PART 2

East Kalimantan
Between 1997 and 2007, hundreds of men and women departed from the village of Krajan alone. To today, there is no end to the exodus. On October 5, 2009, a small article appeared in the Surabaya Morning (Surabaya Pagi) entitled: Seribu warga eksodus ke Kalimantan (Thousand residents in exodus to Kalimantan). It describes the migration wave after Ramadan 2009 from Krajan and three adjacent villages (Andungsari, Sumber Dumpyong and Ardisaeng) through Surabaya: ‘A wave of more than 1000 inhabitants of [the villages] leave for Kalimantan. They leave the island with the hope of gaining a better life [literally: a life with more dignity]. In a single day, around 100 people from these villages charter a truck to board one of the ships in Surabaya’s harbour Tanjung Pekar with destination Kalimantan. The travellers consist of people who have visited their home village and now leave and take along new family members and neighbours’.

‘In the villages where they come from they are farmers or landless labourers who leave for various places in Kalimantan. Some go as far as Sulawesi and even to the Moluccas’, the article continues. The final decision to go was taken after they felt they could no longer survive in their village because of the lack of economic opportunities. After Lebaran, [the festive period following Ramadan] every visiting person, who had migrated earlier, took at least five relatives and neighbours along. […] According to the village head of Krajan and the former village head Bagenda, now member of the DPRD in Bondowoso, the government should do something about the poverty in the villages’.

This article summarizes the nature of Madurese migration from East Java: the migrants come from poor rural areas, they go to islands where large land development and crop booms are taking place, they use the cheapest possible transportation and they use networks of relatives and neighbours to find a job. In the following chapters, I provide an overview of how these Madurese migrants live and settle, and how they constitute a secure livelihood. The key questions are: how do they make a living, what role do social relationships play, and how and in what ways do they cope with insecurities in the migration areas.

The story of the people from Krajan is not unique. The migrants from Krajan are but a tiny part of the enormous diaspora of Madurese who have moved to Kalimantan, to other islands in Indonesia, to cities, to populate frontier areas, who flock to construction sites and occupy sidewalks and market places in search of income and a better life. They have left communities in which they