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THEME

**Southeast Asian Islam:
Plurality, Tolerance and Change**

Plurality,
Tolerance and
Change in
Southeast Asian
Islam

Islam in Malaysia:
Between Rhetoric
and Reality

Islam, State and
Civil Society in
Malaysia: The Case
of the Al Arqam

Claiming Religious
Space: Malay
Women and the
Transformation of
Rituals in the
Urban Context

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Election Politics
and Beyond

A Religiously Based
Institutionalization
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Return of the Birds.
Images of a
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Muslim Minorities
in Cambodia

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Editorial and production

Nordic Institute of Asian Studies (NIAS), Leifsgade 33, DK-2300 Copenhagen S, Denmark
Tel: +45 3532 9502
Fax: +45 3532 9549
Email: leena@nias.ku.dk
Online: <http://www.nias.ku.dk>

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Editor

Jørgen Delman (responsible under the Danish press law)

Coordinating editor

Leena Höskuldsson

Guest editor for this issue

Sven Cederroth

Editorial committee

Jørgen Delman
Leena Höskuldsson
Gerald Jackson
Timo Kivimäki
Anja Møller Rasmussen
Erik R. Skaaning

Language editor

Janice Leon

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Leena Höskuldsson

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On 6 October 2004, the final signing ceremony of the Cooperation Agreement of the 'new' NIAS took place at the Nordic Council of Ministers. From left: Director Jørgen Delman, NIAS, Secretary General Per Unckel, Nordic Council of Ministers, Rector Göran Bexell, Lund University, Rector Linda Nielsen, University of Copenhagen, and Rector Finn Junge Jensen, Copenhagen Business School. Behind: Erik R. Skaaning and John F. Christensen, NIAS Administration. More pictures on p. 25.

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Does Nordic make sense?

Restructuring of NIAS – first step in place/second step on the way



Jørgen Delman

NIAS has taken the initiative to establish the Asian Century Research School, a network institution that would provide quality PhD education in Asian studies in the Nordic region. A Nordic working group has been set up to formulate the strategy, establish thematic or regional clusters under the school, and put together financing. The school plans to offer a programme of activities, including courses, supervision and scholarships, already from next year. The initiative is one of the outcomes of the reconstruction of NIAS.

Yes, it's official: the 'new' NIAS is finally on its way. From 1 January 2005, the institute will have a new ownership. In October (see opposite page), the **University of Copenhagen**, the **Copenhagen Business School**, and **Lund University** signed an agreement to jointly share the responsibility for the running of NIAS in the future. The University of Copenhagen will be the legal and administrative host of NIAS.

The 'new' NIAS will remain Nordic with continuing core funding from the Nordic Council of Ministers. This will be topped up by contributions from the three founding partners.

This ownership arrangement finishes the first step in our restructuring process.

Next step is the creation of a **Nordic NIAS Council** (NNC). We had a second meeting with our Nordic partners in late September to discuss the establishment of the NNC and what the NNC and NIAS should do together. We are now in the process of sending out the formal invitation to the Nordic partners to join the NNC. After the constructive meeting in September, we believe that this, the second step, is within reach.

It means that the 'new' NIAS will be built on two platforms, i.e. (1) universities in the Øresund Region and (2) partners in the remainder of the Nordic region. By combining the strengths and efforts of partner institutions and colleagues in these two regions we are confident that we will be able to continue to play a focal role in the development of Asian studies in our part of the world.

The new ownership will bring us a great deal closer to our partners and colleagues in the Nordic region. We will continue as a hub and facilitator, as well as strive to stimulate new initiatives in Asian studies for the benefit of our partners. The *Asian Century Research School* is one such example.

We see the new construct as a sign that our partners have appreciated our competence as well as our results in the past four decades, and that they believe that we will continue to make a difference through our activities and services. We are proud and thankful for this. Our future will still be with Asia and with Nordic partners. Nordic still makes sense in Asian studies.

From 1 January, we shall have a new name. It will be *NIAS – Nordic Institute of Asian Studies*, and not 'Nordic Institute of Asian Studies (NIAS)'. NIAS has become a brand name and we have decided to highlight that in our name at the same time as the 'new' NIAS is established.

Our readers will have noticed the process in the last couple of years that has led to make *NIASnytt* a streamlined and informed magazine focusing on important issues in the transformation of modern Asia. Each issue has a guest editor from a Nordic university or research institute who puts together a number of articles from his/her colleagues around the world. Sven Cederroth from the University of Gothenburg, himself an old NIAS-hand way back, has put together this issue on Southeast Asian Islam: Plurality, Tolerance and Change. The articles provide fresh, research-based views and regional perspectives on one of the burning issues today: what is happening with Islam in Asia?

Enjoy your reading! Feedback is welcome.

Finally, a Happy New Year to all our readers. We look forward to an exciting 2005, two steps ahead of where we were last year.

Jørgen Delman
Director



Sven Cederroth is an Associate Professor at the Department of Social Anthropology, Göteborg University where he is also associated with the Centre for Asian Studies. In 1988–97 he was a senior researcher at NIAS. He has carried out fieldwork on the islands of Lombok and Java in Indonesia and in peninsular Malaysia. He is presently completing a re-study of religious practices on Lombok based on his original fieldwork 30 years ago. He has published a large number of books and articles on leadership, religious practices and rural livelihoods. These include *Survival and Profit in Rural Java*, *The Case of an East Javanese Village*, *Managing Marital Disputes in Malaysia*, *Islamic Mediators and Conflict Resolution in the Syariah Courts* (co-authored with Sharifah Zaleha) and *Elections in Indonesia*. *The New Order and Beyond* (co-edited with Hans Antlöv).

Plurality, Tolerance and Change in Southeast Asian Islam

By **Sven Cederroth**

*In Indonesia and Malaysia, two Southeast Asian countries with almost the same official language and a similar Malay culture, Islam is the dominant religion. In Indonesia, the largest Muslim country in the world where more than 90 per cent of the population are Muslims Islam has no official position. In principle all recognized religions are equal. In *pancasila*, the five statements which make up the constitution of the Indonesian republic, the first point refers generally to belief in God, without mentioning any specific religion by name. In Malaysia, where just over 50 per cent of the population are Muslims, Islam is nevertheless the official state religion, and by being classified as *bumiputra*, sons of the earth, the native population, that is the Muslim Malays, enjoy a number of privileges. Under the influence of many different orthodox mission groups, known as the *dakwah*-movement, the position of Islam in Malaysian society has steadily strengthened during the last two centuries. The two dominant Malay parties, the United Malays National organisation (UMNO) and the *Persatuan Islam se-Malaysia* (PAS), almost seem to compete to satisfy Islamic demands.*

The above description indicates that the position of Islam in the two countries of Indonesia and Malaysia differs quite considerably. In Malaysia, Islam has been identified with the Malays and with Malay culture to such an extent that when non-Muslims convert, they also become Malay (*masuk Islam/masuk Melayu*), irrespective of their earlier ethnic belonging. In Indonesia, the development has been quite different. Here, Islam and ethnicity have effectively been kept separate by reference to the *pancasila* constitution. Its first principle, *Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa*, belief in God, is so general and unspecified that no ethnic group can oppose it.

This issue of *NIASnytt* contains a total of seven articles on Malaysian and Indonesian Islam. The three contributions on Malaysian Islam all deal with Islamic plurality and change in one way or another.

Firstly, Omar Farouk discusses the position of Islam in the Malaysian nation. Although all Malays are supposed to be Muslims and Islam is therefore a

homogenizing agent of Malay ethnicity, in practice the religion is now becoming increasingly heterogenous. Many different schools of Islam, as well as a multitude of *tariqa* movements are present. Also within official Islam there is no uniformity and there is considerable variation between the states. Finally, the political role of Islam also adds to its immense prestige in Malaysia.

In her article, Sharifah Zaleha also develops the theme of Islamic heterogeneity in Malaysia by discussing one of the *dakwah* (mission) movements and its remarkable transformation from a dynamic religio-political movement in opposition to the state and the official version of Islam to an economic organisation that supports the state and its development mission. The movement in question, Al Arqam, began as an informal Islamic study group attempting to recreate an ideal Islamic community through mysticism and economic radicalism but developed into a messianic movement, preaching the coming of Imam Mahdi and the necessity to take up armed

struggle against the state. After it was outlawed in 1994, the movement eventually managed to reorganise itself as an economic organisation in line with the official Malaysian version of Sunni Islam.

In the final article about Malaysian Islam, Sylva Frisk looks into the changing role of women in the religious sphere. Among rural Malays, the *kenduri* has long been of central importance as a feast or communal ritual celebrated for a wide variety of purposes ranging from life crisis events to religious ceremonies connected with the Muslim calendar. However, when the ritual has followed the Malays into urban and middle class contexts significant changes have been brought about. In the traditional *kenduri* there was a division of labour between men and women whereas in the urban contexts there are now exclusively female *kenduri* ceremonies known as *majlis doa*. There are even female religious authorities to lead the prayers which indicates that women are now taking a more important

role in religion than before.

Indonesian Islam is treated in four articles which also reflect the wide variety of the religion, on political Islam, traditional Islamic education, a Muslim student organisation and syncretistic Islam, respectively. There is a red thread that more or less explicitly unites all the four articles and that is the insistence on the plurality and tolerance of Indonesian Islam.

Azyumardi Azra describes the recent political developments in Indonesia and the role of Islam in politics in particular. He argues that the successfully held general elections in Indonesia prove that there is no inherent incompatibility between Islam and democracy. Islamic issues, such as the possible implementation of *shari'ah*, have not become central issues in the elections, rather the success of an Islamically-conservative party, the PKS, was due to its fight against corruption and for the creation of good governance. Despite recent incidents, Indonesian Muslims are basically moderate and tolerant and there are a lot of signs that post-election Indonesia is likely to be more stable.

The theme of tolerant and democratic Indonesian Islam is also the focus also of the article by Kristian Morville, who discusses his experiences with HMI-MPO, a Muslim Student Association, the largest such organisation in Indonesia. He describes the HMI as a very tolerant and plural organisation, allowing all kinds of Islamic students into its ranks and actively encouraging independence and critical thinking. The organisation manages to create a room for free and dynamic discussions in which young Muslim students can experiment with new ideas without having to compromise their religious convictions.

A similar theme is pursued by Jörgen Hellman who has likewise followed the life and teachings in a *pesantren*, a traditional Islamic boarding school. While doing fieldwork to study ritual forms of fasting, he decided to participate in the life of the *pesantren* during *ramadan*, the fasting month. His article is a personally coloured treatment of the routines of the fasting month and the religious teachings connected to it. His experiences also enable him to reflect on the position of the *kiai*, the religious leader of the school, inside the school compound itself as well as in his relations with the surrounding neighbourhood. He concludes that the *pesantren* and the *kiai* are central in developing a moral basis for society at large.

The theme of plurality returns in the fourth and final article about Indonesian Islam. In his article Sven Cederroth describes his experiences in a North Lombok society which practises a kind of Islamic syncretism known as *wetu telu*. The description is focused on a remarkable mosque which contains a number of images not normally found in mosques, such as carved birds and a dragon. The mosque is the central sanctuary for all Lombok confessors of *wetu telu* but it is not used in the same way as ordinary mosques. No Friday prayers are ever held in the mosque and it is visited only by specifically appointed religious officials at a few ritually important phases of the Muslim year.

Besides the two large Muslim countries of the area, there are also Muslim minorities in a number of other Southeast Asian countries. In two of these countries, the Philippines and Thailand, the Muslims are concentrated in the southern parts of the country and in both countries they are now actively

engaged in armed conflict with the state. In the Southern parts of the Philippines, the Moro Liberation Front has long waged a guerilla war against the Philippine government whereas the conflict in the Pattani province of South Thailand is of more recent date and so far has not escalated into a full-scale war although there have recently been a number of bloody incidents. The countries of the Indochina region – Vietnam Cambodia and Laos – have Muslim ethnic minorities and one of these, the Cham of Cambodia, is the focus of an article by Ing-Britt Trankell and Jan Ovesen. The Cham are descendants of the historical Champa kingdom of present-day Vietnam and today they number about half a million people. The Cham are divided into three separate groups, two of which, the Cham proper and the Chvea, adhere to the Malay-influenced Shafi branch of Sunni Islam. The third group, known as Jahed, practises a syncretist version of Islam in which a spirit possession cult plays an important role. The Jahed follow the Muslim customs such as they have inherited them from their Champa ancestors. One of these include their insistence on praying only once a week, on Friday, not five times a day as normally practised.

Relevant bibliographical material concerning the present theme are available at:

https://rex.kb.dk/F/-?func=file&file_name=find-b&local_base=nia02_isa



Omar Farouk Bajunid obtained his Ph. D. from the University of Kent at Canterbury, England, in 1981. He taught for many years at the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur before moving to Japan as a tenured professor. He now teaches at the Faculty of International Studies, Hiroshima City University. He has done considerable research in Southeast Asia on a range of themes including the role of Muslim minorities and the contemporary phenomenon of Islamic resurgence. He is currently series editor of the 'Islam in Asia' series for Marshall Cavendish Academic [Singapore]. The first volume of the series, *The Life of This World: Negotiated Muslim Lives in Thai Society* by Chaiwat Satha-Anand, is due to be released soon. The second volume, slotted for 2005, comprises a collection of essays by a panel of international scholars on the theme of Buddhists-Muslim Relations in Thailand.

Islam in Malaysia: Between Rhetoric and Reality

By Omar Farouk Bajunid

Islam in Malaysia is more than an enigma. Sometimes it appears to be a straightforward phenomenon but at other times, it emerges as something very complex. The rhetoric that is often attached to Islam invariably blurs or impairs its image unless one is really able to read in between the lines and understand the peculiar contexts within which it evolves. Probably because Islam in Malaysia is so closely intertwined with a range of other variables including rituals, culture, tradition, magic, myth, emotion, genealogy, psychology, language, art, knowledge, power and perhaps most potent of all, politics, it inevitably tends to symbolize different things to different people, believers as well as non-believers. But yet its presence is so pervasive that one can immediately feel the overpowering sense of its ubiquitousness.

Islam seems to be everywhere – in the corridors of power and the courts, in the bureaucracy and in the legislatures, in the homes and palaces, in the streets, in the restaurants and shopping malls, in offices and factories, in taxis and buses, at the airports and train stations, on television, over the radio and on the internet. Its high visibility often tends to give the impression that it is a massive monolith. Yet, partly because of the way it manifests itself in Malaysia, partly because of the manner in which it is organized and partly because of its inherent nature, the religion is far from monolithic. The diversity that Islam in Malaysia admits is remarkable and the many paradoxes that characterize it are simply amazing. Failure to appreciate this fundamental perspective is bound to distort one's perception and understanding of its actual role in Malaysia.

The Constitution of Malaysia merely stipulates that Islam is the religion of the Federation and yet it appears to have been conclusively interpreted to mean that it is the official religion of the Federation. The architects of the Constitution must have had good reason to avoid defining too explicitly the place of Islam in the Malaysian democratic polity. Yet, the mere existence of this

constitutional provision has been viewed as a sufficient legal and political basis for the government to provide active support and patronage to Islam. Likewise, constitutionally, the jurisdiction over Islamic matters is supposed to rest squarely with the states rather than with the federal government and yet, since independence, there have been deliberate, repeated and systematic attempts to dilute this provision by trying to centralize and standardize the administration of Islam. Not that this is a bad thing but the legal anomaly cannot be casually dismissed.

In principle, it is the hereditary rulers of the nine Malay states who should serve as the constitutional heads of Islam in their respective states, but that function seems to be almost totally symbolic and ceremonial. To what extent the Malay sovereigns can exercise their jurisdiction in matters pertaining to Islam without prior consultation with the federal government or without its consent is debatable. There is a National Council of Religious Affairs which is supposed to be made up of all the State Religious Councils, but by choice rather than by default, not all the states are represented.

Technically, freedom of

religion is guaranteed in the Constitution but it remains to be seen whether in practice this right can really be exercised. Previous Muslim converts who wanted to renounce their new faiths are known to have incurred a lot of problems – bureaucratic, legal and social. Muslims who want to give up Islam, and there have already been several high-profile cases, have even greater hurdles to cross. Since the legal definition of Malay includes the adoption and practice of Islam, Malays who forsake their religion will automatically forfeit their ethnic status and all the special privileges that accompany.

Conversely, other Muslims, including new converts, have tried to use this religious conduit to gain recognition as Malays and in the process have become beneficiaries of the special privileges that are supposed to be reserved only for the Malays and the other indigenous groups. In an important sense the role of Islam as the homogenizing agent of Malay ethnicity has been reinforced. The numerical base of the Malays has grown tangibly either due to the above phenomenon or the rapid increase of their population compared to the other ethnic groups but yet,

paradoxically, at the same time Malay ethnicity in Malaysia is also becoming more heterogeneous than ever before. In the final analysis all Malays are supposed to be Muslims mutually reinforcing their ethnic identity with Islamic identity. Officially, it is the Sunni school which is accepted as the official school of Islam followed in Malaysia while the practices of the other schools, except Shiism, are tolerated.

Although official rhetoric tries to project the image of Islam in Malaysia as a coherent, unified and harmonious faith, the reality seems to be much more complex. Even within official Islam, there is no uniformity. One of the Malaysian states, Perlis, formally adopts the reformist version of Islam which is close to *Wahhabism*. Another of the states, Kelantan, on the other hand, has been trying to impose *huddud*, the criminal penal code, albeit without much success. The ideologization of Islam by the fundamentalist Islamic party, PAS, which has been in power in Kelantan for much of Malaysia's modern history since independence, highlights one distinctive popular dimension of political Islam that is in operation and which stands in stark contrast to that which the UMNO-led Coalition claims to advocate. The Hanafi school of Islam, although a minor school, flourishes in many urban areas of the country and within certain segments of the Muslim community. The number of mystical orders, *tariqa* movements, existing covertly and overtly throughout the country is simply too large to come under official scrutiny.

Among the Muslim public, beneath the veneer of a common faith, the attitudes, affiliations and approaches toward Islam vary considerably from region to region, state to state, group to group, family to family and

between individuals. Like their counterparts in other countries, there is considerable variety with regard to the level of understanding, commitment, piety and practice of Islam within the Muslim community in Malaysia. Generally, the Malays are known to have a strong emotional attachment to Islam. Indeed, at one level, Islam is invariably considered to constitute a central feature of the Malay collective identity and forms an integral part of their psyche, identity and culture. Through Islam, the Malays see themselves as being an integral part of the universal Islamic moral community or the *ummah*. However, as indicated above, there are also apostates among the Malays although the number is believed to be very small and perhaps more significantly, there is also a discernible proportion of the Muslim community in Malaysia with a very liberal and lax attitude towards their religion. The large number of Muslims either patronizing or working in pubs, karaoke bars and nightclubs is a good indication of the presence of this group. On another note, Muslim women in Malaysia appear to be among the most liberated in terms of their public visibility and freedom to receive education, to work, to socialize, and to participate in the political system. Although the overwhelming majority seems to be rather strict in their observance of the Muslim code of attire, usually wearing the *hijab* or at least a scarf, many still opt to be freed from what they perceive as something trivial or unnecessary. And interestingly, even for those who conform strictly, there seems to be considerable leeway in terms of their choices of style and colour. The margin which Malaysian Islam seems to allow its individual adherents to play with is sufficiently spacious to enable them to express their

individualities with very few constraints.

One other interesting paradox which characterizes Malaysian Islam is that while on the one hand, Islamic consciousness seems to be at an unprecedented high as manifested by the growth of Islamic associations and institutions, wide and dominant media coverage of Islamic issues and news, increasing popularity of Islamic studies and schools, frequency of Islamic seminars and conferences, preferences for conservative forms of Islamic attire and the proliferation of all kinds of Islamic symbols, which contribute to the creation of the aura of ubiquity of Islam giving the impression that the religion is on the ascendancy, on the other hand, a contradictory phenomenon characterized by an incredible range of negative incidents such as infanticide, rape, incest, sodomy, corruption, fraud, robbery, highway bullies and other crimes, mainly involving the Muslims, has risen sharply in Malaysia. Similarly, as the role of Islam appears to dominate the public space in Malaysia, social problems embracing areas such as alcoholism, drug addiction and drug-trafficking, homosexuality, domestic abuse, divorce and the spread of HIV Aids, all of which primarily affect the Muslims, have also increased dramatically.

Finally, it is the role of Islam in politics that seems to give it immense prestige and leverage in Malaysia. It is the practice of democracy that has given Islam its political space and premium. It provided the religion with a political formula to allow itself to be co-opted in the competition for the support and patronage of the people. Given its pervasiveness in Malay society and culture, it is understandable

continued on p. 19



Sharifah Zaleha binte Syed Hassan, Ph D (Cornell) is currently an Honorary Research Associate at the Institute For Environment and Development also known as LESTARI, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia. A social anthropologist by training, Sharifah has engaged in fieldwork in Malaysia to investigate the role of syariah courts, Islamic movements and gender issues in Malaysian Islam. Her works on these matters are recorded in local and international journals such as *Akademika*, *Bulletin of Interfaith Studies*, *Sojourn*, *Solidarity* and the *Asian Journal of Social Science*, as well as a book co-authored with Sven Cederroth entitled *Managing Marital Disputes in Malaysia: Islamic Mediators and Conflict Resolution in the Syariah Courts* (NIAS-Curzon, 1997) and an edited volume entitled *Malaysian Women in the Wake of Change* (University of Malaya Press, 1998).

Islam, State and Civil Society in Malaysia: The Case of the Al Arqam

By Sharifah Zaleha Syed Hassan

In Malaysia, Islamic non-governmental organisations form an important sector of the civil society. They are however, closely watched by the government which would not hesitate to repress them if their activities were perceived to prevent the attainment of the national goals of multi-racial harmony, peace and tolerance. One such organisation that met this fate was the Al Arqam. The movement was dissolved in August 1994 but three years later reinvented itself as the Rufaqa. To be able to operate as an active civil society actor, the former Al Arqam evidently had to change its vision of Islam and stance with regards to issues of democracy, nationalism and pluralism. This essay explains why and how this change has taken place.

Al Arqam's beliefs and goals

The Al Arqam originated as an informal religious group (*jemaah*). Like many groups that sprang up in the city of Kuala Lumpur in the mid-1960s, the Al Arqam served as a social context within which a new consciousness of Islam, Islamic history and the Shari'ah was forged among urban-based Malay middle class. Its founder, Ashaari Muhammad, came to maturity just as the British were about to leave Malaysia (then the Federation of Malaya) and was not unaware of the rising tide of Islam in Egypt, India, Sudan and Pakistan. Before establishing the Al Arqam, Ashaari supported the politics of dissidence mounted by the Islamic Party of Malaysia and joined the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM). Like the other Islamist activists of the time, Ashaari was concerned with the impact of modernization and secularization on Malay religiosity and the precarious position of the Malays in the country's political arena in the face of non-Malay challenge. He blamed both conditions entirely on the Malays for allowing Satan and their baser selves (*nafsu*) to arouse their souls to worldly concerns and for being too dependent on the government for succour and protection.

Ashaari promised that if they faithfully followed the example of Prophet Muhammad, they would be strong and could dominate over the non-believers. To him, walking in the path of the Prophet meant constantly stimulating one's soul to resonate to issues that concerned Allah and the other-world, making the mystical practices of tariqat Muhammadiyah the centre of one's life and expanding one's resources and efforts to develop Islamic villages or communes. The final goal was the establishment of an Islamic society capped with an Islamic state which Ashaari predicted would gradually emerge.

Al Arqam's trends of proselytization

When it was active, the Al Arqam managed to recruit about 10,000 full-time and part-time members from among university students, professionals, factory workers, and government employees to live and work in its 28 communes that were distributed all over Malaysia. The Al Arqam followers stood out in public because of their attire and lifestyle. The women wore black gowns and face veils while the men wore turbans and green robes. They led a spartan lifestyle, drew from a common pool of resources money and goods to

meet their daily needs and to manage on a collective basis their clinics, vegetable farms and small-scale industries practised polygamy widely and were deeply loyal to Ashaari.

As a movement that was committed to helping Malays become self-reliant and to develop a new society, the Al Arqam produced two different trends of proselytization at different points in time. During the first 17 years of its establishment, between 1968 and 1985, the Al Arqam presented itself as a self-conscious Islamic status group whose members saw themselves as fulfilling an obligation to relive the Islamic past through mysticism and economic radicalism. Mildly other-worldly in orientation and still organised as an egalitarian structure, the Al Arqam carried out proselytization activities that were aimed at stimulating individual reforms and improving the economic condition of its followers while not encouraging people to be politically engaged. As such, there was no rivalry or competition between it and other *dakwah* organisations such as Jemaah Tabligh and ABIM.

From 1985 to 1994, however, the movement made the past the focus of its prophetic messages through open antagonism against the state and

other Islamic organisations. During that time, it openly accused state *ulamak* of being corrupt and criticised Malay political parties and other *dakwah* organisations for their ineffectiveness as Islamic socialising agents. Ashaari also redefined *jihad* to mean armed combat against unjust leaders. Then through books and speeches, he talked about the coming of Imam Mahdi who would lead Muslims to victory and of himself as the calendrical renewer or *mujaddid* who would precede the Mahdi and who would take up armed struggle against the state. These messianic messages not only contradicted the religious fundamentals of Sunni Islam that Malaysian Muslims subscribed to but also served to further emphasise the stark difference between the Al Arqam and other Islamic organisations.

This distinct shift in the Al Arqam reflected the movement's efforts to accomplish two objectives. First, to forge unity among its members who were becoming divided due to internal power struggles, and second, to 'out Islamise' the other bodies that were involved in the Islamisation of Malaysia process such as the United Malays National Organisation, the Islamic Party of Malaysia, the ABIM and Jemaah Tabligh. Thus, the Al Arqam began presenting itself as political and exclusivist. Since its goal was the construction of the ideal society which differed from the prevailing cultural, social and political conditions, the Al Arqam also had become a sectarian and cultic organisation which in terms of governance relied more on authoritarian rather than democratic principles. Evidently at this point in time, the Al Arqam movement could not guarantee 'a civil-democratic politics' to use Robert Hefner's words (1998:39). It was also

anti-democracy and promoted communalism.

Al Arqam as Rufaqa

The Malaysian government reacted by detaining the Al Arqam's top leaders and making them renounce their teachings in public. It also disbanded all of the Al Arqam's communes and forced its 10,000-strong members to undergo a rehabilitation programme so they could be re-integrated into mainstream Islamic culture. Though most of the former members had dispersed, a few managed to revive the movement and renamed it Rufaqa.

The Rufaqa, which means 'true companion', was established in 1997. Its formation was an outcome of a series of meetings held between 1995 and 1996 and attended by Ashaari, a few former Al Arqam leaders, state *ulamak* and government officials. It was agreed that the Al Arqam be allowed to operate its business enterprises under the name Rufaqa Corporation Ltd. The executive director of this registered company is Ashaari Muhammad who is now under house detention in Labuan, Sabah. Most of Rufaqa's business establishments come under the category of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). They include travel agencies, restaurants, inns, clinics for alternative medicine, sundry shops, book shops and cottage industries producing food stuffs and traditional medicine. The organisation asserted its identity by naming a business establishment that is set up in a particular locality as '*bandar Rufaqa*' (meaning 'Rufaqa town').

The business operatives of the Rufaqa see themselves as fulfilling a social obligation or *fardhu kifayah* to accomplish two religious duties. First, to bring to the fore Islamic identity through business practices that

regard the acquisition of profits and wealth not as an end in itself but as a means to forge unity of the *ummah*. second, to offer services to help build religious minded and economically vibrant Muslim communities. In this regard, the Rufaqa does not differ from the state as to the goal of Islamisation and its project of producing Malay entrepreneurs capable of engaging themselves with the global economy. From its poems, books and on-line forums, it is obvious that the Rufaqa uses a vocabulary to express a vision of Islam that is pro-democracy, non-hostile to non-Muslims and civilisational in approach. By doing so, the organisation is no longer sectarian in nature and has a niche in Sunni Islam. However, like other civil society actors, the Rufaqa is not free from state control as its business activities may have some political implications and there is still some amount of ambiguity in the accommodation that it makes to nationalism, democracy and pluralism.

Conclusion

Without doubt, the Al Arqam is an example of a highly resilient civil society. The transformation that it has undergone from a dynamic religio-political movement playing the role of the state's political opponent into an economic organisation that is supportive of the state's developmental mission is the result of its engagement in conflict with the state. The motivation for the conflict is for the Al Arqam to resist the domination of state power and for the state to assert its role as the definer of Islamic orthodoxy. The fact that the Al Arqam could eventually resurrect itself as the Rufaqa shows that Islam as a potent cultural source for conflict engagement can definitely contribute to the strengthening of civil society in Malaysia.



Sylva Frisk is presently Director of the Centre for Asian Studies at Göteborg University and also a lecturer at the Department of Social Anthropology at the same university. Her research focusses on the intersections between gender, Islam and social change. Her dissertation, called 'Submitting to God: Women's Islamization in Urban Malaysia', (2004) is an anthropological study which addresses issues of subjectivity and agency within the context of pious, Muslim, Malay women's religious practice in urban Malaysia. It investigates how Malay women come to understand themselves as gendered, religious/pious subjects, and, thereby, explores the motivations and meanings that women ascribe to their emergent roles in the religious sphere and within the Islamization process.

Claiming Religious Space: Malay Women and the Transformation of Rituals in the Urban Context

By Sylva Frisk

Over the past three decades, Malaysia has been characterised by a broad movement of Islamization. The negative effects of that movement together with modernization on Malay women have indeed been pointed out by a number of scholars who have argued that the Malaysian Islamization projects, both the government's and the local dakwah movement's¹, have actively introduced many patriarchal Muslim Arab or Middle Eastern practices of gender and family relations into the Malaysian context and, as a result, have produced an intensification of Malay gender difference, segregation, and inequality, and a strengthening of male authority (Ong 1995, Norani 1998, Stevens 1998).

This perspective is important for an understanding of the constraints on Malay women in contemporary Malaysia. However, as I have argued elsewhere (Frisk 2004), it leaves unexplored the active participation of women themselves in the process of Islamization, as well as the meaning that they ascribe to it. As an illustration I will here focus on women's organization and performance of collective religious rituals, *majlis doa*, in the urban context. The material presented here is drawn from an anthropological fieldwork conducted among middle-class and upper middle-class Malay women's religious study groups in Kuala Lumpur. The *majlis doa*, as a religious gathering of women performed independently from men, is a modern, urban phenomenon, and its emergence is closely connected to women's increased piety. It reflects in many ways the changes in recent years of Malaysian society and how women create more clear-cut religious identity and authority for themselves in that process.

Majlis doa

'*Majlis*' is a word of Arabic origin used in the sense of 'gathering' or 'congregation'. '*Doa*' is the Arabic concept for voluntary prayer, through which

a person can ask God directly for something as opposed to the compulsory, more ritualised, five daily prayers.

Basically the *majlis doa* consists of an element of prayer (*doa*), reading of the Koran (usually *Yasin* which is the chapter considered to be the 'heart' of the Koran), repetition of God's name (*tahlil*) and it is always concluded by the sharing of a meal consisting of rice, side dishes, drinks, and sweets.

The general idea of a *majlis doa* is to ask for God's protection, guidance and blessing in various situations. The most common reasons are severe illness, when a new house has been built or an old one has been renovated, when children sit for exams or leave home for university. Life-crisis events in connection with birth and death are also accompanied by a *majlis doa*. Another reason can be to mark a change of spiritual direction in life or to show gratitude towards God for hearing earlier prayers – a thanksgiving ritual. The *majlis doa* can also be performed in connection with the religious events of the Muslim calendar, such as Muhammad's birthday. Two or more reasons can be combined and it can also be given for no particular reason, and some women arrange a

prayer meeting in their homes regularly once a year.

The initiative for a gathering is taken by an individual woman and the *majlis doa* is performed in the home of the host and the guests are all women. Most mosques have a group of women whom members of the community can call on to come and help them perform a *majlis doa*. The invited guests are usually a mix of relatives, neighbours, friends, and women attending religious classes together.

The gatherings always have the same basic structure. Since it is a special occasion, women dress with care and choose headscarves that are a little more elaborate than the everyday ones – maybe brimmed with lace or embroidered. When entering the room, everyone 'gives *salam*' (meaning to greet respectfully) to the people already in the room before being seated on the floor close to the wall. The hall is usually cleared of furniture on these occasions and the floor covered with carpets to make it more comfortable. A special place is often marked off with cushions for the woman who leads the *doa*. If a member of the household is ill, there are bottles of water are placed in front of her. The water is turned into '*Yasin* water' when read over and

is given to the sick person to drink. The woman who leads the prayer and the recitation is someone with a good voice and who can recite the Koran beautifully. The reading of the Koran and the prayers starts and usually go on for about an hour. After the reading, the food is served and eaten while news is shared.

Gendered changes

From this brief description of the *majlis doa*, it is clear that it forms part of the broad category of rituals known as *kenduri*, central to Malay social and ritual life. The *kenduri* is described as a feast, or a communal rice meal, in connection with a ceremonial event, often, but not always, including an element of prayer. As such it shares basic traits with the ritual complex of *slametan*, described in Clifford Geertz's classic anthropological ethnography, *The Religion of Java* (1960). But the transformation of the ritual into the urban and middle-class context has brought about significant changes. Here I will emphasise changes in terms of gender.

The general pattern of the traditional *kenduri* is that there is a division of labour between men and women. The practical arrangements such as pooling of resources, decorating the house, cooking, serving, washing and cleaning up are women's responsibility. Men are responsible for the religious elements of the ritual, the prayer and recitation of the Koran.

What we see in the urban context is that women perform *majlis doa* without the assistance of men or male religious authorities. The *majlis doa* can be exclusively female, with women both as organizers and as performers of the ritual. (In some cases the husband performs a separate ritual the same day or on another occasion.) In terms of gender, it is also interesting to

note that it is not uncommon for affluent households to have the food provided and served by a catering service – very often with male staff – thus, in terms of gender, showing a reversed image of the ritual.

Women thus play the active role in the religious part of the ritual and they even have female religious authorities to lead them. This means that in some ways women have assumed the role of religious guardians of the household and its members. This could indicate that women are taking, and are being allowed to take, a more important role in terms of religion than before, something that the women themselves attributed to the increasing popularity of religious study groups for women in the city area. The religious aspect of the ritual was emphasized by individual women as the reference to the ritual events clearly shows. The women referred to their gatherings using a religious/Arabic term, '*majlis doa*', instead of the Malay '*kenduri*'.

Female religious authority

Women's communal, religious gatherings are a common feature of the Muslim world and have received some attention in anthropological literature. In many cases, particularly in the Middle East where patriarchal ideology limits women's movements outside the household, religious gatherings are said to offer women opportunities to meet socially in each other's homes and in groups that cut across the ordinary kin groupings (Fernea and Fernea 1972, Betteridge 2001). This analysis is of limited relevance when we consider modern, well educated women who are not restricted to the household. Urban Malay women are a case in point. They do not have the same need to frame socializing in religious terms. As teachers, lecturers,

employees in private companies or government administration, or heads of small businesses they do not lack opportunities to meet other women outside the household. In fact, some of them even decide to leave their professional careers in order to devote more time to religion: going to religious classes and attending prayer meetings.

This is not to say that the religious gatherings lack a socializing aspect. Many women valued the gatherings highly as social events. But to reduce the analysis of prayer meetings to socializing would be a mistake. Instead I want to emphasize the achievement of piety that women sought through the performance of the *majlis doa*. When women take on the responsibility of collective rituals they are also creating a space for religious agency in public. The rituals are held in the home and the hosts are individual women. Participants in the rituals are drawn from family and friends, but to a large extent from the context of the mosque and religious classes. The ritual is an event that requires the participation of the larger community, and is by no means a private matter performed in the close sphere of family members. The performance of *majlis doa*, as I see it, is a means for women to reinforce their religious identities and actively create a basis for greater religious authority.

Note

¹ A wide range of local Islamic resurgence groups aiming at strengthening the Muslim identity and religious practices of Malays.

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Azyumardi Azra is Professor of History at Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN, or State Institute for Islamic Studies), Jakarta. He is the founder and editor-in-chief of *Studia Islamika*; *Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies*. He has been a visiting fellow or professor at several universities, e.g. Oxford University, the University of Philippines, Universiti Malaya and New York University.

His books include *Jaringan Ulama*, 1994; *Pergolakan Politik Islam*, 1996; *Islam Reformis*, 1999; *Konteks Berteologi di Indonesia*, 1999; *Menuju Masyarakat Madani* (Toward Civil Society), 1999; *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi dan Modernisasi Menuju Milenium Baru*, 1999; *Esei-esai Pendidikan Islam dan Cendekiawan Muslim*, 1999; *Renaissance Islam di Asia Tenggara* (which won the national award as the best book of the year 1999 in the area of humanities and social sciences).

Indonesian Islam, Election Politics and Beyond

By **Azyumardi Azra**

The long and tiring Indonesian election year of 2004 is finally over in a surprisingly peaceful manner. To recall once again, the elections began with the Legislature General Election on 5 April, followed by the first round of the presidential election on 4 July, and finally the second round of the presidential election on 20 September. Despite the bomb blast on 9 September at the front of the Australian embassy, the final stage of the presidential election ran smoothly with Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Jusuf Kalla, respectively Presidential and Vice Presidential candidates, emerging as the clear winners beating Megawati Soekarnoputri, the incumbent President, and Hasyim Muzadi.

The completion of the election and the soon to follow formation of a new government will arguably accelerate the peaceful transition of Indonesia from authoritarianism to democracy; only six years ago the autocratic Soeharto regime was forced to abruptly end its long-held power that had lasted for more than three decades. President B.J. Habibie, who replaced President Soeharto, introduced liberal and multi-party politics in 1998 and hoped for a smooth transition to democracy. However, these hopes seemingly withered away in the aftermath of the 1999 General Election which led to continued political fragmentation and conflict among political elites and parties.

In fact, the democratically elected President Abdurrahman Wahid was impeached in 2001 for mismanagement and erratic behaviour, and was replaced by President Megawati Soekarnoputri. In spite of a great deal of criticism towards her government, the successful 2004 General Election was, one must admit, her greatest achievement. By the same token, her greatest weakness was her failure to address the spread of ever rampant KKN (*korupsi, kolusi, nepotisme* or corruption, collusion and nepotism).

Compatibility of Islam and democracy

The fair, free and peaceful elections have shown to the world that Indonesian Islam is indeed compatible with democracy. Despite being the world's largest Muslim country, Indonesia is neither an Islamic state nor is Islam the official religion of the state. After its independence on August 17, 1945, Indonesia tried to adopt democracy; what was implemented, however, was a kind of quasi-democracy, called 'Guided Democracy' (*Demokrasi Terpimpin*) during the period of President Soekarno and, 'Pancasila Democracy' (*Demokrasi Pancasila*) during the era of President Soeharto. Therefore, Indonesian citizens have had very little knowledge and experience of real and genuine democracy. That is why in the early years of the Indonesian experiment with democracy in the so-called period of reforms (*masa reformasi*) there were a lot of signs pointing to the 'break-down' of democracy; indeed what happened was a kind of 'democracy' since democracy seemed to be understood by certain segments of the Indonesian society as mass-demonstration that often ended in chaos and anarchy.

The success of Indonesia of holding general elections in a peaceful way should silence the

skeptics who wrongly believe that democracy cannot have strong roots in a dominantly or pre-dominantly Muslim country. This might be true for certain Muslim countries elsewhere, but should not be made into a sweeping generalization. The Indonesian case shows that Islam is not inherently undemocratic or incompatible with democracy. In fact there are a lot of Islamic principles and teachings that are compatible with democracy.

The seeming incompatibility between Islam and democracy is a result of a literal interpretation of certain verses of the Qur'an, and by adhering only to certain aspects of Islam and at the same time ignoring others. In addition, the failure of democracy in many Muslim countries is due mainly to a number of internal and external factors that inhibit the growth of democracy, including, among other things, weak economic conditions, backwardness in education, lack of socio-cultural capital and, not least, the support of Western powers for undemocratic regimes in Muslim countries.

Furthermore, the Indonesian exercise in democracy has shown the fallacy of the so-called 'democratic trap' theory which argues that a democratic opening in Muslim countries would only

result in the rise to power of the Islamists, maybe even Muslim fundamentalists. Based on this theory, a number of regimes, supported by certain Western countries, have annulled the results of elections when Islamists or Islamic parties seemed to win. The classic example of such interference in democracy is the Algerian case where the Western-supported regime annulled the election when the Islamic party FIS was about to win and was set to replace the ruling regime.

Such undemocratic interference has in fact alienated proponents of democracy in Muslim countries from democracy; the double-standard attitude of some Western countries has produced disillusionment among Muslims who would love to see democracy take root in their country. The democracy trap argument has, however, been proven wrong in the Indonesian case. The Indonesian elections have shown that Islamic parties or the Islamists have not been able to ride the waves of the democratic opening nor to create a 'democratic trap'.

Islam and transformation of Indonesian politics

As far as Islam is concerned, the results of the 2004 General Elections in Indonesia indicate a number of interesting political developments, not only in the Presidential Election, but also in the Legislature one. All in all, I would argue, Islam and Islamic issues – such as the possible implementation of *shari'ah* or Islamic law – have not become central issues pervading the general elections. In fact, the Indonesian public have been concerned mostly with issues they face in everyday life, such as continued economic hardship, more rampant corruption, lack of law enforcement, increased insecurity, continued spread of narcotics and other forms of social ills.

The best example of this is Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (PKS or Prosperous and Justice Party), the most conservative Islamic party that was able to make substantial gain in the last election, increasing their votes from less than two per cent in the 1999 election to seven per cent. The party succeeded in getting more support not because it campaigned for the implementation of *shari'ah* or the transformation of Indonesia into an Islamic state, but rather for its fight against corruption and the creation of good governance.

The first direct Presidential elections have substantially transformed Indonesian politics. Some of the most important tendencies are; firstly, political parties have not been able to dictate their will to their members, let alone the masses as a whole. Big parties like the Golkar, which won the Legislature Elections, together with the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle, PDIP, the United Development Party, PPP and others forged the so-called 'National Coalition' (*Koalisi Kebangsaan*) to contain the momentum of Yudhoyono and Kalla, which in contrast formed what they called 'the People's Coalition' (*Koalisi Rakyat*); this pair won the elections regardless. More than that, the appeal of Hasyim Muzadi – the non-active national leader of the largest Muslim organisation of Indonesia, the Nahdatul Ulama (NU), who was also the Vice-Presidential candidate of Megawati Soekarnoputri – to the Muslim leaders, the *kiyai* and their masses of followers to vote in his favour also failed. These developments indicate that the Indonesian voters are now becoming more independent and more rational in their political and voting behaviour; they cannot be dictated by their party leaders or

by their *kiyai* any more: now they decide themselves.

Secondly, the election of Yudhoyono and Kalla also shows the continued decline of the so-called '*politik aliran*' theory. According to this theory, based on Clifford Geertz's division between '*santri*' (strict Muslims), '*abangan*' (nominal Muslims) and '*priyayi*' (aristocracy), Indonesian politics were heavily divided along religious lines and traditional loyalties. Sociological and religious changes that have been taking place since the last decade of Soeharto's rule have contributed to the rapid demise of the *politik aliran*. In fact, since the beginning of the reform era, Indonesian politics have been less and less dominated by *politik aliran*. In contrast, Indonesian politics have been characterized since then as 'interest politics' if not 'opportunist politics'. The election of Yudhoyono and Kalla clearly shows that the religious argument is no longer relevant. Though Yudhoyono has been termed by some international media as a 'secular' person, he is known in Indonesia as a good and practicing Muslim; while Kalla on the other hand has long been known as having more Islamic credentials, being the former leader of HMI (Association of University Muslim Students), for instance.

Thirdly, despite the bomb blast outside the Australian embassy on 9 September, Indonesian Islam remains moderate and tolerant. The bomb has, in fact, contributed to a more resolute and stronger attitude among Indonesian Muslims in general to confront radicalism; more and more Muslims abandoning the defensive and apologetic attitude towards the ruthlessness of the perpetrators of the bombing. The belief among some people in the so-called 'conspiracy theory' seems to be decreasing. Virtually all Muslim

leaders issued statements in the strongest terms ever to condemn the bombing. The police investigation of the bombing makes it clear that the 'intellectualist actors' of the bombing are Malaysian – DR Azhari and Nurdin M – who recruited some misled Indonesians. Therefore, there is a strong tendency that radical and militant groups or terrorist groups are foreign-led, rather than home-grown ones. This again, confirms that Indonesian Muslims are basically moderate and tolerant; but they must be aware of negative influences brought in by foreign Muslims.

With developments of this kind both at the societal and government levels, the latest bomb blast will only force other radical groups to lay low. It is no secret that a number of suspected people have been arrested by the police after the disclosure of the networks of the perpetrators of the Bali bombing less than two years ago; more alleged terrorists were detained and brought to justice after the Marriott bombing in Jakarta; and more of them have been placed in police

custody in the aftermath of the embassy bombing. Therefore, one of the most important keys to addressing terrorism in Indonesia is more stringent law enforcement; the professionalism and credibility of the police in the investigation of the perpetrators of bombing and other kinds of terrorism is crucial. With public support, the police are now in a better position to decisively act in the war against terrorism.

Conclusion

There are many signs that the post-election Indonesia is likely to become more stable. Expectations of the new national leadership are now high in Indonesia. Therefore, one of the most important keys for Yudhoyono and Kalla to gain even more support from the people is their ability to form a cabinet that could win the widest possible public acceptability. To this end, they must form a cabinet that consists of people with credibility, accountability, and professionalism in their respective fields. Yudhoyono and Kalla should prevent themselves from doing 'horse-trading' with any interested parties,

particularly political parties.

So far, so good for Yudhoyono; he has been able to keep the momentum alive, and seems to lead the right way. One of his greatest challenges is the possible tension and conflict between him and the 'National Coalition' which dominates the seats in the Parliament (DPR). But, one has to admit that the National Coalition is indeed very fragile. The interest or opportunist politics among Parliament members and party politics makes it possible for the Yudhoyono government to run with mini-mum opposition from and conflict with the DPR. The Yudhoyono theme of K2A (*Konsiliasi, Konsolidasi, Aksi, or Conciliation, Consolidation, and Action*) could be very appropriate and a smart move for Yudhoyono to anticipate maneuvers against him from the DPR.

With regard to consolidation, the next five years is indeed crucial for Indonesia. The Yudhoyono government needs not only to consolidate efforts to solve Indonesia's huge internal problems, but also to reconsolidate the very fabric of Indonesian society. There is now an increasing need to reconsolidate civil society and NGOs as pillars of democracy. In the last election – as has been the case since the fall of Soeharto – civil society and NGOs at large have been pulled into power politics. This is particularly true for the NU when its national chief Hasyim Muzadi decided to run as the vice-presidential candidate of Megawati Soekarnoputri. Tensions and conflicts that have resulted from Hasyim's candidacy now need to be resolved. Otherwise, this largest Muslim organization in Indonesia will not be able to function effectively for a better ordering of Muslim society.

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A Religiously Based Institutionalization of Democracy

By Kristian Morville

Indonesia is an object lesson in moderate Islam, and the question is why Islam, as professed by 200 million Indonesian Muslims, tends to differ so markedly from the practice of Islam in the Middle East. It is a highly complex question, of course, which requires a thorough investigation of cultural, historical, political and economic factors, taking into consideration the peaceful spread of Islam via the market-place in Indonesia, the tradition of religious syncretism, the notorious tolerance of the Javanese, and the deliberate apolitization of Islam during president Soeharto's New Order regime. Another way to approach the question, however, is to look at the subject matter from a bottom up perspective and attempt an understanding of the social institutionalization of 'democratic civility' (Hefner 1998: 10), as it takes place in the everyday lives of ordinary Indonesians.

A suitable place for initiating such an investigation is the Yogyakarta branch of HMI-MPO¹, which is probably the biggest Muslim student organization in Indonesia. The Yogyakarta branch is just one out of 32 local branches, but it is the most important branch within HMI-MPO. It is the oldest and biggest with around 3,000 active members dispersed over 52 *komisariat* at different universities and colleges in the city. It is considered the most liberal branch and has a reputation of being independent, plural and debate-loving, where 'members are allowed to think whatever they want, and everything can be discussed, including questions about God, as long as it is based on Islam', as I was told by the local chairman. To a certain extent HMI-MPO functions as an off-campus study group, and the main reasons for entering the organisation are indicative of this: to take part in the intellectual discussions, to learn more about Islam, and to meet fellow students with different religious backgrounds and political outlooks. The civil democratic ideas of independence, plurality and tolerance – the topics of the present article – should not,

however, be seen as a Western ideological import. They are part of a globalizing trend, yes, but they are experienced as deeply rooted in Islamic values and a local Indonesia history.

Independence and courage

HMI-MPO was born out of a brave decision to oppose President Soeharto's demand for a uniform national-secular ideology and a deep-rooted wish to remain independent of the dominant political establishment. The idea of being 'anti-mainstream' is a distinctive feature of the organization, and bravery has been cherished by the members ever since it was founded.

'At that time no organization was brave enough to reject [the national ideology of] Pancasila. Only HMI-MPO had the courage. Not because we didn't like it. We agree with the five principles of Pancasila, who doesn't? They're fine. But what we didn't like was the New Order regime's use of pressure, the way they forced all social organizations to accept Pancasila as their sole base.' (Interview with a local committee member)

The organization was declared illegal, because it rejected the national ideology, and all

activities in the first few years had to take place in secret. The members of the organization were seen as 'naughty kids' and were perceived as being rather extreme and militaristic. But as time went by the structure of the organization changed from a closed, cell-like *kholagoh*-form, inspired by Hasan al-Banna's Muslim Brotherhood, and became more open and democratic. HMI-MPO made contact with other student organizations during the late 1990s fight for democracy and political reforms, and it became more inclusive.

The courage to go against the tide and challenge the prevailing perceptions is still deeply ingrained in HMI-MPO, though. I was often told about previous members, who had decided to leave the organization and go off by themselves. Some decided to drop out of school before graduating, because they lost faith in the academic establishment, while others decided to go into politics, start their own businesses or go into research. The point, however, is not where they decided to go, but rather that they had the courage to do it. Independence and courage are highly praised values in HMI-MPO, and at



Kristian Morville is an anthropologist at the Centre for Comparative Cultural Studies, University of Copenhagen. He is working on a Ph.D. project about Islam and democracy in Indonesia and has conducted fieldwork in Yogyakarta on Central Java.

times they seem to be the main parameters for success, to such an extent that the more superfluous the organization becomes for the individual member, the more triumphant the organization has been, and that is indeed an unusual organizational logic.

Plurality and critical thinking

HMI-MPO describes itself as an *organisasi kader*, which means that it is an organization that primarily focuses on the training of members (cadres). In technical terms there is a formal training structure divided into basic, intermediate and advanced levels, and an informal training structure consisting of small-scale ad hoc study groups, political training courses, senior courses and networking. All the training, whether it is of a religious, political or philosophical nature, aims at the development of two personal characteristics: independence and critical thinking. These characteristics are very hard to acquire within the established system of education, where a hierarchical 'yes-man' culture (Lubis 2001: 18) is still at large, and it was often pointed out to me, that if I were to meet an outspoken and critically inquiring student, he or she would most probably be a member of a student organization, because only there would it be possible to acquire such talents. But the plurality of HMI-MPO is not just something that is sought for by the students entering the organizations, it is also a means of educating the members and a prerequisite of a critical debate, and the liberal attitude applies to religious convictions as well: 'HMI-MPO doesn't want to judge the religious quests of the members. We have no interest in forcing them to become identical. The way we see it, uniformity is nothing but a deceit, an illusion.' (Interview with a local committee member)

Tolerance and openness

Islam is the moral base of HMI-MPO, and religious symbols and rituals still play a vital role for the members of the organization. Female members wear *jilbab* (though a few of them only wear it on campus or during activities in the organization), most of the members pray five times a day (more or less), and female members are not supposed to ride bikes or shake hands with people of the opposite sex. The regulations of the organization are also clearly stated in Muslim terms, but in spite of all this, it is rather difficult to identify the religious nature of the organization. One member said that the aim of the organization was not to make Indonesia more Islamic, but to make Islam more Indonesian, whereas another member explained that the members of HMI-MPO were best thought of as persons with strong religious feelings and a distinct critical thinking. They were, in the words of ex-president Habibie, students with 'a German mind and a Medina heart'.

One of the consequences of HMI-MPO's religious base is that everyone, who confesses to Islam, is allowed into the organization. In principle, there are very few limits as to who can join the organization, but in practice the question is more complicated. A lower borderline emerged when a Muslim student, who did not pray five times a day, wanted to join the organization. He was allowed to participate in the five-day long basic training course, but was ultimately rejected because he was not a rightfully practicing Muslim. He protested loudly and accused the organization of hypocrisy. Several of his friends did not pray five times a day either, they only prayed during basic training, so why was he treated differently than his friends? Why was he punished for being honest? This story was

told to me by one of his instructors, who assured me that it was not an easy decision to make, but it was a decision that had to be made. As a religious organization they were forced to draw a line, when they were openly challenged by what they considered to be a non-practising Muslim.

When it comes to an upper borderline, however, there seem to be no limits as to how religious the members might be or what religious interpretations they might profess, and that opens up the possibility of some members being extremely, if not fanatically, religious. It is not unlikely that because HMI-MPO has such a tolerant policy towards new members, they might end up admitting persons into the organization who actually are anything but tolerant. I have discussed this matter with members of the organization and they appear to be aware of it although they approach the question from different perspectives. The pragmatic answer highlights the fact that fanatically religious persons usually do not feel at home in HMI-MPO. There is nothing to prevent them from getting in, but they are most likely to leave the organization very quickly in search of more like-minded companions elsewhere. The political answer draws attention to the fact that HMI-MPO has an obligation not to become too secular or too religious. It is imperative to strive for a balance between the different fractions of the organization in order to facilitate a dialog between the various types of members and hold the organization together. The ideological answer, however, emphasizes that the primary aim of HMI-MPO is to strive for the ideal human being (*insan ulil albab*) by encouraging the mem-

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Ramadan Fasting at a *Pesantren* in West Java

By **Jörgen Hellman**

Islamic boarding schools, pesantren, are important institutions in the development of Islam on Java. The schools have been described generally playing just a minor role in the daily, communal life of villages and functioning as political agents mainly in times of social and economic turmoil. The institution has also been recognized as a pool of religious knowledge harbouring charismatic leaders prone to induce their followers to take part in uprisings and revolts. The purpose of this article is to present a different view of the pesantren in which the schools have a more constituting role in social life.

Pesantren schools on Java have a long tradition of providing religious education (Geertz 1960; Kartodirjo 1973; Horikoshi 1976; Dhofier 1999). The schools are led by a *Kiai* (religious teacher). The pupils (*santri*), who are aged about twelve years and older, take part in collective work, such as farming and construction to support the school (some *pesantren* also take an additional fee). Many stay for several years in the education system. In the modern *pesantren* the curriculum usually includes conventional school subjects such as language, mathematics and geography but the emphasis is on religious studies supervised by the *Kiai*. *Pesantren* are regarded as centres for religious knowledge and serve to produce role models for religious behaviour. To attend *pesantren* education is, by and large, considered very prestigious and the local elite on West Java has a long tradition of *pesantren* studies (Lubis 1998).

In 2001 I conducted a fieldwork on West Java to study ritual forms of fasting and how these are related to political influence and social prestige. In order to learn more about the role of fasting in Islamic traditions I spent some time at a *pesantren* during the fasting month Ramadan. The school is situated in the centre of a small country town south of Bandung.

This particular school is led by a *Kiai* affiliated with

Nahdlatul Ulama, the largest Islamic organisation on Java. The organisation is considered quite tolerant towards local customs and co-opts cultural traditions into its teachings rather than trying to expel them from the realm of religion. In order to convey what fasting during Ramadan is about at a *pesantren*, a slightly edited excerpt from my field diary is presented below.

At two o'clock in the morning the students at the *pesantren* awake to the accompaniment of the *Bedug* drum reverberating loudly through the compound. The drum is played for about half an hour and the suggestive sound rises and falls in rhythmic sequences. This is the signal to start cooking the morning meal, *Sabur*, which is the last meal before the fast begins. Usually women cook, but there is no rule without its exceptions and at this *pesantren* a male student does the cooking. At three o'clock, the *Kiai's* family assemble in his house to have the meal before the fast begins at ten to four. It is still dark, the fast begins at dawn. The moment described in the Koran as that at which a black thread can be distinguished from a white.

Later, the breaking of the fast will coincide with the call for people to attend evening prayers (*Magrib*). This means fourteen hours of abstention from eating and drinking. In a tropical climate, performing

regular work as usual, this challenge feels somehow thrilling, and the students are obviously curious to see if I will be strong (*kuat*) enough to endure it. We eat the meal together with the *Kiai*, his children and grandchildren. It is a rather large family that lives in the centre of the housing complex that constitutes the *pesantren*.

Among us is also the *Kiai's* favourite grandson who is six years old and already strong enough to fast for a whole day. According to this congregation's interpretations of religious regulations, boys should fast (as a religious duty) from the age of twelve and women from the age they start to menstruate. Therefore the *Kiai* stresses that no force is used to make the boy fast. However, there is no mistaking the *Kiai's* pride when he tells of his grandson's determination.

To understand the presence of a researcher and his interest in and performance of the fast, even though I am not a Muslim, a similar explanation is given to that used for children's fasting. The *Kiai* decides that non-Muslims can follow and take part in the fast if they are studying (*belajar*) fasting, just like the children. However, they do not actually perform *saum*, the fast that is mandatory to Muslims alone as a sign of their faith.

After the meal the students assemble in the mosque for morning prayers and recitations.



Jörgen Hellman, Ph.D., is a lecturer at the Department of Social Anthropology, Göteborg University, Sweden. He is also the Manager of Museion, a border-transcending body, integrating research and education, also at Göteborg University.

His monograph *Performing the Nation* was published by NIAS Press in 2003; it is a revised version of his dissertation "*Longser antar pulau: Indonesian Cultural Politics and the Revitalisation of Traditional Theatre*".



Pupils at the *madrasah*.
Photo J. Hellman

At about five o'clock in the morning the *pesantrén* comes to rest again. Today, a public recitation and exegesis of the Koran is given from seven until nine o'clock in the morning and people from the neighbourhood flock in. Several hundred visitors from the villages in the area gather to listen to the *Kiai* reciting from the Koran, intercepting it with explanations and exegesis.

During the daytime life goes on as usual, all routine tasks are performed and the students may be helpful on the rice fields, or with other tasks generating subsistence for the school. The *pesantrén* I visited was established quite recently (1974) and is expanding rapidly. They have about 400 students (*santri*) at the boarding school, both male and female. There is also an element-

Female *santri*. Photo
J. Hellman



ary school (*madrasah*) for pupils from the villages. The *madrasah* is run by the *pesantrén* but is based on the national curriculum. In the middle of the housing complex is a work site for a new three-storey building, which is going to be used as a senior high school for economics. The *Kiai* explained his interest in establishing the school as a way of promoting *santri* to take part in the building of society after their education. According to him the time has past when each *santri* after their education could establish their own *pesantrén*. Today, after spending a couple of years in the school most of the students leave to work in either the private or public sector and therefore also need an education that can provide them with job opportunities. The *Kiai* recognises this situation not as a drawback, but as an opportunity to provide the future working force with a religious education.

The school is situated in the centre of a small country town, surrounded by food stalls and small shops. People are entering and leaving the *pesantrén* all day, going to school, visiting friends, consulting religious authorities, or going out for shopping. Some of the students have their families in the vicinity of the school and make regular visits to relatives.

The day is intercepted like any other day of the year by the obligatory prayers. When it is time for the Magrib prayer at six o'clock in the evening, people assemble to break the fast and share a meal together. Usually they start with something sweet, like dates or sweetened drinks, after which follows a substantial dinner. It is extremely important to break the fast together with someone and the most valued way is with the family, but colleagues, friends and neighbours also arrange to break the fast together. After the meal, the *Muazin* calls for the last

obligatory prayer (*Isya*) but since it is Ramadan most people (all in the *pesantrén*) continue with recitations and voluntary prayers (*tarawéh*) for at least one hour. After performing these religious duties, people in the *pesantrén* come together to talk, chat and snack during the night. If one is lucky (and rude enough to withdraw) one may get to sleep at eleven p.m., for a few hours rest before the *Bedug* wakes you up again at two a.m. to a new day of fasting. In the *pesantrén* adherence to the fast is total and all the students attend the *tarawéh* prayers. They also pay special attention to the night of Lailat – al Kadar. This night coincides with one of the uneven dates during the last ten days of the fast and since it is not known beforehand on which, all these nights people gather together in the mosque for full nights of reciting and praying. The reward for staying awake and praying this specific night is that the fast of the day that precedes Lailat – al Kadar is counted as equivalent to a thousand ordinary months of Ramadan fasting. Attendance at one of these night-long gatherings may be seen as the apex of the month in the *pesantrén* as most of the students return home to their villages to celebrate Lebaran, the end of Ramadan.

Inside the school the religious teaching stresses the fast as a way of approaching God. Questions nevertheless arise about rules and regulations, how to perform the fast correctly and who possesses the correct knowledge of the rules (and of God's intention with the fast). In the *pesantrén* the *Kiai* has the final say when it comes to how to follow the prescriptions given in the Koran. Following the leader becomes a secure way of finding the correct path. The leader's way of fasting, praying and his religious understanding are validated by certain signals such as the material affluence in

the school and specific powers related to his body, such as healing, extraordinary strength, or invulnerability. These are powers that can only be awarded by God and they are therefore proof of the leader's piety. The names of prominent persons who had visited the *Kiai* for advice in different matters were often mentioned to underline the prestige of the *Kiai* and store rooms full of food donated by local companies and other rooms furnished with computer equipment were considered evidence of the trust put in the *pesantrén* by the local community.

In sum, to be a *Kiai* is to have earned an honorary title through intense performance of religious duties and profound religious knowledge. This position is often associated with the assumed possession of some kind of "supernatural" power such as healing or invincibility. These skills prove that a person possesses power, which is often referred to with the same word – *kasektèn* – as that used by Anderson (1990) to denote power specific to Javanese systems of thought. In interviews and informal discussions with the *Kiai* about fasting and other religious matters, he will use the Koran and the Hadits (traditions of Muhammad) as the ultimate sources of reference. He frequently 'spices' his explanations with citations and references from these texts, preferably in Arabic which is followed by an Indonesian translation. The public reading of the Koran is one event in which the *Kiai* can confirm his familiarity with these texts to a wider audience.

The *pesantrén* is generally considered to be an institution operating at the margins of society. Walls or fences are built around the school, it is often located outside the village centre and the *Kiai* should preferably stay away from the trickery of

politics. However, the presence of this *pesantrén* in society was notable. The walls were there but they were definitely very porous, letting people pass freely in and out, creating a web of social relations between the school and the neighbourhood. The school plays a significant role in the micro-economy and has established itself as an important local institution. The education of *santri* in the centre of town together with the public readings by the *Kiai* helps make religious knowledge a public affair. The inclusion of the madrasah and school of economics signals a definite commitment to partake in the life of local society and that the *pesantrén* and the *Kiai* are central in developing moral bases for society at large.

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Main buildings at a *pesantrén*. The residential area of the *Kiai* to the left, male dormitories to the right. Photo J. Hellman

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that no Malay-dominated political party in Malaysia, regardless of whether it is Islamic-oriented or not, could afford to ignore the Islamic factor in the formulation of its policies and strategies. The role of Islam as a mobilizing social force becomes even more evident in electoral politics. It was the contest for the Islamic vote that helped rejuvenate the dynamism of political Islam in Malaysia. Essentially, it was also the competition between UMNO and PAS, the two rival Muslim political parties, with the latter increasingly resorting to the use of Islamic symbols and idioms that placed Islam at the centre-stage of Malaysian

politics. The declaration by Malaysia's new prime minister, Abdullah Badawi, that his government is committed to the goals of Islam Hadhari, or civil or civilizational Islam, is merely a rhetorical way of re-affirming the continuity of his government's past Islamic policy of harnessing the positive elements within Islam for the consumption of the broader constituency of the Malaysian nation and representing the interests of both Muslims as well as non-Muslims, as equal citizens of the country. In the final analysis, although rhetoric is accorded a role in Malaysian Islam, it is the pursuit of the goals of Malaysian nationhood through pragmatic policies that prevails.



Sven Cederroth

Return of the Birds. Images of a Remarkable Mosque in Lombok

By Sven Cederroth

The birds are flying again in the old wetu telu mosque of Bayan! During a recent visit to Bayan, an old Sasak village in North Lombok where I did fieldwork in the early 1970s, I suddenly noticed that the birds had returned to the village wetu telu mosque. Below the ceiling, where before there had only been a void, they were now once again flying freely. During my earlier work, I had been secretly told that until 1967, the mosque had contained a number of wooden, carved birds, hanging from the ceiling. In this year, which was a year of unrest and religious persecution in Lombok, the birds were removed and hidden in a secret place, but now they were back again.

The island of Lombok is the home of the Sasak people, most of whom are now orthodox Muslims, adherents of the *waktu lima* sect. However, on the island there is also a Hindu Balinese minority and smaller groups of non-orthodox *wetu telu* Sasak. Whereas the orthodox *waktu lima* Sasak follow the Islamic fundamentals as taught to them by their religious teachers, the *Tuan Guru*, the *wetu telu* practise an Islamic syncretism in which there are traces not only of Islam, but of Hinduism and pantheistic beliefs as well. The Bayan area is one of the strongholds of the *wetu telu* religion.

In fact, the *wetu telu* religion has many basic features in common, not only with Balinese Hinduism, but also, and perhaps above all, with *agami jawi*, the Javanese Islamic syncretism (Koentjaraningrat 1985). Among such common elements, the central role of the ancestors stands out as especially important. This is based on a philosophy rooted in a belief about life as a kind of continuous flow, in the course of which a powerful element, commonly labelled a soul, is generated. During life, the soul is contained within the body and although it may leave its abode temporarily, for instance during sleep, it always returns to the

person concerned. At death, the soul has to abandon the body but does not cease to exist. It now feels deserted and homeless and starts to roam the surroundings at will. To placate and appease such, potentially dangerous, souls, a series of rituals is required, whereby the soul is guided to the hereafter. In this process the deceased is transformed into an ancestor. There are also many other common elements between *wetu telu* and *agami jawi*, such as an interest in mystical speculation which often involves number and colour magic of some kind.

The *wetu telu* religion may be preliminarily characterized as a syncretism in which aspects of pantheism and Hinduism are mixed with Islamic beliefs, glossed lightly over the older belief systems. The Muslim elements are in no way dominant, however, and resemble more a thin varnish through which the older beliefs are still clearly visible.

During my earlier fieldwork, I had been impressed by the mosque which is quite different from ordinary Sasak mosques found all over the island. This building is situated on a hill, beside the central hamlets of Bayan and is entirely constructed of wood and bamboo. It is surrounded by a complex of ancestor graves (*makam*), each of

which is dedicated to the soul of an ancestor. These ancestors are the founders of the Bayanese nobility groups and of some other nobility living in surrounding villages. Each ancestor grave is protected by a bamboo house. These houses last some only 8–10 years and therefore have to be renewed periodically. These renovations are always surrounded by large celebrations, one of which, the *alip gama* ceremony, has been described in an article by J. van Baal (1941). These ceremonies are essential elements in the *wetu telu* calendrical ritual cycle. *Alip*, for instance, the year in which the renovation is carried out, is one of the years in an eight-year cycle.

The mosque is accessible by a path ascending from the eastern side and encircling half the hill. To the north there is also a direct connection with the commoner hamlet Karang Bajo and with the residence of the religious official *lokaq gantungan rombong* and his dwelling place. The top of the hill is covered with grass and on its slopes there are several mighty trees, enclosing the hill with a curtain of greenery. When climbing the slope, one immediately notices that this is an extraordinary place with a very special atmosphere. Even without having attended a

moonlit ceremony or having watched the preparation of healing betel quid (*sembeg*) and sacred water in the presence of intensely serious people, one can easily sense the serenity of the place and understand the reverence which the *wetu telu* community of Bayan pay to it.

On the top of the hill, the scenery is dominated by the old mosque. Its shape resembles a two-tier *meru* with exceptionally low walls and entrance. The mosque has an earthen floor and except for wooden pillars and beams that hold up the construction, both the walls and the roof are entirely made from bamboo. The roof of the mosque is composed of thousands of short bamboo sticks, split lengthwise. In this it differs from other traditional houses and pavilions in Bayan which have grass-thatched roofs. Like most other mosques, it contains a drum (*bedug*), here used to announce noon, and a niche in the wall (*mihrab*), marking the direction towards Mecca. As previously mentioned, the mosque also contains a number of birds hanging from the roof and there is also a podium (*mimbar*) crowned by a somewhat bizarre-looking creature (*naga* Bayan). Its name means the dragon of Bayan and with some imagination one might be able to say that it does resemble a dragon.

When I first arrived at Bayan in 1972, not only had the birds been removed from the old mosque, but also the dragon was in a deplorable condition. However, in the early 1980s, when only fragments were left of the sculpture, it was replaced with a new image, modelled after the former. Together with the newly returned birds, this dragon may be taken as a suitable starting point for a brief analysis of the structure of Bayanese *wetu telu* cosmology. The birds are a symbol of heaven

and the dragon of the underworld and when kept together in the central sanctuary they represent the totality of the universe.

However, in addition to this, we also find a number of symbolically interesting carvings on the front side of the dragon. A closer examination of these reveal that there are representations of a water buffalo, a fowl, a rice axe, a piece of cotton, some coconuts and a large knife. These carvings were interpreted by some of the people in Bayan as a symbolic explanation of the inner meaning of their religious system, the *wetu telu*.

Among the Bayanese, it has been a commonly accepted belief that their village is the navel of the world, its absolute centre. Consequently, the old mosque is the most important sanctuary of the world. It is therefore no coincidence that here the upper world of heavenly creatures is symbolically present as is the world of the spirits, the underworld. But on the dragon, itself a representation of the underworld, we find the representatives of this world, the world of the living. Here is, above all, mankind symbolized by the piece of cotton and the knife. Together these two objects represent the duality of mankind, cotton being a female symbol and the knife a male symbol. But here we also find whatever is important to the survival of mankind in the form of domesticated animals, represented by the water buffalo and the fowl, respectively, edible plants, in the form of a rice axe and fruits as seen by the coconut. Thus, these animals and plants are there to guarantee the continuous fertility and prosperity of man.

The Bayan mosque is the central sanctuary for all those *wetu telu* confessors who look towards Bayan as their spiritual centre. Although the sphere of influence has dwindled since the

glorious time of the kingdom, when the authority of the Bayanese nobility comprised the main part of northern Lombok, there still exist a number of mosques similar in both construction and function to the one in Bayan. It is generally assumed that when Islam arrived to Lombok, probably some time during the 15th century, it was first received and accepted in Bayan. Later the new religion spread from this original centre to other parts of the island. The Bayan mosque is therefore seen as the central sanctuary for all *wetu telu* muslims, while the others are branch establishments. The religious officials of the latter have to assemble periodically in the central mosque to participate in the celebration of certain important ceremonies.

In the course of a whole muslim year, these *wetu telu* mosques are in fact used only a few times. During the celebrations of the birth of the prophet Mohammed (*maulid*), each mosque is festively adorned with a large number of cloths and the *kiyai* assemble to say a prayer and eat a common meal (*periapan*). Furthermore, during the fasting month, Ramadan, all *kiyai* assemble each evening in the mosque to which they are connected to read prayers (*sembahyang tarwe*). Also, at the celebration marking the end of the fasting month (*lebaran tinggi*) and during the complementary ceremony one month later (*lebaran pendek*), the religious officials come together in the mosque to eat a common meal and to read the specific sermon (*khotbah*) reserved for these occasions. Besides these ceremonial uses, one of the *kiyai* also visits the mosque each day at noon to clean it and beat the drum.

Thus, the use of the *wetu telu* mosques is limited to a few



1. The old *wetu telu* mosque in Bayan
2. The old Bayan mosque during celebration of Maulid, the Prophet's birthday
3. The old naga Bayan, the dragon of Bayan
4. The main mosque in Mataram, the capital of Lombok
5. Sculpturing a new image of naga Bayan to replace the old one in the mosque

All photos by the author

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Muslim Minorities in Cambodia

Ing-Britt Trankell and Jan Ovesen

Ing-Britt Trankell is Associate Professor of Anthropology at Uppsala University. She has done research in Northern Thailand, Laos, and – since 1996 – in Cambodia. Publications on Cambodia: “Songs of Our Spirits: Ritual and Historical Imagination among the Cambodian Cham,” *Asian Ethnicity*, vol. 4,1, 2003; and (with Jan Ovesen) “French Colonial Medicine in Cambodia,” *Anthropology and Medicine*, vol.11,1, 2004.

Jan Ovesen is Associate Professor of Anthropology at Uppsala University. He

The Muslim minority in Cambodia amounts to about 500,000 people, about five percent of the country’s population. They are collectively referred to as Cham. This name indicates a purported origin in the historical kingdom of Champa that occupied the coast of present-day Vietnam, between Hue and Ho Chi Minh City. The ‘Hinduized’ kingdom of Champa was the hereditary rival of the Khmer kingdom at Angkor, and from the tenth century onwards several wars were fought between them. Eventually Champa also had to contend with the Vietnamese (Dai Viêt), and after the Vietnamese destruction of the Champa capital Vijaya in 1471, it was territorially reduced to the southern principalities of Kauthara (Nha Trang) and Panduranga (Phan Rang) while still being subject to further Vietnamese incursions (Po Dharma 2001). These principalities underwent a gradual and partial conversion to Islam through the influence of the coastal trade of Arab, Persian and Indian merchants. The Champa history of military defeats between 1471 and the 1830s, when Vietnam finally annihilated the last vestiges of an autonomous Champa, entailed various waves of Cham emigrations, to the Malayan peninsula, to Cambodia, and possibly to Sumatra and Java as well.



has done research in Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Laos, and in Cambodia. Publications on Cambodia include “Political Violence in Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge ‘Genocide,’” in P. Richards (ed.) *No Peace, No War. An Anthropology of Contemporary Armed Conflicts*, London 2005; James Currey; and (with Ing-Britt Trankell) “Foreigners and Honorary Khmers: Ethnic Minorities in Cambodia,” in C. Duncan (ed.) *Civilizing the Margins. Southeast Asian Government Programs for Development of Ethnic Minorities*, Ithaca 2004; Cornell University Press.

Three separate groups may be distinguished within the Cham category (Collins 1996). The largest, the Cham proper, trace their ancestry to the Champa kingdom, but emphasize their religion (Islam) rather than their historical origins as their main defining feature. Most still speak the Cham language, which belongs to the Austronesian family, but all are fluent in Khmer and thus bilingual. They are located mainly in Kampong Cham, Kampot and north of Phnom Penh. A second group is referred to as Chvea which is the Khmer word for Java, suggesting their penultimate origin in the Malay-Indonesian area. Today they speak Khmer. They refer to themselves not as ‘Chvea’ but as ‘Khmer Islam’ – stressing both their linguistic and national belonging and their separate religion, rather than their ‘foreign’ origin (cf. Ovesen and Trankell 2004).

Both these groups belong to the Malay-influenced Shafi branch of Sunni Islam. They have for some time been recipients of various forms of Islamic aid from the Middle East (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the Arab Emirates) as

well as from Malaysia and Brunei. The aid consists of school books and religious literature in Arabic and assistance for building schools, mosques and wells. These are also travel funds every year for a number of prominent local community members to go on the *hajj*, the pilgrimage to Mecca; in 1992, ninety-six Cambodian Muslims performed the *hajj* (MRG 1995:11), and similar numbers have travelled in subsequent years. The Cham and Chvea welcome this attention from the world Islamic community, as they feel it signals an international recognition of their importance as Cambodian Muslims.

The third group of Cham are referred to as Jahed. Although Muslims, they identify themselves primarily in terms of their historical origins in the Champa kingdom. Their ancestors formed part of an exodus from the Champa principality of Panduranga, following its defeat by the Vietnamese in 1692. The refugees numbered about five thousand families, mainly belonging to the Champa royal family and the aristocracy of

Panduranga. With permission from the Khmer king they settled around Udong, the former Khmer capital (north of Phnom Penh). Their long-standing attachment to the Khmer rulers is well attested in the Khmer Royal Chronicles and has been important to both parties (Mak Phoeun 1995:397), and even today they take pride in the fact that they farm their own paddy land by ancient royal permission.

Today the Jahed number about 23,000 people. They are located mainly in two communities north of Udong, in two adjacent districts of Kampong Chhnang province (where the authors have conducted anthropological fieldwork); smaller communities are found in the neighbouring provinces of Pursat and Battambang. Their somewhat unorthodox version of Islam (superimposed on a basically Hindu type of cosmology and influenced by Sufi traditions) sets them apart from the other Muslim groups in Cambodia, the Chvea and the Cham. Though bilingual and fluent in Khmer, the Jahed not only speak the Cham language but preserve the knowledge of writing in the Cham script; Cham writing is taught locally by the local religious leaders to young boys who are destined to be active in the religious community. The prayers are also chanted in Cham, and all religious leaders have a collection of Cham language religious literature, meticulously copied in the Cham script on durable brown paper.

Their Islamic unorthodoxy is also reflected in the existence and contemporary flourishing of their *cay* spirit possession cult. The *cay* spirits are the royal spirits of their ancestors in Champa. The cult celebrates the Cham mythical history as retold in the *pi cay*, the songs of the spirits chanted by the (mostly but not exclusively female)

mediums while possessed (Trankell 2003). Although the local Muslim leaders do not participate actively in the possession cult, they tolerate it as an important expression of the group's ethnic and historical identity. And they are also adamant in following the Muslim customs that they have preserved from Champa as their historical heritage. The most important of these is the Friday prayer. The Jahed are well aware that other Muslims pray five times a day, but they themselves insist on praying just once a week. The men assemble in the village mosque on Friday mornings, and after the midday prayer, which is led by an 'Imam' and performed by about a dozen members of the congregation, the women of the village bring trays of food, fruit and sweets to the mosque, to be consumed by the men and, soon, by the small children who are eagerly waiting around the mosque for their share. The village mosque is a rather unimpressive building which bears little resemblance to the white-tiled edifices found along the Tonle Sap in the northern outskirts of Phnom Penh. Apart from not being built on stilts like ordinary houses, it is distinguished by the large (Buddhist-temple style) drum that hangs in front and is beaten to call for prayer.

The refusal of the Jahed to pray five times a day and to use Arabic as their religious language has caused some concern among more orthodox Muslims, both Cambodian and foreign. In 1997, the village in which we worked was visited by a group of Islamic missionaries from Pakistan who promised financing for a fine white mosque and a school, on the condition that the people behave as proper orthodox Muslims. The local leaders argued that since Allah had created all men, He could be expected to tolerate the cultural diversity of



Religious leaders praying at a funeral. *Photo by the authors*



A meal in the mosque after the Friday prayers. *Photo by the authors*

mankind, so why should not His believers follow His example? Such arguments proved to no avail, and eventually the missionaries were asked to leave. It was not the first time they had had such a visit, and our informants found it rather embarrassing that they had to be rude to their Muslim brethren and send them away,



Local Cham religious leaders in a wedding procession. Photo by the authors

but to depart from their proper traditions was unthinkable. They were also concerned that their amiable relations with their Khmer Buddhist neighbours, based on practical cooperation and mutual tolerance of each other's ways, might be disrupted if more radical Islamic influences were to take root among them.

As an ethnic subgroup, the Jahed find themselves in a predicament. On the one hand, they feel closer to the Khmer, culturally and mentally, than to the orthodox Muslims (all of whom they tend to refer to as Chvea). They represent the vestiges of Champa royalty but at the same time they occupy their present territory by ancient Khmer royal privilege, and they regard themselves as loyal subjects of the Cambodian rulers, who, in contrast to Islamic missionaries, have respected their cultural and religious distinctiveness. On the

other hand, they are Muslims and as such expected (by other Cham as well as by the Cambodian government) to identify primarily with the Cambodian Muslim community. But the foremost objective of the community leaders is to preserve and continue their ancestral traditions, including their particular version of Islam, that link them to their historical past as heirs to the Champa kingdom. In the long run, theirs is probably a lost cause. While religious literacy in the Cham language and script was until fairly recently transmitted to children of both sexes, and women were not inferior to men in terms of formal education (Ner 1941: 170), nowadays this knowledge is taught to only a limited number of male pupils. And the cheaply printed prayerbooks in Arabic which are liberally distributed by Arab Islamic organizations may eventually come to replace the painstakingly produced Cham manuscript literature.

In terms of religious ideology, the Jahed are very far removed from Wahhabi Islamist groups such as Jemaah Islamiyah and others associated with the al-Qaida network. In keeping with their Hindu-derived cosmology, their religious teachings contain a strong emphasis on non-violence. But on the whole, Wahhabism has so far gained little foothold among Cambodian Muslims (*Phnom Penh Post* 2003) and also the Cham/Chvea majority are generally wary of being associated with, and blamed for terrorist crimes committed in the name of Islam by extremist groups. It is important to note that, in contrast to Thailand's Muslim minority for example, Cambodia's Muslims are not found in a national/cultural border area, and that separatism is therefore not an issue. On the contrary, Cambodia's Muslims share with the Khmer majority the experiences and sufferings of recent national

history, including French colonization, civil war, Pol Pot's terror regime, and subsequent Vietnamese occupation.

Currently, however, the greatest problem for the social and national harmony desired by the vast majority of Cambodian Muslims seems to be the party-political cleavage between Prime Minister Hun Sen's Cambodian People's Party (CPP) on the one hand, and the 'Alliance of Democrats' opposition on the other, which characterizes the political climate of Cambodian society at large. Hun Sen's general strategy of enrolling prominent religious leaders (Buddhist and Muslim), as well as other leading figures within the civil society, for his own party-political aims is threatening to politicize the Cambodian Muslim community from within and split it right down the middle.

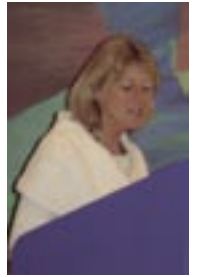
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The New NIAS Is Born

On 6 October 2004, the University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen Business School, and Lund University signed an agreement of cooperation to jointly share the responsibility for the continuation of NIAS. The formal signing ceremony took place in a festive atmosphere at the premises of the Nordic Council of Ministers. The occasion was well attended by scholars and officials from across the Nordic region, and representatives of Asian embassies in Copenhagen.

The speakers were Per Unckel, Riitta Lampola, Linda Nielsen, Finn Junge-Jensen, Göran Bexell, Geir Helgesen and Jørgen Delman.



Linda Nielsen



Göran Bexell



Finn Junge-Jensen



Recent Visitors



Dr **Ruan Zongze** from the China Institute of International Studies (CIIS) in Beijing, gave a lecture on *Asia & Europe: Joining Forces for Multilateralism* at the Museum of Decorative Arts on 4 November. The lecture was arranged jointly by the Asia–Europe Foundation (ASEF), the Danish Foreign Policy Society and NIAS.



In September, NIAS hosted a visit to Copenhagen by a delegation from the General Administration of Press and Publications (GAPP), which was headed by Sun Wenke, Deputy Director General of the GAPP Personnel and Education Division. GAPP is the PRC government's administrative agency responsible for drafting and enforcing goals and production policies for China's news publishing activities. GAPP is also in charge of monitoring and managing the contents of information published on the Internet. After a formal visit at the Association of Danish Newspapers the delegation came to NIAS, where there was a presentation by and discussion with Wang Yihong, associate professor, the Institute of Journalism & Communication of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), currently a visiting researcher at the Copenhagen Business School,



H.E., Mr. **Gotaro Ogawa**, Japanese Ambassador to Denmark, gave a talk on the theme *An Insider's View on Japanese Official Development Assistance on 15 September*. This lecture was organized jointly by NIAS and the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Copenhagen.

NIAS Grants

Guest Researcher Scholarships for Nordic Scholars

This type of scholarship is designed for senior researchers and doctoral candidates based in the Nordic countries. It offers researchers an opportunity to work at NIAS as an affiliated researcher for 2 or 4 weeks. A scholarship includes inexpensive travel to and from Copenhagen and accommodation with full board in a NIAS room at Nordisk Kollegium. The guest researcher enjoys full access to the Institute's library services and research tools, computer facilities, contact networks and scholarly environment. Stays are arranged subject to a time schedule administered by NIAS. The application form is available at <http://www.nias.ku.dk/activities/supra/NIASNordicGuestResearcherSch.doc>

Contact Scholarships for Nordic Graduate Students

These scholarships are designed to make NIAS's library and other resources accessible to graduate students in the Nordic countries. A scholarship covers inexpensive travel to and from Copenhagen and accommodation with full board in a NIAS room at Nordisk Kollegium for a period of two weeks. Stays are arranged subject to a time schedule administered by NIAS. The application form is available at <http://www.nias.ku.dk/activities/supra/NIASContactScholarshipsAppli.doc>

Øresund Scholarships

Researchers and students from Lund and Roskilde universities are invited to apply for NIAS's 'Øresund Scholarships'. The candidate will be seated in the library's reading room and will be offered the same extended library services as the regular holders of contact scholarships. Only transport costs are covered by the scholarship. Accommodation costs and incidental expenses are not covered. Stays are arranged subject to a time schedule administered by NIAS. Find the application form at <http://www.nias.ku.dk/activities/supra/NIASresundScholarshipAppliac.doc>

Application Deadline

Monday 4 April 2005 for scholarships during the period May–August 2005.

Further information on NIAS's scholarship programme on the web:
<http://www.nias.ku.dk/activities/supra/scholarships.htm#students>.

continued from p. 21 • S. Cederroth *Return of the Birds. Images of a Remarkable Mosque in Lombok*

ritually important phases of the muslim year. However, each mosque may also be used for another purpose, namely at irregular intervals, when the need to "repair the world" arises. This means a situation when a catastrophe of some sort such as an earthquake, war or epidemics hits the village. It is then mandatory to stage a large ceremony called *lohor jariang jumat* in the mosque. In order to perform this ceremony, *kiyai* from all the North Lombok branch mosques come together in their mosque to read a specific sermon. The coming Friday, *kiyai* from all the mosques have to assemble in the central sanctuary where they read a specific sermon. In contrast to the sermon read at the ceremony which marks the end of the

fasting period and which is taken from the Koran and read in Arabic, these sermons are specifically Bayanese, i.e. they are especially composed for use at the *lohor* ceremony and they are read in the local language and not in Arabic.

Ordinary Friday sermons are never held in these mosques as they are in the orthodox *Waktu lima* mosques. In fact the common people of Bayan never visit the mosque, except to carry offerings of food to the *kiyai* during the ceremonies mentioned above. In addition, the people neither conduct the Friday sermon nor perform the obligatory five daily prayers. Instead, the execution of religious duties rests entirely on specifically appointed officials, the above mentioned *kiyai*.

Summarily then, in this *wetu telu* mosque and the way in which it is used we can discern influences from several different religious traditions. Here we find not only Islamic elements but traces of pantheistic beliefs in supernatural powers as illustrated by the birds and the dragon. In and around the mosque we also notice traces of ancestor worship in the many ancestor graves surrounding the mosque. This is indeed a remarkable mosque, probably the only one of its kind in the entire Muslim world

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Call for papers

Workshop on Religion and the Indonesian Conflict Resolution

January 10–11, 2005, at Assembly Hall, Parahyangan Catholic University in Bandung, West Java, Indonesia

The workshop will be organized in conjunction with the 50th Anniversary of Parahyangan Catholic University & ICSN's Annual Asia Link activities. It will focus on the role of religion in Indonesian conflict resolution by viewing both the international and the domestic aspects of the issue. While religion is studied as the rallying point of inter-communal disputes, it can also be viewed as a source of norms that contribute to conflict transformation – norms against corruption and against violent crime, as well as for tolerance. Furthermore they have been studied as a resource of social capital for peace – good religious leaders have been found in many areas as useful allies for peace.

Abstracts or proposed topics of papers are requested to be sent to Timo Kivimäki (timo.kivimaki@nias.ku.dk) and Monacella Ella Kosasih (ella@home.unpar.ac.id) as soon as possible. The final program will be announced at www.icsnasialink.net by 16.12. 2004.

The Indonesian Conflict Studies Network (www.conflicttransform.net/icsn.htm) is a scholarly network, which aims at bringing together the Nordic European tradition of peace research and the Indonesian understanding of Indonesia's conflicts. The workshop will be organized as the network's project (www.icsnasialink.net) within EuropeAid's Asia Link program. This project establishes regular links of social scientific cooperation primarily between Nordic European Peace university activities in peace research and Indonesian universities in conflict areas. While the network is led and coordinated at the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies in Copenhagen, the Asia Link project of the network is hosted by the University of Helsinki. Parahyangan Catholic University, who hosts this workshop, has also hosted several projects of the Indonesian Conflict Studies Network and is a partner of the ICSN Asia Link project (www.icsnasialink.net/unpar.htm). Recent UNPAR-led ICSN projects include two projects with the Finnish Embassy and the International Media Support, involving media training and building of media-assisted mechanisms of early warning.

continued from p. 16 • K. Morville *A Religiously Based Institutionalization of Democracy*

bers to think for themselves and form their own ideas about Islam. So when a well-known fundamentalist, on a rare occasion, was invited to speak at an intermediary training session, it should not be seen as an official expression of support for his extreme viewpoints, but as a way to provoke a debate among the members, which succeeded quite well.

The organizational logic of HMI-MPO is rather unusual in the way it unites the values of independence, plurality and tolerance within a religious context. What is most unique

about HMI-MPO, however, is the way it manages to create room for free and dynamic discussion, where young Muslim students can experiment with new ideas without having to compromise their religious convictions. In that sense it is not religious ideology, but critical and political thinking, we find at the base of the organization. This kind of thinking is inspired by Western democratic traditions, but motivated by local aspirations of a more just and ideal society devoid of corruption, nepotism and militarism.

Note

¹ *Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam - Majelis Penyelamat Organisasi*; The Muslim Student Association's defence committee.

Literature

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Recent Visitors



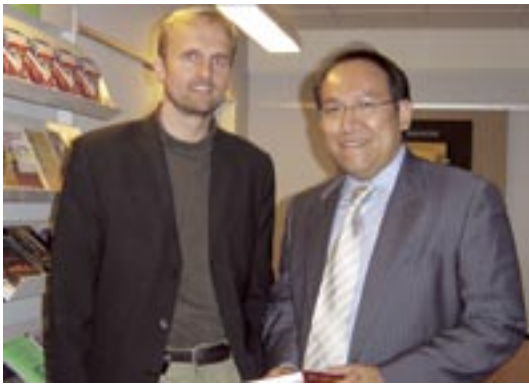
Maria Jaschok, Director of the International Gender Studies Centre, University of Oxford, stayed at NIAS in the beginning of October. She gave a seminar presentation on *Thinking the Unheard, Writing the Unwritten – Reflecting on Marginality, Ethnography and Text in a Collaborative Research Project*.



Edmund Terence Gomez, Associate Professor at the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, was affiliated to NIAS in October–November. His fields of research include *Ethnic Chinese in Europe and Southeast Asia*, *Chinese business in Malaysia* and *Chinese enterprise*. A number of seminars were being organized by NIAS and partner institutions. Prof. Gomez was photographed together Michael Jacobsen, NIAS.



Mikiko Eto, Professor at the Faculty of Law, Hosei University, Tokyo, worked at NIAS 8 September–8 October. Her current research is dealing with *women's movements in Japan*. While visiting Denmark she also gave a lecture at the University of Aarhus on *The Japanese Women's Movement in its Global Context*.



Professor **Zaw Oo** from the American University in Washington, D.C., gave a lunch talk on *Burma and the EU–ASEAN Relations* on 15 September. Here with Timo Kivimäki, NIAS.



Farrukh Irnazarov, Linköping University, and **Sven Paikre** from the Renvall Institute for Area and Cultural Studies, University of Helsinki, held both a Contact Scholarship in September–October. Farrukh Irnazarov is writing an MA-thesis on the *Strategic Importance of Central Asia*. Sven Paikre is writing an MA-thesis on the *Modern Economic Theories in the Asia-Pacific Context*.



Professor Charles Keyes, the Department of Anthropology and International Studies at the University of Washington in Seattle, gave a seminar presentation on *Ethnicity and the Nation-States of Thailand and Vietnam*. The seminar was organized jointly by NIAS and the Institute of History of Copenhagen University. Here with Gerald Jackson, NIAS Press.



Senthil Ram (left), Peace and Development Research Institute (Padrigu), Göteborg University, **Kristina Göransson**, Department of Social Anthropology at Lund University and **Tashi Nyima**, Institute of Eastern European and Oriental Studies, University of Oslo, stayed all at NIAS in September. Senthil Ram (Guest Researcher) carries out a Ph.D. project on *Tibetan Conflict Analysis: Asymmetry Relationship, Protracted Issues and Non-violent Responses*. Kristina Göransson (Øresund Scholar). She is working on a Ph.D. thesis on *The Dynamics of Intergenerational Relations among Chinese Singaporeans*. Tashi Nyima (Contact Scholar) is writing an MA thesis on *Ethnicity and Employment Opportunities in Diqing Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture*.



Siri Elisabeth Haug, University of Bergen, and **Jenni Moberg**, Swedish School of Economics and Business Administration in Helsinki, held a Contact Scholarship each in October. Siri Haug is writing an MA thesis on the subject, *How Is Ethnic Identity Expressed among Minority Students at University Level in Kunming, China*. Jenni Moberg's MA thesis is on *Management of the Keiretsu Groupings*.



Päivi Poukka, University of Helsinki, held a Guest Researcher Scholarship in September. She is working on a Ph.D.-thesis on *Conception of Human Being in Japanese Primary School Moral Education*.

Reni Jasinski Wright, University of Tromsø had a Contact Scholarship in September. She is writing an MA thesis on *Practice and Experience of Chinese Popular Religion*.



Anjelika Mamytova, Stockholm University, and **Heidi Havansi**, University of Helsinki, held a Contact Scholarship each in October–November. Heidi Havansi is writing an MA-thesis on the subject, *Grass-root Level and Citizen Activism – Case: 'No to the World Expo 2005 in Aichi, Japan'*. Anjelika Mamytova's MA thesis on *Civil Society and Democratization – A Comparative Analysis of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan on Women NGOs*



On 1 October, Ph.D. Candidate **Andrew M. Fischer**, London School of Economics, gave a seminar presentation on *Tibet in Transition: Social and Economic Challenges for the Next Decade*. The seminar is organized jointly by NIAS and the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Mr Fischer is photographed here together with Anders Højmark Andersen, NIAS.



Michael Eilenberg, University of Aarhus, had a Contact Scholarship in November. He is writing an MA thesis on *Borderland Identity – A Case of the Iban in West Kalimantan, Indonesia*. **Taina Dahlgren**, University of Helsinki, was NIAS Guest Researcher in November. Her Ph.D. project is on *Finland and the Vietnam War*. **Ted Svensson** from Lund University had an Øresund Scholarship in November. His MA thesis is on *Women in Indian Society*.

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At a roundtable discussion on 24 September, Professor **Charan Wadhva** from the Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi, gave a presentation on *Indian Economy-Vision 2020*. The talk was organized jointly by the Embassy of India in Copenhagen and NIAS. Together with Prof. Wadhva are Erik Skaaning and Jørgen Delman, NIAS.

Welcome to an unruly arrival – an occasional entry from the diary of NIAS Press



Some books glide into this world, quietly waiting to be noticed. Others are more unruly and by their nature impossible to ignore. Definitely the latter type is “The Thaksinization of Thailand”, by Duncan McCargo and Ukrist Pathmanand, an in-depth, root-and-branch critique of the government and leadership style of Thaksin Shinawatra, prime minister of Thailand.

The omens were good, printing of the book nearing completion. Then we heard that Duncan McCargo would be giving a lecture on Friday, 26 November at the Institute of East and Southeast Asian Studies in Lund as part of its Focus Asia programme. With Lund to be a foundation owner of NIAS from January (see Editorial, p. 3), it seemed a good idea to do a world launch of the book in Lund that Friday with a Copenhagen launch on the following Monday.

The fates then intervened. Forces beyond our control meant that we ended up with only two advance copies of the book. A public relations disaster looked to be in the making. Launch? What launch? This is a “book welcome”!

So – no champagne (but the snacks and chocolates were nice), no fast-disappearing piles of books signed by the author. But as book welcomes go, the two events were a pleasure to attend, not least because Professor McCargo was in top form - first in a masterly dissection of Thai politics and the media at Lund, second by a carefully crafted analysis of how mishaps, missteps and the “CEO leadership”-style of Thaksin Shinawatra have combined to inflame a minor local situation in Thailand’s Muslim south into what looks increasingly to be a major conflict that could yet inflict massive damage on tourism in Thailand, a mainstay of the country’s economy. Both lectures were an outstanding success and were followed by animated discussions after the lecture.

Book launch? Who needs a book launch if we can be favoured with such rich fare at a book welcome!

Gerald Jackson



Photos by G. Jackson & L. Höskuldsson



SELECTED NEW NIAS BOOKS ON SOUTHEAST ASIA, OUT IN JANUARY

Civil Society in Southeast Asia

Edited by Lee Hock Guan

The concept of 'civil society' has all the characteristics of an essentially contested concept. As such, despite the numerous discussions of and publications on this concept, no universally agreed-upon definition of civil society is likely to prevail, probably ever. However, what can be seen in this volume is that the Southeast Asian countries provide an excellent example of where diverse colonial histories, ethnic, religious and cultural mix, economic developments, and state regimes readily offer a crucible to demonstrate how these factors would interact to shape the form and composition of civil society.

January 2005, 270 pp.
Pbk • 87-91114-54-3 • £17.99

Divinity and Diversity

A Hindu Revitalization Movement in Malaysia

Alexandra Kent

This book looks closely at the Malaysian following of the contemporary Indian godman, Sathya Sai Baba, a neo-Hindu guru famed for his miracle-working. The '911' attacks on the United States and subsequent 'war on terrorism' have brought a discussion of transnational 'religious' networks onto centre stage. Today, then, issues of faith and devotion are more urgent than ever in the interfaces between diverse world-views, not only at local and national levels but, increasingly, at the global level as well.

January 2005, 224 pp., illus.

Hbk • 87-91114-40-3 • £40

(a pbk edition follows later in 2005 - watch this space)

From Monobank to Commercial Banking Financial Sector Reforms in Vietnam

Jens Kovsted, John Rand and Finn Tarp (with Le Viet Thai, Vuong Nhat Huong and Nguyen Minh Thao)

This study analyses the difficulties and problems encountered in transforming the Vietnamese financial sector from one subordinate to government objectives and goals to an autonomous sector guided by market forces and competitive pressures.

January 2005, 192 pp., charts and tables

Hbk • 87-91114-62-4 • £40

(a pbk edition follows later in 2005 - watch this space)

Indonesian Literature vs New Order Orthodoxy

The Aftermath of 1965–1966

Anna-Greta Nilsson Hoadley

Analyses Indonesian literature produced during the New Order period dealing with the events of 1965–1966 and its consequences. It examines the political coercion that people were subjected to and how the authors deal with the taboo subject of the killings.

January 2005, 176 pp., illus.

Hbk • 87-91114-61-6 • £36

Islamic Revivalism in a Changing Peasant Economy

Central Sumatra, 1784–1847

Christine Dobbin

Curzon Press, 1983, 300 pp.

Pbk • 0-7007-0155-9 • £15 £12

Subud and the Javanese Mystical Tradition

Antoon Geels

Curzon Press, 1997, 262 pp.

Hbk • 0-7007-06,062-3 • £60 £20

Redesigning the Cosmos Belief System and State Power in Indonesia

Ruth McVey

NIAS, 1993, 36 pp.

Pbk • 87-87062-27-5 • £4 £3

NIAS Bookshop Quarterly Sale Theme: Islam in Southeast Asia

Orders: carol.hansen@nias.ku.dk (credit card only). Delivery charged at cost.

Managing Marital Disputes in Malaysia

**Islamic Mediators and Conflict
Resolution in the Syariah Courts**

*Sharifah Zaleha Syed Hassan and
Sven Cederroth*

Curzon Press, 1996, 260 pp.

Hbk • 0-7007-0432-9 • £60 £30

Pbk • 0-7007-0454-X • £19.99 £10

From Syncretism to Orthodoxy? The Struggle of Islamic Leaders in an East Javanese Village

Sven Cederroth

NIAS, 1991, 45 pp.

Pbk • 87-87062-35-6 • £2.50 £2

Survival and Profit in Rural Java

The Case of an East Javanese Village

Sven Cederroth

Curzon Press, 1995, 350 pp.

Hbk • 0-7007-0294-6 • £60 £30

A Sacred Cloth Religion?

**Ceremonies of the Big Feast among the
Wetu Telu (Lombok, Indonesia)**

Sven Cederroth

NIAS, 1992, 170 pp.

Pbk • 87-87062-21-6 • £6 £4



It is now apparent, especially in the aftermath of the regional financial crisis of 1997, that globalization has been impacting upon the Southeast Asian economies and societies in new and harrowing ways, a theme of many recent studies. Inadvertently, these studies of globalization have also highlighted that the 1980s and 1990s debate on democratization in the region – which focused on the emergence of the middle classes, the roles of new social movements, NGOs and the changing relations between state and civil society – might have been overly one-dimensional.

This volume revisits the theme of democratization via the lenses of globalization, understood economically, politically and culturally. Although globalization increasingly frames the processes of democracy and development, nonetheless, the governments and peoples of Southeast Asia have been able to determine the pace and character – even the direction of these processes – to a considerable extent. This collection of essays (by some distinguished senior scholars and other equally perceptive younger ones) focuses on this globalization–democratization nexus and shows, empirically and analytically, how governance is being restructured and democracy sometimes deepened in this new global era. A historical review introduces the volume while an analytical assessment of the ten case-studies concludes it.



SOUTHEAST ASIAN *Responses to* GLOBALIZATION

RESTRUCTURING GOVERNANCE AND DEEPENING DEMOCRACY

edited by

**FRANCIS LOH KOK WAH
AND JOAKIM ÖJENDAL**

NIAS Democracy in Asia series, 10

NIAS Press, January 2005, 390 pp.

Hbk • 87-91114-43-8 • £40

Pbk • 87-91114-44-6 • £13.99

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