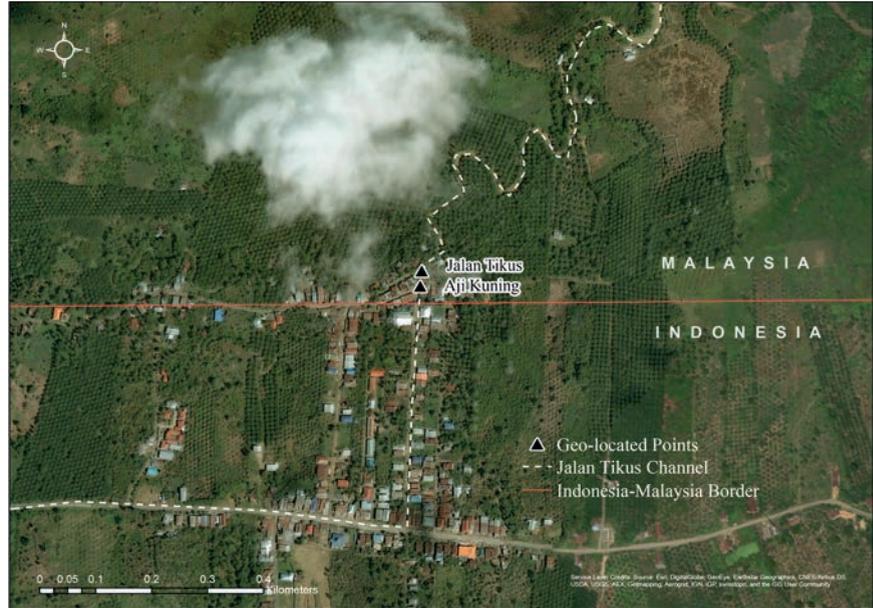


Figure 4 Policing virtual thresholds. Map provided by ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.

at the Indonesia-Malaysia border—throws into stark relief the various ways in which perceptual grounds, ontologies, or maps configure the ways thresholds are detected and policed. It also shows how indexical signs that point such and such about certain states of affairs are “simultaneously important and elusive” (Kockelman 2017: 136), their detection or discernment contingent on the maps and media (e.g., stone markers or GPS) available to particular semiotic agents.

In the following section, I continue examining how agents’ indexical sensitivities to particular intensities inflect the policing of bodies in motion.

Policing Virtual Thresholds II: Signs of “Moreness”

“We’re the same, but not the same, that’s our philosophy,” my older acquaintance tells me as we drive through Tawau Town, passing by *batu* or “stone,” the name for the once conspicuous jetty for undocumented migrants from adjacent Indonesia, now ostensibly closed and closely monitored by *imigresen*. My friend, whom I refer to as Abang (a fictive or tropic use of the Malay kin term for “older brother”), works in intelligence, though he never goes into detail as to what that entails. His by now familiar philosophy of “same, but not the same” refers once again to that

contrastive commonality obtaining between coethnic Bugis citizens and noncitizens in contemporary Sabah. He offers a preliminary example: the “tightness” or relative “sexiness” of jeans. Undocumented Indonesian migrant women, he explains, are distinguishable on the basis of their form-fitting clothing, vis-à-vis more modest, flowing gowns favored by Tawau’s Bugis women. Thinking me suitably convinced, he offers a second example: the “thickness” of migrant talk. Though some undocumented Indonesians may, with varying degrees of success, sartorially assimilate into the fabric of everyday life in Sabah, their talk in Malay is thicker (*lebih pekat*) relative to that of local Malays (*Melayu tempatan*).

Abang’s observations reflect certain ontological assumptions—widely shared in Tawau and greater Sabah—about index-kind or index-identity relations: undocumented Indonesian women have a projected propensity to wear tighter (*lebih ketat*) jeans or sexier (*lebih sexy*) clothing, and undocumented Indonesians in general have thicker speech. This projected propensity toward cross-modal “moreness”—note the presence of the Malay degree adverb *lebih* corresponding to the English degree morpheme *-er* in *sexier*, *tighter*, or *thicker*—has been the object of mediated representation in national news portals. Consider, for example, a profile of Mulyati, a Bugis woman living on Sebatik, in Malaysia’s *Star Online* (2012) news portal.

Mulyati was born in Aji Kuning on the Indonesian side of Sebatik but raised on the Malaysian side of the island. “I was living in Indonesia because in the 1970s we did not know whether this house was in Malaysia or Indonesia,” she says. “We are all the same. We are Bugis, we speak Bugis language. We are all the same because in this village, the Malaysians have mixed with the Indonesians and the Indonesians have mixed with the Malaysians.” Her half-sister, born in Boné Regency in the Bugis homeland of Indonesia’s South Sulawesi Province, was also raised in Aji Kuning, but she currently lives on the Indonesian side of the island. “Take my sister Asirah. She’s an Indonesian. But I don’t see any difference between her and me. Maybe the way we dress and speak,” she says. Mulyati’s reported speech is interlineated with commentary by the *Star*: “Indonesian women, Mulyati observes, tend to wear sexier clothes while Malaysian women are more conservative. For instance, an Indonesian might wear leggings and a blouse, whereas a Malaysian wearing leggings would conceal it in a *baju kurung* [enclosed dress].” Mulyati continues, highlighting that second point of contrast regarding habits of talk. “We also speak differently,” she notes. “When Indonesians speak Bahasa Malaysia, it is thick [*pekat*] with Bahasa Makassar. They also pronounce the words differently.” Here she effectively refers to Makassar Malay, a regional Malay variety spoken throughout the Bugis homeland of South

Sulawesi resulting from the assimilation of the phonology and morphosyntax of two of the region's "local languages" (*Bahasa daerah*) with Malay or Indonesian lexical material (Carruthers 2017b, 2017c). And she marks a certain thickness that distinguishes the Malay spoken by Bugis Indonesians from that spoken by Bugis Malaysians.

Sexiness, tightness, and thickness are abstract qualities stipulated by a predicate that relate to a subject or materialize in a substance: clothes, jeans, and talk.⁷ Much linguistic anthropological ink has been spilled regarding the issue of qualia, or sensuous instances of abstract qualities that "materialize" cross-modally.⁸ Comparatively little work, however, has examined how human beings (as semiotic agents) grade or weigh the relative intensities (or prequantitative "mores" or "lesses") of qualities, and the causal effects that such weighings entail.⁹ Framed with an eye to Sapir (while telescoping back to Aristotle) by way of Mulyati and Abang, abstract qualities like sexiness, tightness, or thickness "admit of a more and a less" (Aristotle 1963). Statements as to the relative sexiness of one's clothes, tightness of one's jeans, or thickness of one's talk make propositionally explicit the assumptions that undergird one's semiotic ontology (Kockelman 2012: 65).¹⁰ They reveal something about the contextually salient and experientially grounded thresholds that, returning to Sapir (1944), double as one's points of departure for determining the relative moreness or lessness of entities and events.

The idea of moreness matters, not only because it helps mediate our understanding of intensity and grading, but primarily because it is regularly invoked and predicated about by Bugis migrants, relating not only to their aspirational orientations but also to processes of policing and passing. A certain item in Malay—*kelebihan*—recurs as an articulated object of desire in the narratives of Bugis migrants in Malaysia or return migrants in Indonesia. Frequently glossed

7. Framed in another way, the predicates that refer to or stand for the embodied qualities in things—*tight*, *sexy*, *thick*—can become subjects of thought in and of themselves (tightness, sexiness, thickness). C. S. Peirce (1906) called this process hypostatic abstraction, a process that "turn[s] predicates [e.g., *tight*, *sexy*, *thick*] from being signs that we think or think through, into being subjects thought of [e.g., tightness, sexiness, thickness]" (Peirce 1906: 522). Recall Peirce's (1867: 288) example of a black stove: "If we say 'The stove is black,' the stove is the *substance*, from which its blackness has not been differentiated, and the *is*, while it leaves the substance just as it was seen, explains its confusedness, by the application to it of *blackness* as a predicate."

8. For an important overview and synthesis of the qualia literature, see Harkness 2015.

9. For exceptions, see Carruthers 2017a, 2017b, and Kockelman 2016, *inter alia*.

10. In this sense, they are examples of Peircean representational interpretants (in contrast to affective and energetic interpretants) (Peirce 1955: 276–77, 1998 [1907]: 398–433; see Kockelman 2012: 64–67).

in the literature as “surplus,” “excess,” or “advantage,” *kelebihan* is defined in one Malay dictionary as “the quality of being more than usual” (Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka 2005: 906). Attending to the word’s morphology, however, provides us with a more precise understanding of its meaning: it is a nominalized form of the degree adverbial *lebih* or “more.” In this formal sense, *kelebihan* (ke-lebih-an or NOM-more-NOM) is best understood as moreness: a kind of meta-quality that migrants stipulate about some (unstated) but semiotically salient quality whose intensity exceeds normative thresholds.¹¹ Bugis migrants often characterize their movement to and from Malaysia as a “search for moreness,” either in their regional variety of Malay (*mencari kelebihan*), or in Bugis (*kelebihangné isappa*). *Moreness* is also used by migrants, however, to indicate certain recognizable intensities that they evince in their everyday speech.

In what remains, I examine two named excesses of migrant speech that are jointly recognizable by migrants and Malaysians alike: *kelebihan G* or a moreness or excess in the letter *G*, and *kelebihan lagu* or a moreness or excess in intonation. Both of these excesses emerge, as Mulyati alluded to earlier, from the assimilation or “mixing” of Bugis phonology with Malay lexicon. The first—an excess in the letter *G*—stems from a phonotactic constraint in the Bugis language that stipulates the glottal stop and velar nasal (ng) as the only consonants appearing in word-final position. This stipulation or constraint is “carried over” by Bugis migrants from Bugis to Malay, shaping the ways they pronounce common Malay words like *fish* (migrants pronounce *ikan* as *ikang*) or *eat* (*makan* is pronounced *makang*), the names of cities in Sabah (Sandakan becomes Sandakang), or even *kelebihan* itself (*kelebihan* becomes *kelebihang*). For speakers, this excess in the letter *G*—sometimes jokingly referred to as an “excess in vitamin *G*” or *kelebihang vitamin G*, in which *kelebihan* and *vitamin* evince the excess *G* in question—reflects an orthographic orientation, in which the excess is visualized through writing, not phonetics. The second named excess—*kelebihan lagu* or intonational excess—stems, like *G*, from mixing, in which prototypically Bugis intonation contours featuring high and low pitch targets are carried over by migrants from Bugis to Malay. Like *G*, a Bugis Indonesian propensity to *malagu-lagu* or evince a moreness or excess in melodic or singsong pitch movement is one that distinguishes Bugis migrants from Bugis Malaysians.

11. See Carruthers (forthcoming) for a closer examination of *kelebihan* qua moreness.

An indigenous Sabahan sits at a table at a nonhalal restaurant in Tawau. “They’re taking our jobs,” he notes between sips of his beer. “And they’re everywhere,” referring to Bugis Indonesians who irregularly enter Sabah. “Everywhere?” I ask. “Yes,” he says, noting that they look “just the same” (*sama sahaja*) as Bugis Malaysian locals. But, by attending to their habits of talk, he explains, they are distinguishable:

Text 1

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>F: Pertama, dia punya loghat. Sebutan kadang-kadang sama, sama! Cuma ada punya sleng, ada punya timing, macam dia punya, apa itu, lagu-lagu itu.</p> <p>AC: Lagu-lagu==</p> <p>F: ==Lagu. Lagunya, punya soun-soun itu tidak sama. Kalo orang di sini, kan, macam orang lokal, lokal di sini ada juga Bajau, ada lah Tidung, kan? Murut. Dusun, Murut, dan Tidung itu saya tidak bezakan, sama dengan loghat saya. Nah, tapi kalo tempatan yang di sini, Bugis, saya tahu.</p> <p>AC: Kenapa dengan Bugis itu?</p> <p>F: Sebab dia ada ikut-ikut dengan dia punya Ibunda punya . . . ini, sleng, lagu-lagunya lah. Lebih kurang begitulah.</p> | <p>1 F: First, they’ve got an accent. Their pronunciation is sometimes the same, the same! It’s just that they’ve got some slang, they’ve got timing, like they have, what is it, a melody.</p> <p>6 AC: A melody==</p> <p>7 F: ==Melody. Their melody, their sounds aren’t the same.</p> <p>9 If people here, right, like local people, locals here we’ve also got Bajau, there’s Tidung, right? There’s Murut. The speech of Dusun, Murut, and Tidung I can’t differentiate, it’s just the same with my accent. Now, if we’re talking about locals here who are Bugis, I can tell.</p> <p>16 AC: What is it about those Bugis?</p> <p>17 F: Because they follow their native . . . uh, slang, it’s their melody. It’s more or less like that.</p> |
|--|---|

“Their melody, their sounds aren’t the same,” he says, tracing the ups and downs of a virtual mountain range in the air with his left hand. This up-and-down topsy-turvy tracing emulates the Bugis tendency to *malagu-lagu*, a habit of speaking that instantly distinguishes them from Bugis *tempatan* or locals whose habits of talk are “more flat” (*lebih rata*). By characterizing the sensual singsong of “ille-

gal” immigrants’ habits of talk with respect to the “flatter” intonation contours of their coethnic, “legal” counterparts, this petty sovereign has not only engaged in acts of grading. He has also identified a certain intensive excess that might be seized on to identify “illegal” interlopers in contemporary Sabah—one that hinges on the highs and lows or the mores and lesses of pitch movement. He continues in a similar vein, identifying “illegal” Bugis from their coethnic Malaysian counterparts by way of a graded excess in another feature of speech:

Text 2

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>F: Nah, ini Bugis, kita tahu sahaja kerana selalu “G” dia orang tidak boleh pakai.</p> <p>AC: Selalu “G”?</p> <p>F: Ah, “N,” “N!” “N” kah, “pulang,” “pulan.”</p> <p>“G” kah dia tak boleh pakai? “N” kah? “Ikang” ah “N” tak boleh sebut! Kalo, kan “ikan,” “ikang.”</p> <p>AC: “Ikang.”</p> <p>F: Kalau “Sandakan,” “Sandakang,” asal “N” hujung . . . “N” dia tak boleh sebut. Tapi oleh kerana dia orang-orang di sini, kan, dia harus learn itu supaya boleh sebut “NG” sama “N.” Tapi macam mana, sudah lancar sudah bercakap keluar juga itu.</p> <p>AC: Dan masih ada [anunya.</p> <p>F: [ah, masih ada</p> <p>AC: Masih ada [lagunya itu.</p> <p>F: [tak boleh hilang.</p> <p>Masih ada.</p> | <p>1 F: Now, these Bugis, of course we know</p> <p>2 it’s them because it’s always “G” they can’t</p> <p>3 use.</p> <p>4 AC: Always “G”?</p> <p>5 F: Ah, “N,” “N!” Is it “N,”</p> <p>6 “return” (pulang), “return” (pulan).</p> <p>7 Is it “G” that they can’t use? Is it “N”?</p> <p>8 “Fish” (ikang) ah it’s “N” that they can’t</p> <p>9 pronounce! If, right, they say “fish” (ikan),</p> <p>10 they say “fish” (ikang).</p> <p>11 AC: “Fish” (ikang).</p> <p>12 F: If “Sandakan,” it’s “Sandakang,” if</p> <p>13 “N” is at the end . . . “N” they cannot</p> <p>14 pronounce. But because they’re people</p> <p>15 who live here, right, they should learn it so</p> <p>16 they can pronounce “NG” as “N.” But</p> <p>17 how can they, if they’re already fluent</p> <p>18 when they speak, it still comes out.</p> <p>19 AC: And there’s still the [um.</p> <p>20 F: [ah, still is.</p> <p>21 AC: Still have that [melody.</p> <p>22 F: [cannot disappear.</p> <p>23 Still there.</p> |
|---|--|

In homing in on a certain sound, this Sabahan identified a certain intensity or excess that obtains in the speech of undocumented Bugis migrants from Indone-

sia. Just like those singsong pitch contours that migrants “bring” to Malay from their Bugis language, one of those features is the velar nasal in the word-final position. Much like those prototypically Bugis singsong pitch contours, an intensive or graded excess in this sound is one that indigenous Sabahans have indexically homed in on as an aural sign of outsidership (Carruthers 2017b, 2017c). And it’s one that undocumented immigrants’ coethnic, Malaysia-born counterparts have homed in on as well.

Sketch 2

“What’s more important, Bugis language or Malay language?” a Malaysian Bugis woman asks her Indonesian Bugis interlocutor on a palm oil plantation. The Malaysian woman, herself a descendent of Bugis extraction, is accompanied by two Bugis Malaysian friends, one of whom is an active member of UMNO. “Bugis is important!” she exclaims. “I don’t know half of Malay!” (*Nda’ tahu separuh itu Melayu*), she continues, evincing that prototypically Bugis singsong in the process (see fig. 5).

Rather than focusing on the denotational content of her interlocutor’s response, the UMNO member homes in on the singsong pitch contours of her utterance, interrupting and characterizing it as “very Bugis” (*Bugis sangat*). “Too Bugis” (*terlampau Bugis*), she tells me later.

The Indonesian Bugis woman’s dramatic phrase-final fall on *Melayu* (see fig. 5) is what triggered her Malaysian interlocutor, leading her to characterize the woman’s utterance as “very Bugis” (*Bugis sangat*) and “too Bugis” (*terlampau Bugis*). Again, note the presence of intensifiers *sangat* and *terlampau*, corresponding to English intensifiers *very* and *too*. Both utterances are implicit comparative constructions which imply that the woman’s speech is in excess of itself, in a manner of speaking. Indeed, to say that the woman’s speech is too Bugis is to imply it transgresses locally salient thresholds or points of departure. It is to say that her *lagu* or intonation is, as our UMNO member would inform me later, “very Bugis compared to the speech patterns of local Bugis people.”

This Malaysian woman would later explain to me that people such as this woman—card-carrying “Malaysians” actually from Indonesia—must “reduce” certain features of their speech such that it aligns with locally salient norms and forms, and such that the speakers might effectively pass as Malaysian citizens. “It’s best if they [Bugis immigrants from Indonesia] correct their pronunciation as best they can, because from their pronunciation one can tell if they’ve lived a long time in Sabah or just a few years, even though they’re identity card holders,” she

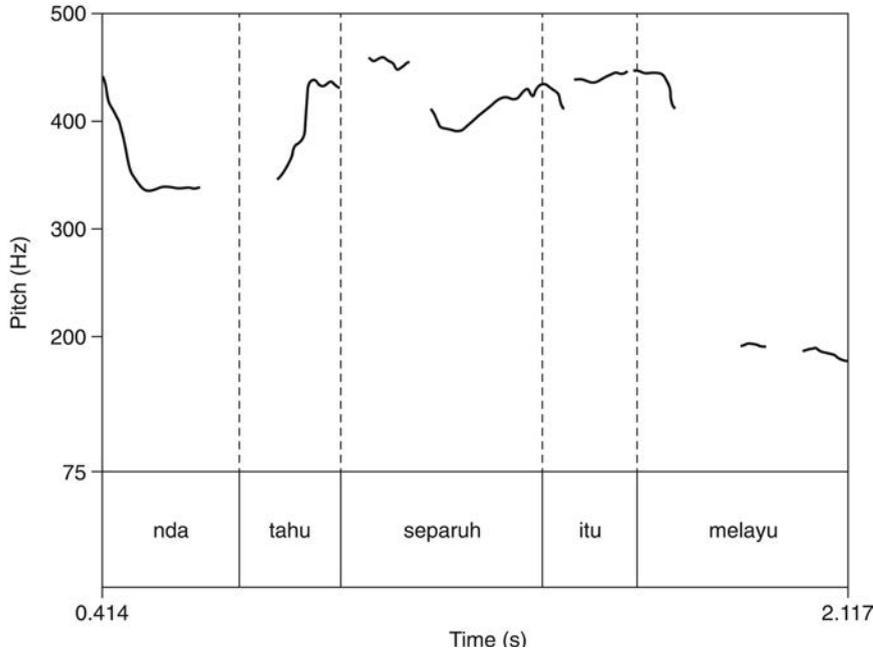


Figure 5 Intonational “excess.”

told me. To pass as local Malays (and avoid potential arrest), such migrants must modulate, minimize, or “hide their Bugisness” (*tapok kebugisannya*) by masking certain sonic excesses that distinguish them from their coethnic Malaysian counterparts. In contemporary Sabah, an excess in singsong pitch or velar nasals in the word-final position is “enregistered” (Agha 2007: 144) or conventionally understood to index or point toward “illegal” presences, and speakers who exhibit such excesses may be subject to capture by police (Carruthers 2017b, 2017c). To effectively pass as local card-carrying Malays, then, such migrants must modulate their habits of talk, lest the sounds they evince deviate from a normatively regimented distribution of the sensible.

In this crucial sense, then, processes of policing—of detecting a putative excess or moreness in certain features of migrant speech—serve as the very points of departure for processes of passing. By mapping regimes of sensible intensities, and by coming to understand where the thresholds between such regimes lie, migrants might minimize embodied excesses, enabling them to effectively travel

under thresholds of detection. Like agentive, “thermodynamic gods” (Schneider and Sagan 2005: 326), they might pass by using their “consciousness to direct energy, to tap into local muscle gradients in [the] body,” modulating certain intensities by policing laryngeal and articulatory settings.

Conclusion: Policing Intensity

In *The Policing Web*, Jean-Paul Brodeur (2010: 41) argues that “a theory of policing aiming to be (relatively) complete should provide an account of what is being referred to when we use the word ‘police’ as a common noun (the police), as a verb (policing), and as an adjective (as in police apparatus).” With an eye to Brodeur’s parts of speech, *policing* in *policing intensity* may be alternatively read as a noun or verb, meaning the phrase may refer to the relative intensity or magnitude of policing practices on the one hand, and to the practice of policing or monitoring intensity (qua direct object) on the other.

First, and in the absence of readily available or regularized data of arrest or deportation, *policing intensity*, or the relative magnitude or intensity of policing practices in Sabah, is a notion that migrants speak of with respect to a more or a less. Recall here the comment by our Nunukan karaoke patron who, drawing on the Malay intensifier *terlampau* or *too*, noted that the policing of undocumented migrants in the East Malaysian state has now become “too cruel,” in which a present magnitude of cruelty is weighed or graded with respect to past magnitudes. This current intensity is one that forecloses (at least for now) the possibility of this patron’s return, and it is one that, following a political sea change in the 2018 Malaysian general election, has a nebulous future. In May 2018, the Alliance of Hope—led opposition won a simple majority over and against the UMNO-led National Front coalition. This has led to a degree of uncertainty regarding the future of undocumented immigrants in Sabah, a place once considered a “fixed deposit” for the National Front and UMNO, the Malay race-based party alleged to have illegally disseminated national identity cards to Bugis immigrants in exchange for votes. Leading up to the election, Sabah’s “illegal immigrant problem” was characterized as “the mother of all problems of Sabah,” with calls for “the government to resolve the issue of illegals getting their hands on genuine Malaysian identity documents through the back door” (*Borneo Post* 2018). Subsequent to the opposition’s win, calls reemerged for what we might call the re-“fabrication of social order” (Neocleous 2000) in Sabah, where all extant Sabah identity cards would be made null and void, with new ones issued only to “genuine Sabahans” holding birth certificates. The policing apparatus presupposed and

potentially entailed by this policy proposal, would, as I've written elsewhere, have devastating entailments in the lives of those Bugis Indonesians who have come to pass as card-carrying Sabahans (Carruthers 2016).

Second, and returning to the issue at the heart of this essay, *policing intensity* refers to the monitoring of intensity as a discernable dimension of everyday experience. I have addressed how policing practices take aim at the “more-or-lessness” of flows and forms that transgress institutionally and normatively regimented thresholds—be they putatively “intransitive” borders between nations or borders between speaking subjects. Put differently, in the Indonesia-Malaysia borderlands, encounters with and evaluations of moreness—or what William James (1890: 151–52) called “the immediate feeling of an outstanding plus”—reflect and shape certain distributions of the sensible.¹²

Rancière (2004: 12) defines his “distribution of the sensible” or *partage du sensible*—where *partage*, an item that “combines the sense of both division and connection” (Mezzadra and Neilson 2012: 66)—as a *langue*-like “system of self-evident facts of sense perception that simultaneously discloses the existence of something in common and the delimitations that define the respective parts and positions within it.” There is a rather ubiquitous term floating about today that resonates with Rancière, if defined accordingly: *ontology*—that set of assumptions that semiotic agents have about the signs and kinds that constitute a world (see Kockelman 2012, 2017). If we approach *le partage du sensible* in this way, then we might also personify or recharacterize Rancière’s abstract notion of the police as those keepers of kinds—that is to say, as agents who have militantly common-sense intuitions about where the thresholds or borders between different kinds of entities lie, on the basis of the signs they evince.

Let’s recall Rancière’s (2004: 39) assertion that the political “defines models of speech and action but also regimes of sensible intensity,” maps “the visible” and “trajectories between the visible and the sayable,” and defines “variations of sensible intensities, perceptions, and the abilities of bodies.” If this is the political, then how do those keepers of kinds—that is to say, the police—not engage in political acts in their everyday lives?

To bring this observation to bear on this essay’s foregoing ethnographic particulars, how is Assemblyman Muis’s agenda not explicitly political, insofar as it seeks to regulate or redefine certain “variations of sensible intensities, percep-

12. Note here the rhetorical resonances between James’s sense of moreness as “an outstanding plus” and Mimi Thi Nguyen’s (2015: 793) notion of the hoodie as “an example of Hortense Spillers’s signifying property plus.”

tions, and the abilities of bodies” in the act of building his wall along a virtual border that conflicts with Hasidah’s notion of the invisible fence that cuts through her home? And, with an eye to Sapir’s (1944) work on grading, how are undocumented migrants’ efforts to pass as locals—efforts that entail the minimizing or masking of certain qualities—not contingent on their contrastive evaluation of sensible intensities, an act that Rancière resolutely defines as political but one that, in this case, might best be defined as a mode of self-policing?

The police is political and the political polices, and this is more than evident in the Indonesia-Malaysia borderlands, a setting where people and places are characterized as more-or-less the same on the basis of certain sensible intensities. With respect to high-stakes situations or settings where one’s failure to pass “lexical [or phono-lexico-grammatical] border guards” (Suleiman 2013: 21) may mean life or death, the stakes discussed here may seem decidedly lower.¹³ Recalling the plainclothes policemen depicted in my introduction, this fact could perhaps reflect a historically cultivated sense of kinship or cross-border commonality that obtains between Bugis Indonesians and Malaysians. Nonetheless, the setting described here—one where border crossing is decidedly not a movement between radical worlds or incommensurate domains, as is so often alleged in the literature—allows us to consider policing from a different angle of vision. It encourages us to consider how the police act within a slippery continuum that they themselves orchestrate or seek to do so.¹⁴ And, with an eye to the mediating role played by intensity or more-or-lessness within such a setting, it indicates something about the foundationally fuzzy logic that undergirds certain processes of policing.

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13. See the shibboleths associated with the “Parsley” massacre of the Dominican Republic, Palestinian versus Lebanese pronunciations of *tomato* in the Lebanese civil war, or Mojaddedi’s work (this issue) on language, translation, and wartime exchange. See *Boys Don’t Cry* (dir. Kimberly Peirce; 1999) for another high-stakes depiction of the perils of passing.

14. I thank Stuart Schrader for suggesting this point.

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