



## Graffiti, Converts and Vigilantes: Islam outside the Mainstream in Maritime Southeast Asia

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### Introduction

As a Southeast Asianist focusing on the Malay-Indonesian world, I have been regularly visiting this region, mainly Indonesia, for the past twenty years. The purpose was not always in the interests of research, but during each out of my thirteen stays in the country I was easily able to discern a visible shift within the society. The country has been rapidly modernizing – on every visit the skyline of Jakarta seems to be more crowded, boasting dozens of new skyscrapers. In addition, it is wealthier and, putting it mildly, it is increasingly a money- and consumption-oriented society. Furthermore, stating it bluntly, it is increasingly Islamized. Indonesia still remains a multi-ethnic, multi-religious country with a pluralist society, but subjectively the atmosphere, especially when it comes to religion and inter-faith interaction, has become rather tense of late, particularly when compared with two decades ago when I started discovering this fascinating country (and region), let alone when we contrast it with the situation half a century ago. The last forty years of *dakwah* campaigns, summoning the population to the ‘correct’ path of Islam, co-funded by Saudi petrodollars, the rapid urbanization and the trend for general modernity, accompanied by state-instilled educational policies on Islam of Soeharto, as well as the increasingly dominant role of Islam in the Indonesian public arena in the post-1998 era, and along with numerous other factors such as the quest for deeper personal piety in an uncertain world, have all significantly contributed to changes in the face and the nature of the (once) pluralistic and syncretic Indonesian response to Islam. Although the Islamization process of Malayo-Indonesian Southeast Asia is often ‘deemed unfinished’<sup>1</sup>, this deep transformation has brought about a myriad of consequences. In my view, the most notable ones would be the stripping of local Islam of its ‘local foliage’<sup>2</sup> to a great degree resulting from the intensive purification campaigns; and secondly, the raising up of Islam to the position of ‘superior’ religion, whether official (Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam) or not (Indonesia). The latter change has determined the

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1 Ali, in Kenney & Moosa, 2014, p 406.

2 Dhume, 2009, p 4.

cultural, moral and social patterns of the whole nation, including non-Muslims, and has been propped up by the increasingly influential official and quasi-official bodies such as the JAKIM (Malaysia) or the MUI (Indonesia). The official and societal pressures, as well as other aforementioned factors, have thus pushed the mainstream Islamic discourse in both of these Muslim-majority countries of Southeast Asia from moderation towards unprecedented orthodoxy.

Arguably, this intense and complex shift towards a more pronounced role for Islam in the public sphere has also increased the capacity that a religion may have to act as a barrier between various communities. Such a situation was not only considerably less pronounced in both countries in the past but it may also have a negative impact on the frequently 'advertized' pluralism and harmony associated with these multi-cultural countries.

There is a multitude of angles from which we can view and describe the nature and position of Islam in Southeast Asia. There is a myriad of questions connected with its recent and current development, which is the result of a centuries-long and complex process of Islamization. Such developments have been influenced by a number of factors: the adaptation and acculturation of the new creed through its interaction with the autochthonous cultural, social and mental fabric; the strong presence of Europeans and their religion during high colonial times; modernization, including the modernization of Islam; and, last but not least, as a result of local, national and regional political interests. Therefore, to talk about 'Southeast Asian Islam', 'Malay(sian) Islam' or 'Indonesian Islam' is, in many ways, an oversimplification, for the region presents a highly diverse and heterogeneous religious mosaic<sup>3</sup>.

Nonetheless, it is both interesting and essential to look more closely at some of the set phrases which are sometimes stereotypically associated with Islam in Southeast Asia, whatever their relevance. In the first place, the Muslim religion in this part of the world has for centuries had the reputation of being less fundamentalist, less orthodox and (therefore?) more pluralistic, inclusive and tolerant towards non-Muslims and less orthodox Muslims alike. This perception was validated by a great number of foreign observers who visited or settled in the Malay-Indonesian world and, perhaps with the exception of Aceh – the 'Veranda of Mecca' – noticed and recorded that the character of Islam in Southeast Asia visibly differed from its inspirational source in the Arabic-speaking Middle East. It was often characterized as having an intensely syncretic nature, which lacked the legalistic normativity of the Arab heartland's faith. However, as has been alluded to above, do such stereotypes still retain their validity?

Given the heterogeneous nature of Islam in the region of maritime Southeast Asia, how can we objectively define the faith that is held by the bulk of populations in Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei, the three Southeast Asian countries where Islam is the dominant religion? Is this feasible at all in the space of a few paragraphs? Can this form of Islam still be perceived as being prevalently tolerant and pluralistic, eclectic and mystical, syncretistic and popular? How close is it to the medieval 'mystical

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3 von der Mehden, 2008, p 11.

synthesis', as Merle Ricklefs<sup>4</sup> and Gordon Means<sup>5</sup> have defined it? Does the notion of a 'thin veneer' of Islam, valid for centuries, still have any relevance at all in these countries? And, globally, does Islam in Southeast Asia still represent the 'Islamic fringe', perceived as being peripheral and not orthodox enough, even marginal, with no or very little say in the Islamic world at large, and with large segments of the population being secular or nominal Muslims who shun the fundamentalist *dakwah*-pushed trend? Or is this actually an outdated debate since the purists, conservatives, fundamentalists and radical Islamists are in the process of taking over or have already succeeded? Worse still, is it the case that Southeast Asian Muslim societies and the nation-states in this cultural-geographic sphere actually represent a contemporary 'crucible of terror', providing the soil which nourishes deadly terrorist networks and their cells, as Zachary Abuza depicts in his much-quoted monograph<sup>6</sup>? And, most fascinatingly, how is it that this crucible of terror receives so little attention from the Arab world as well as from other Muslim regions around the globe, which consider it to be peripheral, improper and simply not orthodox enough?

So, what do we make of all these contradicting simplifications? For several reasons, this publication by no means seeks to provide comprehensive answers to such rather complex questions. Firstly, despite the 'peripheral' position of Islam in Southeast Asia within the Islamic world at large, this field has been exceedingly well studied and has been the subject of thorough and focused attention in recent decades. Therefore, there exists a great variety of both general and highly specialized monographs on this topic, which actually answer some of the questions raised above. Nevertheless, the ambition of the current edited monograph is to cast some light on the issue of what lies *outside mainstream Islam* in Maritime Southeast Asia, *a wide array of Islamic forms which may be deemed as peripheral, marginal and marginalized, radical and ultraorthodox, or simply understudied.*

Of course, this goal inevitably and immediately raises another line of inquiry – what actually epitomizes the Islamic mainstream in Islam in Southeast Asia and what actually lies outside it? In the first place, this is naturally very difficult to define, but we will offer a modest explanation in order to provide some sense of what we are trying to convey in the following pages.

#### Islam in Southeast Asia – some topical hard data and some historical context

Before embarking on the actual task of defining the Islamic non-mainstream in Southeast Asia, let us try to position this territory within the Islamic world at large. A simple review of the primary hard data is downright fascinating; size and numbers matter and the numbers that will follow are high. Southeast Asia as a region boasts the second-largest Muslim population in the world, with approximately 260 million

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4 Ricklefs, 2006, p 162.

5 Means, 2009, pp 18–19.

6 Abuza, 2003.

adherents, following that of South Asia with a huge 525-million-strong *umma*. These are not surprising facts for the area expert but may provide eye-opening data for those outside the field. If we combine these figures, we discover that approximately 55 percent of the world's Muslims live east of Iran, not counting the tens of millions of Hui Chinese Muslims. This clearly undermines the cliché that Southeast Asian Islam is peripheral or marginal for, in addition to the afore-mentioned fact, it is also home to the world's most populous Islam-majority nation – Indonesia.

While frequently overlooked and underestimated by major actors in the Islamic heartland from the Arabic-speaking Middle East – for many reasons, including an alleged lack of orthodoxy and influential Islamic thinkers – Indonesia is an incredibly important country, not just because it has the world's largest *umma*. It is one of the very few Muslim societies that can boast a functional democracy, however imperfect, supported by a robust and dynamically growing economy. This, combined with Indonesia's highly strategic location and its position as a regional and rising middle power, makes it an absolutely unique country, which has the unusual opportunity to become the first democratic Muslim superpower. Whether or not Indonesia fails (as has often been the case in the past) or fulfills the expectations has to be the focus of other papers. Nonetheless, the potential is evidently there and Indonesia has a good chance of becoming a leading force, not only in Southeast Asia, as has already been acknowledged, but also in the whole Islamic world.

Indonesia's huge population lies behind the paradox that Islam is the numerically strongest religion in the area of Southeast Asia, where some 42 % out of the region's 630-million inhabitants are Muslim,<sup>7</sup> for there are only two other Islam-majority countries – Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam. The Muslim population of the former is 60 per cent of its 30-million-strong multicultural total, while in tiny Brunei it is two thirds of the 400,000 population.

Importantly, Sunni Islam is the dominant creed in these three countries, with Malaysia and Brunei having raised Islam to the status of official religion. Shi'ism remains on the fringes as an unwanted, unpopular and persecuted branch of Islam – it has been deemed illegal in Brunei Darussalam and in 11 out of 14 Malaysian states, in spite of the influence and role it once had in the past in the Islamization of the region.

There are also Muslim minorities in each of the remaining eight countries of the region, in some cases quite sizeable ones. The most notable and influential ones are those in Myanmar (Burma), Thailand and the Philippines, in all of which the Muslim community comprises around 5 percent or slightly less of the overall population.<sup>8</sup> However, in some regions, such as the deep Thai South or parts of the Southern Philippines, Islam traditionally represents the majority religion, which not only stipulates the cultural milieu of these areas but also poses serious socio-political challenges in relation to the politics of the individual countries.

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7 The numerically second, Buddhism, with approximately 202 million adherents, constitutes about 40 % of the region's population, while Christianity comes third with roughly 125–130 million believers.

8 Current and impartial figures on the Muslim population of Myanmar are notoriously hard to come by; estimates of the Muslim population range from 3–8% of the total.

### On the spread of Islam in Southeast Asia – from acculturation to rigor?

It is a classical and widely accepted explanation that the Indian Ocean trade connecting the Middle East and India with the world of Southeast Asia was the major factor behind the Islamization of the region, which was undoubtedly a long, gradual and by no means straightforward process. Most probably, Islam arrived in Southeast Asia aboard hundreds of commercial sailing ships embarking from the Arabian Peninsula (mainly Hadhramawt), Persia, numerous areas of India, including Bengal, and also China. Although it is beyond the scope of this brief introduction to discuss the origins of Southeast Asian Islam, we are in a position to state that all of these places were, to a varying degree, instrumental in the process as they were the places of origin of the new creed's proselytizers. While the first encounters with Southeast Asia apparently occurred as early as in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, the process of Islamization in the sense of large-scale conversion only started during the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, from which period we have abundant evidence of the existence of Islamized entities in the form of harbor principalities in North Sumatra (Pasai, Perlak, Lamuri). Arguably, the major wave of Islamization and Southeast Asia's inclusion within the growing Muslim *umma* started in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and lasted until the 17<sup>th</sup> century, inspired by Melaka's adoption of Islam. While polities such as the early Muslim kingdoms in modern-day Aceh did indeed play a certain role in the dissemination of the new creed, Melaka's royal family conversion in the early 15<sup>th</sup> century was to be a significant turning point in history, since this new harbor principality soon gained the position of the leading *entrepôt*, as well as the regional hegemon. Hence, it naturally became "the primary dissemination point of Islam, which followed the maritime trade routes along the Melaka Strait to northern Java and eastern Indonesia"<sup>9</sup>.

A great number of treatises have been devoted to the identification of factors behind the fairly smooth and mostly peaceful Islamization of Southeast Asia, so let us content ourselves with the provision of a brief summary of the major and generally acknowledged ones. In the first place, the local rulers in the Malay-Indonesian world were willing to adopt a pragmatic approach as they sought to accommodate the needs of the Muslim merchants in the interest of enhancing mutually beneficial maritime trade. At that time trade was dominated by Muslims from all parts of the vast Indian Ocean region, be they Arabs, Persians, Chinese, Gujaratis, Tamils or Bengalis. Acehnese, Malay, North Javanese and other rulers in the Malay-Indonesian world may well have been impressed by the might of powerful sultanates such as the Ottoman or Timurid Empires.<sup>10</sup> The Muslim-owned ships from Gujarat and other parts of Persianate India also bore Sufi ideas, originally emanating from Persia. Sufi principles became important for local princes for they contained, beside the notion of the mystical communion with God, the politically important idea of a 'just and universal ruler' (*shah*)<sup>11</sup>, which further overlapped with the Islamic notion of the

9 Andaya & Andaya, 2015, p. 94.

10 Ibid.

11 The originally Persian term *shah* became very popular, especially among the rulers on the Malay

monarch being ‘God’s shadow on Earth’<sup>12</sup>. This idea was inevitably highly attractive to the Hindu-Buddhist princes of the Malay world and Java, whose kingly power was based on a similar concept of a ‘universal ruler’ of semi-godly substance, known as *dewaraja* (the God-king). It is certainly no coincidence that Sufi ideas blossomed in both Indianized spheres of South Asia and Southeast Asia, for Sufi mysticism, simply put, results from the interaction of the Islamic world with the mystical traditions of India. Therefore, centuries later, as Sufism reached both of these regions, it proved to be highly successful given the compatible nature of the autochthonous Hinduized cultural substrate and the imported Sufi creed, prevalent within Muslim cultures in the Indian Ocean littoral between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Nonetheless, Islam was to take root successfully even in places where Indianization did not occur or had left only a weak imprint, such as in parts of the Philippines or Maluku, where the India-inspired kingly notions had traditionally held limited sway; in such places the afore-mentioned equation loses its validity. The notion of a universal ruler, associated with Islam, did not necessarily reinforce the older (e.g. Indo-Malay or Indo-Javanese) cultural matrix but it did become attractive to the previously animist Austronesian *datu* (chieftains). The concept actually provided them with a completely new and unheard of degree of legitimacy, enabling them to rule over much larger areas than the one or, at most, several humble villages that had previously been the case – it enabled them to rule over a fully-fledged state as a sovereign monarch, most commonly as a *sultan*. Islam thus became an instrumental state-making tool in areas where there had previously been no (major) state structures and this gave rise to new polities such as the Sulu, Maguindanao, and Ternate Sultanates; it also bolstered existing ones and gave rise to new ones in the Indianized sphere of Maritime Southeast Asia.

With regard to the role of Islam as a state-making tool, perhaps we may conclude that the process basically worked in a bi-directional manner. Islam was willingly embraced by the rulers in the Malay-Indonesian world for a number of reasons, including the fact that it reinforced their position as supreme, semi-godly monarchs. In turn, these newly converted kings – or *sultans* or *shahs*, as they preferred to be called – turned Islam into a sort of state religion, thus intensifying the spread of Islam within their own territories, with their subjects following suit. If the newly Islamized state, as was the case with Melaka, had both political power and expansionist ambitions, then Islamization (and Malayization, by the same token) occurred as the Muslim king embarked on a mission to conquer adjacent areas<sup>13</sup>. As the nature of such territorial expansions suggests, it can be assumed that the execution of this kind of Islamization was much less peaceful than the evolutionary pattern typically witnessed in the

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Peninsula, where it was used as part of their royal name. However, they continued to be referred to by the generic term *raja*, and later *sultan*.

12 Milner, 2009, p 71.

13 To provide a brief example, these areas included, inter alia: Pahang, Johor, Kampar, Jambi, conquered by Melaka where the local rulers were replaced by Muslim princes (Azra, 2006); Minangkabau, exposed to Islamization by Aceh; and inland South-Central Java (later Mataram Islam) after the conquest by the Demak Sultanate.

harbor principalities, where Islam arrived as a result of naval trade and took root through the expansion of inter-ethnic marriage, and because of its pragmatic and prestigious appeal. In other words, even in some areas of Southeast Asia, Islam was spread by means of the sword and fire.

However, in studying the history and motifs of Islamization in Southeast Asia, one should not limit oneself to the world of the elites. For many ordinary citizens, too, Islam had high appeal for it offered a brand new degree of social mobility and prestige, which would previously have been impossible within the Hindu-Buddhist realm(s) of Java and other islands of Nusantara. It not only enabled entrepreneurial-minded individuals from local societies to quickly scale the social ladder, as they succeeded as traders, but, as a modern, progressive and universal (and therefore highly mobile) religion, it attracted a significant number of voluntary converts.

Nonetheless, the practical aspect of conversion was probably the first and strongest motivating factor in the coastal areas, with the notion of trade becoming, in principle, equal to Islam. Unsurprisingly, as Anthony Reid specifically points out, “those who were ambitious, particularly in the area of trade, began to assimilate towards Islam even before they understood anything about its central doctrines”.<sup>14</sup> The fact is that in order to be culturally and otherwise accepted in the trading communities, these individuals also needed a universal socio-religious platform, and this need was fulfilled by the new monotheistic faith and its social system, one which was synonymous with the web of Indian Oceanic commerce networks spanning the region from the coasts of East Africa to the Southern Philippines. In line with this, since Melaka was considered the ideal representation of a Muslim-trading civilization in the region, with its Malay Muslim court and cultural and administrative features inspiring royal houses from Aceh to Bima and Pattani, a strong connection between Islam, Malay culture and also the Malay language evolved.

Therefore, whether or not conversions during the major wave of Islamization (between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries) were voluntary or less so, pragmatic or spirituality-inspired – usually a combination of more than one of these aspects –, the conversions that took place across the Archipelago clearly involved the spread of the ‘Melaka-Malay’ Muslim culture, whatever this consisted of. In other words, when thousands of non-Malays (Batak, Banjar, Bugis, Javanese in Malaya, *orang laut* and others) converted to Islam, they also assumed a degree of the broader Malay cultural identity<sup>15</sup>. This phenomenon is well documented by the centuries-old idiom *masuk Melayu*, which translates as ‘to become Muslim’, but literally means ‘to enter Malayness’, for it reflects the intricate nature of the process – becoming a Muslim and (therefore) a Malay at the same time (and *vice versa*). Converts thus accepted a broad and rather flexible socio-cultural identity and simultaneously entered a rather universal and conducive ‘negotiating space’, instead of assuming a new ethnicity in the modern sense of the word. Given the prominent position of Melaka and its culture,

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14 Reid, 1999, pp 26–27.

15 Reid, in Barnard, 2009.



*masuk Melayu* was a very prestigious thing to do. An additional significant factor that made the new faith appealing was that Islamic civilization was at its peak at that time, its achievements including those in the fields of medicine, philosophy, literature, mathematics, architecture, arts, law, various technologies, and handicraft. Some of the Islamic proselytizers, the most legendary being the 'nine saints' (*wali sanga*) operating in Java, were known for their ability to heal the sick, which might reflect the contemporaneous competence of Arabo-Persian medicine (and other areas of learning). It is well documented that this capacity on the part of the missionaries greatly contributed to an increase in their popularity and following, as illustrated by the case of the *wali* Maulana Ibrahim.<sup>16</sup>

In addition to these external and pragmatic reasons, there was a range of internal factors that were to play a crucial role, Sufism being the primary driving factor behind the overall Islamization of Southeast Asia. It is sometimes argued that Islam had been present in the archipelago from the 9<sup>th</sup> century onwards, or even earlier, due to the presence of Arabic and Persian merchants. The reason why it did not appeal at that time to local populations seems to be two-fold. Firstly, the Indianized empires of the Malay-Indonesian world appear to have reached the apex of their civilization and therefore felt little interest in or need to embrace an alternative religion. Secondly, while Muslim communities were a familiar sight in the commercial ports of Southeast Asia, the strict, legalistic strand running through Islam, dominating the Islamic discourse at that time, seems to have provided little appeal for the mystically oriented populations of maritime Southeast Asia.

The situation changed considerably with the appearance of Sufism in the waters east of the Bay of Bengal. Sufi Islam, borne mostly by Persianate Indians, themselves hailing from a more eclectic and pluralistic environment, was much more compatible with the spiritual world of Hindu-Buddhist societies, with its deeply mystical nature and focus on personal ecstasy and enlightenment, than orthodox Sunni Islam, prevalent at that time among the Arabs. This aspect of unorthodoxy also contributed greatly to facilitating the new Islamic ideas since the Sufis and their faith were relatively open and tolerant towards preserving most of the existing pre-Islamic elements of the individual religio-cultural substrates across the Malay-Indonesian world. In addition, many aspects of the Sufi ritual, such as the repetitive chanting of spiritual formulas known as *dzikir* (from the Arabic *dhikr*) and trance-instilling music, found semblance, and thus acceptance, with the existing autochthonous rituals and practices.

This 'softer' approach on the part of the Sufi proselytizers is probably the most plausible explanation behind the evolution of 'folk' or 'syncretic' Islam in Java, Sumatra and Malaya, a form sometimes referred to as the medieval 'mystic synthesis' or 'thin veneer' Islam, combining animist, Hindu-Buddhist and Islamic elements and ideas in various proportions. It should be underlined at this point, however, that the nature of the forces for change was far from monolithic. Among the aristocratic courtiers, later known as *priyayi*, a rather sophisticated blend of mainly Hindu-Javanese

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16 Nourse, 2013, p 406.



and Sufi elements dominated, while among the village people and other commoners animist features were prevalent, with less of an Indianized legacy and more focus on popular mysticism, along with some essentially external Islamic features – the term ‘thin veneer’ therefore seems appropriate in relation to this discourse. Simply stated, these were the two major streams, together forming a wider mainstream of both unorthodox and less orthodox Islamic doctrines, which overlapped and became strongly internalized by those who embraced them. Thus, in other words, most Javanese, Malays, Bugis, Minangkabau and other peoples of the Malay-Indonesian archipelago would have undoubtedly considered themselves and their respective cultures as Muslim, even though they retained many local cultural idiosyncrasies and *adat*, i.e. customary law. The most pious or orthodox among the Javanese or other ethnic groups of Nusantara would thus typically be the *ulama*, *kyai* or *tok guru*, the religious teacher, and the *santri*<sup>17</sup>, his follower – the (sometimes) itinerant student of a Muslim religious school, wandering from one pesantren to another in search of higher spiritual learning<sup>18</sup>.

#### From the first wave of Islamization to a deeper Islamic reform

Despite the general adherence to and self-association with Islam on the part of the Malays, Javanese and others, it should not be inferred that there were no differences and no conflict. The *ulama* (the Islamic scholars) who were in charge of the *pesantren*, or who were increasingly powerful, along with their circle, naturally exhibited higher degrees of orthodoxy, a position that was shunned by the courtly Sufis and the *kejawén* adherents alike. Most probably, the tension and distrust was mutual. One example of a major conflict – probably both political and religious – may have been the brutal and large-scale massacre of the *ulama* class around the court of the Kingdom of Mataram by Amangkurat I (1646–1677). His father, the feared conqueror *susuhunan* Anyokrokusumo, later known as Sultan Agung (1613–1646), is known to have used Islam for political purposes – including its application as a means of bolstering his political power via increasing his religious authority, for proselytizing Islam, not always peacefully, and perhaps most importantly, for reconciling Islam with Javanese cultural traits by blending elements of both cultures, thus significantly contributing to Islam’s acculturation and indigenization. His son, Amangkurat I, proved to be much less friendly towards Islam, regarding it as a foreign, dangerous, and un-Javanese element. In line with this attitude, he rejected the Muslim kingly term of address, *sultan*, and chose the Javanese *susuhunan* as his regal title. During his tyrannical reign, the despotic and probably paranoid Amangkurat I waged several violent campaigns in an attempt to purge the opposition, including the bloodshed of more than 5,000 *ulama*.

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17 At this point in history, the term *santri* is not yet used in the Geertzian sense of the term, i.e. a prevalently orthodox, urbanite, trade-oriented Muslim of Java, as the antidote of the nominal Muslims of Java, who were known as *abangan*, which became relevant only in connection with the 19<sup>th</sup> century reformist movements.

18 Anderson, 2006, p 9.

His actions were fuelled not only by their having partaken in a rebellion but also because of his dislike for their orthodoxy and prominent position<sup>19</sup>.

Ideological polarization, along with the growing conflict within the Muslim community, was increasingly seen elsewhere in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards, when the accommodating and inclusive nature of the dominating mystic synthesis, however heterogeneous, ceased to be the major voice in Southeast Asian Islam. From this period onwards, the Malay-Indonesian *ulama* began to slowly reform the Islamic creed in Malaya and the Indonesian archipelago, previously both strongly indigenized and revolving around Sufi mysticism, by preaching a more scripturally oriented brand of Islam<sup>20</sup>. Even some learned Sufis increasingly appealed for a more *shari'a*-oriented Sufism, as taught by al-Ghazali, for instance<sup>21</sup>. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, these ideas would lead to mass movements, which occasionally turned political.

Such developments were, to a degree, a reflection of the broader historical discourse that owed its origins to changes in the Islamic networks across the Indian Ocean basin. This development witnessed the traditionally strong ties with the Islamic Turko-Persian culture of the Indian Subcontinent, namely the Persianate<sup>22</sup> sultanates of Gujarat and links with ports such as Cambay, Surat and others, being partially replaced by new networks developing between the Malay-Indonesian *ulama* and the Arabic Middle East, mainly the Arabian Peninsula. As Azra points out, there were “a number of Malay-Indonesian students who later became *ulama* and obtained their education for many years in Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia”<sup>23</sup>. In addition, some notable monarchs of Java – including the ruler of Banten and the aforementioned susuhunan Anyokrokusumo of Mataram, sent envoys to Mecca (and not to Mughal India for example) to be conferred with the Islamic royal title, *sultan*, which was considered more prestigious by Islamic rulers, and which they received in 1638 and 1641 respectively.<sup>24</sup> As a result, the period between the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw major developments in the Sunni tradition in the Malay-Indonesian world.<sup>25</sup> This trend, resulting in a long-lasting Islamic reform process, also implied the gradual replacement and/or marginalization of some of the once important Sufi and even Shi'i concepts associated with Malay-Indonesian Islam, even though other elements of the Sufi, Persian, Perso-Indian and Shi'ite legacy survived in more subtle forms. This includes, for instance, the *ziarah* or the pilgrimage to the graves of Islamic saints, popular to this day among the traditionalist *santri* of Central and East Java. Naturally, this kind of veneration has sometimes led to conflict with

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19 Ricklefs, in Hui Yew-Foong, 2013, p 22; Petrů, in Dubovská, Petrů & Zbořil, 2005, p 165.

20 Azra, in Nathan & Kamali, 2005, p. 11–12.

21 Ibid.

22 Persianate is a neologism coined by Hodgson (1974)

23 Azra, in Nathan and Kamali, 2005, p 10.

24 Andaya, in Tarling, 1999, p 198.

25 Azra, in Nathan & Kamali, 2005, pp 10–11.

the modernist reformers keen on the purification of this more indigenized form of Javanese Islam.

An even deeper degree of polarization within the societies from the Muslim Zone of Southeast Asia occurred during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the largely peaceful flow of moderate reforms towards the ‘Sunnitization’ of the Malay-Indonesian world was disrupted by the rise of the *Padri* movement in West Sumatra. These radical *ulama*, inspired by the Wahhabi ideas from Arabia, aimed to secure the purification of Islam from its pre-Islamic beliefs and practices in the Minangkabau areas, a move which was opposed by the majority of moderate Muslims, led by the traditional gentry<sup>26</sup>. This internal socio-religious conflict between the mainstream, more secular population and the radical *padris*, who would very much fit into the category we strive to define in this book, i.e. ‘Islam outside the mainstream’ in Southeast Asia, ceased only after the intervention of the Dutch, who exploited it in order to increase their colonial grip on the Archipelago. This Wahhabi style Islamic radicalism, however, did not become widely popular in the Archipelago, and, according to Azra, the very term turned into an anathema for many Malay-Indonesian Muslims.<sup>27</sup>

In Java, connected to the Middle East via the commercial ports of the *pasisir*<sup>28</sup>, the Arab trading communities already residing or settling there, as well as the returning Indonesian religious students and pilgrims, modernization and reform on a large scale was progressing during the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>29</sup>. The pilgrimage to Mecca, made easier by a softening of the Dutch regulations, along with the introduction of steamboats,<sup>30</sup> was one of the crucial factors behind the growing penetration of reformist/modernist Islamic ideas into the island. In the areas of Java, where popular syncretic Islam was prevalent, this well-established mystical Hindu-Javanese synthesis inevitably tended to collide with the new orthodox imports. It is difficult to ascertain what the mainstream in Javanese Islam was during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, for there were several major strands (*aliran*), but the extremely pious, including those boasting the title *haji*, were regarded by many as an alien element, as suggested by van Bruinessen. Even Snouck Hurgronje noted that the image of a *haji* was used by parents as a kind of bogeyman when they wished to scare a disobedient child<sup>31</sup>. As van Bruinessen further points out, another category, which can be singled out as standing outside the syncretic mainstream and thus posing a security challenge, would be the traders and teachers of Arabic origin, residing in the coastal communities of Java, who referred to themselves as *sayyids*<sup>32</sup>, i.e. claiming to be descendants of the Prophet Muhammad.

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26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

28 The north coast of Java.

29 Benda, 1958, p 17.

30 Ricklefs, in Fealy & White, 2008, p 116.

31 van Bruinessen, 1999, pp 1-2.

32 Ibid.

A deeper reform at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries:  
an ever-deeper societal polarization?

While having internalized many facets of Islam and undoubtedly considering themselves to be Muslims, not all Javanese subsequently willingly embraced the reformed versions of Islam. Many villagers perceived the modernized form of Islam imported via the ports of Semarang and Surabaya to be a threat to their spiritual worldview (*kejawén*) and, as a result, “began to distance themselves from the five pillars of the faith”.<sup>33</sup> Ricklefs cites several major works by Javanese court and other literati who, in their texts, powerfully dismissed this ‘Arabized’ Islam as unsuitable for Java, and generally referred to those who chose to abandon their Javanese-ness in rather unflattering terms.<sup>34</sup> It was at that time that a group of unorthodox – or nominal – Muslims who came to be known as *abangan* (the red ones), was recorded for the first time. Although their indigenized syncretic Javano-Muslim culture had been in existence for centuries, the term probably gained currency during this period as there was a pressing need to differentiate these groups from more orthodox circles, branded as *putihan* (the white ones), based on the color of their favorite Islamic robes, or *santri*. In other words, the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was a time when the more pronounced *abangan-santri* schism – the result of the uneven impact of Islam on Java – began to emerge<sup>35</sup>. *Abangan*, as nominal Muslims or adherents of the local syncretic Islam, the *kejawén* synthesis, who in some areas represented the majority of the population, derived their identity from a pre-Islamic Hindu-Javanese culture. The *santri* world, on the other hand, revolved around the Islamic *pesantren* schools, which indeed became one of the engines of religious change in Indonesia<sup>36</sup>. Inevitably, their lifestyles were worlds apart and at times even contradicted each other, although simultaneously we can trace certain overlapping aspects.

The new wave of Islamic modernism at the onset of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was to introduce “an entirely new element into Indonesian Islam”<sup>37</sup>. While the 19<sup>th</sup> century had seen the rise of a rural *santri* civilization, based on a traditional conservative form of Islamic orthodoxy, one which polarized the country areas along *abangan-santri* lines, the 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the emergence of its urban, reformist and more pan-Islamic counterpart, which resulted in polarization within the *santri* community itself. When speaking of Java as one of the important centers of Islamic development in the Malay-Indonesian world, the new dynamic reformist stream attacked basically all four main segments of Javanese culture. In the first place, it antagonized the traditional conservative *santri* and their formalism in relation to Islamic orthodoxy, as well as the animist and Hindu-Buddhist ‘impurities’ of the syncretic village (i.e. *abangan*)

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33 Ricklefs, in Fealy & White, 2008, p 117.

34 Ricklefs, in Fealy & White, 2008, p 119.

35 Ricklefs, 2007.

36 Feillard & Madinier, 2011, p 6.

37 Benda, 1958, p 48.

Islam. The other target of the reformists, according to Benda, were the pre-Islamic Indonesian institutions, anchored in customary law, *adat*, along with the influential culture of the *priyayi*, which in the eyes of the Islamic purifiers/purists stood in the way of the propagation of the 'proper' Muslim way of life.<sup>38</sup>

In relation to the issue of 'mainstream in Southeast Asian Islam' and what lies implicitly on its fringes or outside it, this modernism was at first a novelty and a foreign element in both Java and other Indonesian islands, although it soon caught on, resulting, *inter alia*, in the rise of the *Muhammadiyah* movement (1912). Purist and pan-Islamic in nature, at that time it seemed quite radical in the eyes of the adherents of other aliran across the Indonesian archipelago. However, the *Muhammadiyah* has, over time, moderated its ambitions and now clearly represents not only a part of, but even an important pillar of, the Islamic mainstream in Indonesia, alongside the mass movement of *Nadhlatul Ulama*, which was actually formed in 1926 in order to counter the influence of the former.

#### Post-colonial developments: prolonged polarizations during the state-making processes

The strong polarization between modernists and other more radical proponents of Islamization on the one hand and secularists and traditionalists on the other continued to hold sway throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century in most Islamized parts of Southeast Asia. Inevitably, the phenomenon also had a strong impact on the process of nation-building within the emancipated nations of the Islamic world. In Indonesia, the Islamist discourse was reflected in the conflict that emerged during the heated negotiations regarding the future character of independent Indonesia, when the state doctrine of *Pancasila* was being formulated. Unsurprisingly, the Islamists insisted on making Indonesia an Islamic state, based on shari'a law. This came to be defined in an alternative formulation of the originally fifth principle of state philosophy, a belief in the one and only God (*Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa*), which came to be known as the Jakarta Charter (*Piagam Jakarta*). The proposed Jakarta Charter stipulated the duty of all Muslims to abide by Islamic law – *shari'a*. It was also dubbed the 'seven words': (*Ketuhanan*), *dengan kewajiban menjalankan syari'at Islam bagi pemeluk-pemeluknya*<sup>39</sup> ([belief in God], with the obligation for adherents of Islam to practice Islamic law). This formulation basically represented a compromise that was reached between the Islamists and the nationalists on June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1945. The Preparatory Committee placed this phrase in the draft constitution's preamble, but at the initiative of Mohammad Hatta, Indonesia's first vice-president, these words were subsequently dropped in the provisional Constitution adopted on August 18<sup>th</sup>, 1945 by the Indonesian Independence Preparatory Committee (*Panitia Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia*, PPKI), which replaced the previous council, known by the abbreviation BPUPKI.

38 Ibid.

39 We use the new standardized spelling here, used since 1972. The original spelling was as follows: *Ketoeahanan, dengan kewadajiban mendjalankan sjari'at Islam bagi pemeloek-pemeloeknja*.

It should be noted that although the Jakarta Charter was removed from *Pancasila*, probably in order to appease the religiously conscious circles, the principle of *Ketuhanan* was in the end raised to the first place of the nation's philosophy.

Interestingly, Hatta was nonetheless himself a pious and devout Muslim, but he was also a secular politician who did not approve of political parties being based on religious identity. With a perhaps substantiated fear that non-Muslim inhabitants of the Outer Islands would view the earlier definition of the national ideology as discriminatory and might want to break away from the Republic if it were used, Hatta convinced other members of the committee to remove it.<sup>40</sup> As a matter of fact, this was more in line with the ideas of Sukarno, although he had agreed to the earlier draft, for he also personally strongly believed in the separation of religion and state. This development, which resulted in a last-minute reformulation in order to achieve a more open-ended expression of divinity, so as to secure the unity of the nation, inevitably led to great dismay among the Islamists, who would later play the *Jakarta Charter* card during every period of crisis.

This decision regarding the secular character of Indonesia was by no means final, however, for during the critical years of the Indonesian Revolution a large-scale Islamist rebellion led by *Darul Islam* began in 1949, with the ultimate goal of creating an Islamic state (NII, *Negara Islam Indonesia*). Led by the Javanese Kartosuwiryo, but expanding to establish branches on other islands, the main body of the rebellion was only subdued in 1962, when this self-styled imam was captured and executed.

As a result of this fairly uncompromising approach, as well as a combination of other factors, Indonesia has not become an Islamic state, although its system is not strictly secular either, taking into consideration the first principle of *Pancasila*, which stipulates that a belief in one God represents one of the foundation stones of the state. Hence, Indonesia is sometimes regarded as a quasi-secular country. In addition, the political developments of the 1950s, including the historic and pivotal first free elections in 1955, proved that secularity would not be taken for granted. The results of these elections saw Islamic parties collectively gaining more than 40 percent of the popular vote. Although *Masyumi* was banned several years later, as part of the authoritarian sweep of the so-called Guided Democracy, due to its involvement in the separatist rebellions of 1956–1958, it was obvious that the government's approach would be further challenged, *inter alia*, by the ambitions of political Islam.

The Malayan/Malaysian approach was fairly similar – i.e. quasi-secular, but with one small difference. A rather pragmatic nationalist, the nation's first Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, rejected the idea of making Malaysia an Islamic state and was personally in favor, as were his successors, Tun Abdul Razak and Tun Onn Hussein, of a degree of separation between religion and the state. Malaya's Father of Independence is known to have demonstrated his commitment to this approach by reference to his many deeds and statements, including an address delivered in the Malayan Parliament on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 1958: "I would like to make it clear that this country is not

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40 Kahin, in Hui Yew-Foong, 2013, pp 201–202.

an Islamic state as it is generally understood; we merely provided that Islam shall be the official religion of the state.”<sup>41</sup> Much later, in 1983, while already in political retirement, he is known to have stated on an important public occasion: “Don’t make Malaysia an Islamic state, [...] the country has a multi-racial population with various beliefs. Malaysia must continue as a secular state with Islam as the official religion.”<sup>42</sup>

The above-hinted difference between Malaysia and Indonesia was that the latter has never elevated Islam to the position of the country’s official religion, though in both countries Islam has a similarly privileged position in the public sphere and receives strong support from a range of official and quasi-official autonomous institutions, which we shall review later.

While different in style, personality and some aspects of policy, Indonesia’s Soeharto followed Sukarno in the sense that he also attempted to keep political Islam and Islamism at bay. At the same time, however, General Soeharto, as a long-term ruler, contributed significantly to a major rise in Islamic orthodoxy and generally to a substantial shift in terms of what constituted the ‘Islamic mainstream’ in Indonesia. The onset of Soeharto’s New Order had already signaled a major change in the socio-religious arrangement of Java since the anti-communist cleansing of 1965–66 resulted *inter alia* in the massacre of thousands of abangan, who subsequently sought safety (*cari aman*), either by converting en masse to Christianity, or by joining the *santri* community and accepting a more Islamic lifestyle in order to safeguard themselves from similar threats and challenges. While this trend increased the percentage of Christians in some areas of Java, such as the vicinity of Solo (Surakarta), on the whole this development contributed above all to the intense ‘santrization’ of Java during the Soeharto rule, a term and trend, to which Harry J. Benda referred in connection with earlier developments in Java in the late colonial era. Thus, we may assume that santrization – roughly meaning a trend of growing piety and a greater display of Islamic credentials among those who are already Muslim – has been a continuous on-going process in the country since the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Under Soeharto, as well as during the post-1998 era, the character of Indonesian Islam and Indonesian society in general in relation to religion (has) changed considerably, generally moving toward a deeper level of orthodoxy and a much greater role for Islam and religion within the public affairs in the country. Let us therefore take a look at the actions undertaken by Soeharto and his regime that facilitated this development. Since Indonesia’s president was generally suspicious of all ‘-isms’ and ‘irrational ideologies’, he was not favorably inclined towards Islamism, either. Therefore, it must have come as an unpleasant surprise to some Indonesian Islam-based parties in the late 1960s and early 1970s, which had expected a reward for their participation in the annihilation of the Indonesian Communist Party, that no such reward followed and, worse still, they were forced to merge, on the imposition of a top-down command, into a single Islamic party, *Partai Persatuan Pembangunan* (PPP, United

41 <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/history-contradicts-ministers-arguments-that-malaysia-is-not-secular>

42 Ibid.



Development Party). This party was thus turned into a sort of quasi-opposition entity, which was to partake in the regular sham electoral ritual of the New Order, held every five years in order to legitimize his rule<sup>43</sup>; as such, it could not even shape its own program independently, let alone think of promoting any substantially Islamic agenda. Soeharto also demonstrated his distrust of Islam in his ban on wearing the *jilbab* in the classroom, which he only lifted in the latter half of the 1980s when he eased his enmity towards the religion, as part of his search for new allies.

However, despite this ambivalent approach, General Soeharto did much to propagate Islam. Albeit known as an adherent of *kejawén* mysticism, he personally ordered a thorough reform of the educational sector in order to secure that 'a proper version' of Islam be taught at all educational levels, implemented as part of the multifaceted governmental push for 'faith-standardization'. As Sadanand Dhume puts it, the New Order regime encouraged Islam as a faith, while suppressing it as an ideology. In this spirit, the government embarked on an ambitious mosque-building program in the countryside, as well as an expansion of the network of Islam-supported Islamic universities.<sup>44</sup>

In addition, the Soeharto-driven de-politicization campaign, aimed at Indonesian university campuses, indirectly led to a rise in Islamism among students, who diverted their activism from politics to the *tarbiyah* movement as a means of educating themselves in the so-called *halaqah*, or informal study circles, where they studied the Quran, Hadith and the writings of influential Islamic thinkers such as Sayyid Qutb, Mawdudi and Ali Shariati. This activism was apolitical, and limited to these semi-private activities on campus during the Soeharto era. In other words, the *tarbiyah* movement was rather closed in that its members interacted with one another. Only with the demise of Soeharto did its leaders decide to move to a higher plane – i.e. to infiltrate the political arena, which they did by establishing the *Partai Keadilan*<sup>45</sup> (Justice Party).<sup>46</sup>

Regarding external and foreign factors, the Iranian revolution was also to inspire many Islamists, leading a number of them to convert to Shi'i Islam, or at least to embrace some Shi'i practices, but its impact was arguably more intense in Malaysia, where the Islamic revolution of 1979 became one of the engines of Islamization. However, in spite of this, Shi'a has today completely fallen out of favor in Malaysia, being listed and banned as a deviant teaching. While not banned in Indonesia, followers of this creed also face intense persecution and it barely survives as a peripheral force in Indonesia.

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43 Dhume, 2009, p. 57.

44 Dhume, 2009, p 58.

45 Hwang, in Mecham & Hwang 2014, p 61.

46 *Partai Keadilan* (PK) did not succeed in the first post-1998 elections in 1999, so it was forced to reassemble to form *Partai Keadilan Sejahtera* (Prosperous Justice Party, PKS), which, as the political wing of the *Gerakan Tarbiyah*, successfully entered the political arena, becoming the fourth strongest party in 2004. This enabled it to become a member of the broad government coalition, having a degree of influence with President Yudhoyono, mainly in relation to promoting an Islamist and anti-pluralist agenda.

Furthermore, the Saudi-financed *Dewan Dakwah Islam Indonesia* (Indonesian Islamic Propagation Council, DDII) acted as a very active promoter of Islamization, given Arab petrodollar generosity, as well as the position of DDII leader, the well-connected Indonesian Islamist, Mohammad Natsir. Natsir managed to balance his interests between the Middle East, and international organizations such as the Conference of the World Muslim Congress, in which he served as a long-term deputy president, while also campaigning for *dakwah* in Indonesia. DDII was a highly influential entity, one of those that was to contribute enormously to the conservative Islamic shift in Indonesia that the country has experienced since the 1970s. Its manifold activities included, in connection with the aforementioned trend, the Islamization of campuses through the building of mosques and other facilities within the framework of the *Bina Masjid Kampus*. It also provided scholarships to students so they could study in the Middle East, and provided funds to buy and publish Islamic books. DDII was also renowned for its staunchly anti-Christianization stance, although the core factor that drove almost 2 million Javanese *abangan* to convert to Catholicism or Protestantism at the turn of 1960s and 1970s was the *Nadhlatul Ulama*-sponsored killings of their leftist-leaning comrades in the post-30-September 1965 aftermath, rather than Christian missionary work. Natsir's mistrust of non-Muslims and minorities in general, which was a hallmark of fundamentalism, gradually intensified over a two-decade period, gradually incorporating notions of intolerance into mainstream thinking, a development that also resulted in Christians, formerly important political allies of Soeharto, gradually being ostracized. Although Natsir had never been able to secure himself a high political position under the New Order, his campaigning over the decades has thoroughly changed the face of Indonesian Islam, including the introduction of Salafi ideas.

Perhaps in a final attempt to counter the growing influence of political Islam, Soeharto announced a plan to issue a decree, which was to stipulate that from 1985 onwards all social organizations in Indonesia would have to be based on the state ideology, *Pancasila*. This step resulted in the most significant protests against the regime during the 32 years of its rule, with mainly Islamic organizations protesting the decree, claiming that only the Qur'an was fit to serve this purpose. The result of the protests was a casualty list running into the hundreds, especially following riots in the port of Tanjung Priok in 1984, prior to the introduction of the law.

Towards the end of the 1980s, after he felt that he had sufficiently cowed the might of Islam as an alternative political power center and in an attempt to co-opt Islam's remaining cultural power to gain more political allies and generally prop up his grip on power, President Soeharto became more receptive towards ideas of political Islam and started to court the circles of Muslim intellectuals, himself becoming more pious. In 1991 he even undertook, accompanied by his wife and children, the pilgrimage to Mecca. It may be argued as to whether or not this move was dictated by the political situation of Indonesia's then-current ruler, or whether this was an act of personal development on the part of an ageing man who was striving for spiritual solace and reconciliation. Be that as it may, Soeharto did show more of a leaning to-

wards Islam while “the old pattern of ambiguity towards the Islamic factor” remained observable.<sup>47</sup>

All in all, the three-decade rule of the Soeharto New Order had, in many ways, left behind a very different Indonesia. In terms of religion, it was a much more Islamized, a more orthodox and a more conservative Indonesia than it had been in the 1960s. This was the result of a combination of *Orde Baru* policies, foreign influences, societal pressures, and a growing level of personal piety. On the other hand, the regime had managed to keep the most fervent protagonists of Islamization and the ideas of an Islamic state at bay, as well as under surveillance. However, most of these organizations and groups ‘survived’ the harsh dictatorship and were able to start realizing their radical ideas all the more intensively in the post-1998 reform era.

The conservative shift in the 1980s, as witnessed in Indonesia, was even more evident in neighboring Malaysia, and also Brunei Darussalam, the other two Muslim-majority countries of Southeast Asia, and this led to an even more pronounced Islamization of these countries, the process being more intensively intertwined with the official policies than in Indonesia. The Malaysian Muslim elite has also been looking to the Middle East for models of Islamic governance and religious leadership more carefully and willingly than their Indonesian counterparts. While unable to pursue an overall Islamization of the country, given Malaysia’s strongly multi-ethnic and multi-religious character, Malay(sian) Muslim leaders have attempted to emulate Arab models, while simultaneously exploiting financial backing from the Middle East in fostering religious education across the nation.<sup>48</sup>

While in Indonesia institutions such as the DDII have been autonomous entities, albeit with a degree of governmental recognition and backing, Malaysia’s Islamic institutions and organizations have traditionally had a considerably closer affiliation with the federal government. As Azra points out, it is obvious that one cannot find a grass-roots mass organization such as the *Nahdlatul Ulama* or the *Muhammadiyah* in Malaysia, for, as just suggested, Islamic life is rigidly controlled by the state, which gives Muslims only a limited opportunity to express themselves<sup>49</sup>. However, this is not to say that no non-governmental Muslim organizations have ever operated in Malaysia. On the contrary, in the 1970s, the dakwah movement was supported, for example, by the Malaysian opposition party, PAS, and by a variety of other Muslim organizations, such as the Muslim youth movement (ABIM) and the now illegal Sufi-revivalist group, the *al-Arqam*, sometimes known as the *Darul Arqam*. The official response to their activities, their mutual competition and their undesired but growing influence was the government’s own Islamization project, which was an attempt to introduce a massive top-down hyper-rationalized post-modern social engineering initiative.<sup>50</sup>

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47 Azra, 2006, p 98.

48 von der Mehden, 1993, p 82.

49 Azra, 2005, p 16.

50 Hoffstaedter, 2011, p 47.

This campaign included the co-option of ABIM (*Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia*, or the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia), which was initially established as a student group reflecting the international trend of Islamic revivalism. However, during the 1980s it began to be exploited by the government of Mahathir Mohamad (1981–2003). His government chose a different path from that adopted by previous administrations, which had attempted to uphold the character of Malaysia “as a secular state with Islam as the official religion”<sup>51</sup>. Mahathir, partially in an attempt to ward off the Islamic competition emanating from the increasingly influential PAS, proclaimed Malaysia an Islamic state and fostered Islamic values within his administration. As Hoffstaedter points out, the co-option of Anwar Ibrahim, the then leader of ABIM and himself a fierce proponent of Islamic policies and Malay rights (yes, the same Anwar who was later to become a vocal proponent of pluralistic Malaysian Malaysia and who is currently detained once again), has invigorated the Islamization push.<sup>52</sup> Anwar was able to bring with him thousands of supporters of ABIM when he joined UMNO. Mahathir and Anwar not only found common ground in the effort to forge a stronger Islamic identity among the Malays, but the Islamic turn in the 1980s resulted in the creation of more Islamic institutions, including the International Islamic University, as well as “the implementation of several Islamicized laws”.<sup>53</sup> The ruling party, UMNO, also introduced Islamic banks, Islamic insurance and enhanced the role of the shari‘a-based Islamic court system, in parallel with the civil court system<sup>54</sup>. The outcome of this top-down Islamization process has been an overall shift within Malaysian society. However, the process is far from complete, due to a number of factors, including the ongoing Islamization race between the ruling party and the Islamist opposition party, PAS (*Parti Islam Se-Malaysia*, the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party), that has existed since the time of Mahathir, with both parties seeking to secure the support of the conservative Muslim Malay electorate<sup>55</sup>. However, as Farish A. Noor points out, UMNO will never win the ‘*janggut and kopiah*’ race, for it will always remain in second position since it is PAS which “has made political Islam its main thrust and *raison d’être*”.<sup>56</sup>

This discourse has also resulted in the tight grip on power that the Malaysian state holds over Islam, which is also accountable for the arrangement by which the government (*kerajaan*) determines the nature of the ‘proper and allowed’ form of Islam that may be preached and worshipped. The Malay rulers, as heads of religion, have always tended to resist religious change, fiercely oppose variations, and to maintain Sunni traditionalism. This is also valid in the case of Brunei Darussalam, where the Sunni doctrines are blended into the national ideology, *Melayu Islam Beraja*, or the

51 <http://www.theantdaily.com/Main/Secular-or-not-Tunku-Abdul-Rahman-said-it-best#sthash.dtvuNB51.dpuf>

52 Hoffstaedter, 2011, p 48.

53 Ibid.

54 Furlow, in Ghosh 2013, p 217.

55 Müller, 2013, pp 263–264.

56 Noor, 2005, p 123.

Malay Islamic Monarchy. As Azra explains, in Malaysia, the Malay Muslim establishment remains very sensitive to what it regards as deviant teachings (*ajaran menyimpang*, or *ajaran sesat*) and it exploits the powerful Islamic bureaucracy to suppress any group considered to be ‘deviant’ in relation to the official Sunni doctrine.<sup>57</sup> The *kerajaan* is primarily assisted in this sense by the JAKIM (*Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia*, or the Malaysian Department of Islamic Development), which is integrated within the government as part of the Prime Minister’s Office. As a matter of fact, JAKIM is now the highest and most influential Islamic body in Malaysia, responsible for determining the Islamic policies of the country and, in relation to the previous point, it regularly publishes a list of those ‘wayward teachings’, which as of 2012 constituted 56 entities, including Shi’a, Ahmadiyah/Qadiani and Bahai.<sup>58</sup>

This empowerment of the Islamic bureaucracy, combined with the dismissive attitude of the feudal rulers towards alternative interpretations of Islam, as well as the long-term adherence of Malay Muslims to Sunni Islam of the Shafi’i *madhhab*, has ultimately become quite a unique feature of Malaysian Islam, which has become one of the most monolithic and most state-regulated of all nationally administered Islamic beliefs and practices in the whole of the Islamic world<sup>59</sup>. I believe that in this respect the term ‘Malaysian Islam’ is actually an entirely valid term, for in spite of the existence of certain sub-streams, officially only the government-approved version of Sunni Islam exists and is allowed to be practiced. This lack of intra-Islamic pluralism seems both unusual across the Muslim world and quite bizarre since Malaysia is still otherwise a very pluralist country, where Buddhism, Taoism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and other faiths flourish, despite some minor challenges, such as the ban on the use of the word *Allah* by Christian denominations.

Regarding the position of the Islamic bureaucracy *vis-à-vis* the state, as well as the primacy of the official Sunni doctrine, striking parallels with Malaysia can be seen in Brunei Darussalam, where it has become the Sultanate’s most powerful political actor outside the royal family. As Dominik M. Müller points out, the Bruneian “clergy has institutionalized a monolithic, legalistic understanding of Islam as the only acceptable Muslim truth, strengthened by indoctrination, material incentives and the threat of harsh sanctions”<sup>60</sup>. While embedded in different societal milieus, both Bruneian and Malaysian Islamic bureaucrats resort to censorship and compulsory detention in ‘rehabilitation’ centers, the aim of which is to indoctrinate those who have gone astray in their faith and encourage them to return to the ‘proper’ Sunni form of Islam.

On the other hand, it should be seen as a positive factor that Malaysia has been quite successful in containing the activities of Islamic radicals, who have had far less influence in the country than their counterparts in Indonesia. Nonetheless, it may also be argued that as a result of the three-decade duration of the ‘holier-than-thou’

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57 Azra, 2005, p 10.

58 <http://pondoktauhid.blogspot.cz/2012/10/senarai-ajaran-sesat-malaysia-jakim.html>

59 Bakar, in Esposito, Voll & Bakar, 2008, p 82.

60 Müller, 2015.

Islamization race between UMNO and PAS many fundamentalist/Islamist ideas have shifted from the margins into the mainstream Islamic discourse.<sup>61</sup>

Radical and fundamentalist groups in Indonesia have come to the fore with the political liberation, which started in 1998, and have become a significant problem for the whole society. While Indonesia became somewhat friendlier towards Islamic intellectuals and moderate Islamists in the last decade of Soeharto's rule, his demise opened the door for their long-suppressed ambitions to take full flight. During the political transition at the turn of the millennium, Indonesia teetered on the verge of Balkanization for several years, facing a series of severe separatist and ethno-religious conflicts, some of which were either sparked or enhanced by freely operating Islamists. For a period of time, not only Indonesia's newly evolving democracy but also Indonesia as a nation and a pluralist society faced an unprecedented threat from Islamic militants and vigilante groups.

*Laskar Jihad* established training camps in West Java, from whence they sent their militants to fight alongside the Muslims battling Christians in Maluku. *Jemaah Islamiyah* (JI), the supra-national network operating across Maritime Southeast Asia organized a series of deadly terrorist attacks, killing hundreds in Bali, Jakarta and elsewhere (2000, 2002, 2005), which had serious international reverberations. This, alongside the 9/11 attacks, placed the Indonesian administration in a rather precarious situation, which led it to take action against this ultra-violent form of Islamic radicalism, while attempting at the same time not to alienate the population of the largest Muslim-majority nation.

Indonesia has chosen a rather interesting path in this respect. Defining JI as a major national threat to its international image, and therefore the cause of a weakened economy due to the direct impact on the tourism industry, it adopted a radical approach, which resulted in an uncompromising battle against JI, in which its renowned anti-terrorist squad, *Densus 88* (Special Detachment 88), basically annihilated this terrorist organization. Most perpetrators of terrorist attacks were arrested and executed, while others were shot dead during police raids that followed tip-offs.

This radical approach of the security forces was not applied, however, towards other violent radical groups, such as the infamous vigilante organization *Front Pembela Islam*, who had been operating in Indonesia without hindrance due to a degree of tolerance on the part of the police. The police and the national administration alike appear to have had a number of reasons for their lenience, one of them being that they did not want to appear to be anti-Islamic. Other reasons are even more serious in nature. According to the ICG and other sources, the SBY administration (2004–2014) was apparently convinced that international terrorism had to be stopped by any means possible, including the use of strong actions, since it was severely tarnishing Indonesia's international image. At the same time, there seems to have been a prevalent conviction that while Islamic radicalism could not be completely eradicated, its aggressive tendencies might be redirected towards other targets which had been

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61 Müller, 2015.

defined as ‘expendable’, for example domestic minority groups such as Ahmadiyah and Shi‘i Muslims<sup>62</sup>. These factors may also help to provide us with at least a partial explanation as to why Indonesian security forces and the judiciary adopted a very tolerant stance towards perpetrators of extremely violent attacks against members of the Ahmadiyah sect, e.g. the deadly mob lynching in Cikeusik, West Java in 2011, where the organizers and perpetrators received ludicrously low sentences, while some of the victims even faced criminalization for attempting to defend themselves.

The overall situation in post-1998 Indonesia with regard to the position of Islam and Islamization is extremely complex, but the low level of protection for religious minorities, not only non-Muslims, but also non-Sunni Muslims, i.e. Ahmadi and Shi‘i Muslims, has become one of the hallmarks of the SBY administration. This has not only yielded to radical requirements of the ultra-conservatives, but generally has led to the development of a legal infrastructure that allows space for discrimination against minorities. This issue *vis-à-vis* the impact of Islamic vigilantes will be further elaborated on in the chapter on the *Front Pembela Islam*, written by the author of this introduction.

While Indonesia still remains a pluralist country, its pluralism has become very fragile during the past 15 years due to a wide range of factors: the long-term lobbying of radicals and ultra-conservatives at the top rungs of the political elite; the influence and ever-present participation of Islam-friendly, Islamic and Islamist political parties in the post-Soeharto cabinets, the most notable being the PKS and PBB, which have promoted some elements of the pro-*shari‘a* agenda; a growing level of personal orthodoxy; and the increasing popularity of Islamic modernity. All this has combined to change the face and nature of Indonesian Islam. At the same time, however, Indonesian Islam itself remains much more pluralistic than its Malaysian counterpart since in Indonesia there is no official government version even though Sunni Islam is gradually becoming not only the dominant creed, which of course has been the case for decades or even centuries, but also represents the trend-setting creed that determines in a rather holistic manner the cultural, moral and social values of the whole society, the most recent illustration of this being the ban on alcohol sales except in tourist areas. While *shari‘a* has not been implemented at a national level and the new ‘Jokowi’ administration appears not to be interested in amending this discourse, the intensive decentralization in the post-1998 era has witnessed *shari‘a*-based by-laws being introduced in at least 7 of the 34 provinces. *Shari‘a*-minded *bupatis* (regents) have also introduced Islamic policies in regencies such as Bulukumba in South Sulawesi, which includes the imposition of a ‘dry law’ in some areas, whereas elsewhere compulsory *jilbabs* for female civil servants<sup>63</sup> and compulsory *puasa* (Islamic fast) during the *Ramadhan* period for all civil servants have been introduced, as was the case in one of the districts of the province of Bengkulu<sup>64</sup>. In pursuing these policies,

62 Jones, in Künkler & Stepan, 2013. At this point, I would like to cordially thank Dr Kevin Fogg of the OXCIS for introducing me to this idea.

63 Dhume, 2009, p 62.

64 <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Mandatory-veil-and-fasting-as-Indonesia-is-%E2%80%98Islamised>



the mayors and other local administrators are assisted by vigilante groups such as the FPI. Most problematically, dozens of these regional by-laws and regulations are regarded as discriminatory against women, as has been recorded by a number of civil rights groups and other critical parties.<sup>65</sup>

The latter half of the 2000s brought forth elements of religious intolerance at the national level, as well, with the passing of the controversial anti-pornography bill in 2008, which was the result of heavy lobbying on the part of the conservatives. There was also a joint ministerial decree banning the Ahmadiyah from any public and proselytizing activity, issued in the same year. In addition, the activity of the *Majelis Ulama Indonesia* (MUI, the Council of Indonesian Ulama) has not been conducive with regard to the promotion of inter-religious harmony; it has recently issued several highly controversial fatwas, the most notable being the 2005-decree against pluralism, liberalism and secularism. Importantly, as many studies have shown, these fatwas have contributed to the rise of sectarian violence in Indonesia, for they have provided the radical Islamic groups with a ‘justification’ for their uncivil activities, while the vigilante ultra-conservatives in turn have empowered the decrees of the MUI by promoting their ‘anti-heretic’ agenda<sup>66</sup>.

While not being a fully governmental body, even though established in 1975 by Soeharto, this autonomous institution with its quasi-official position in the nation has now taken on the role of major trend-setter and bureaucratic body in Indonesia, having the power to stipulate the moral code for all Muslims, as well as the authority to issue certificates on halal products. Having its central office in Jakarta and branches at provincial, regency and district levels, the MUI represents the “bureaucratization of Islam ... in its most extreme form”<sup>67</sup>. As such, it exerts a great deal of influence and, simply stated, considers its fatwas as binding, even though its legitimacy and impartiality are still open to question.

### Islam, Modernity and Power in Contemporary Indonesia and the Malay World

All in all, these developments mean that the combination of actions taken over the past four decades since the *dakwah* campaigns and the education policies from Soeharto’s time, as well as the aforementioned post-1998 trends, have brought about a deep transformation, basically in three main areas: a) in terms of the individual’s relationship with religion; b) the position of Islam in the public arena; c) the meaning of what constitutes the Islamic mainstream in Indonesia. In this respect, the contemporary trends in Indonesia resemble those in Malaysia to a considerable degree, where certain displays and forms (of ‘Islamicity’) which would have been regarded as a sign

[%E2%80%99-during-Ramadan-22273.html](#)

65 For more information on *shari’a*-influenced regional bylaws, for example, see White & Anshor, in Fealy & White (2008).

66 Sirry, 2013, pp 100–101.

67 Hooker, as quoted by Sirry 2013, p 102.

of fanaticism in the 1970s (such as the headscarf and general Islamic fashion requirements), have all become the norm in recent times. In keeping with the spirit of the times, the public sphere and the media are now full of advertisements for Muslim-only housing estates and programs in Islamic studies. The fashion and the pop cultures have changed dramatically, too. Former raunchy pop stars now present themselves as pious characters, performing for the similarly oriented audience. *Busana Muslim* (Muslim clothing) shops abound, while Islamic media, from journals to websites to radio stations, have been popping up everywhere. Islamic tele-*dai* (preachers), such as the omnipresent super-star Aa Gym, attract, illuminate and motivate crowds<sup>68</sup>.

At the same time, unlike the relatively monolithic Islamic Malaysia environment, in Indonesia one can still discern a high degree of plurality within the *umma*, which naturally results in an intense dialog between the various strands, or *aliran*. The abundant literature on this topic tends to identify several basic strands within Indonesian Islam, namely: the ‘nominal’ Muslims, ‘liberals’, ‘moderates’, ‘conservatives’ and ‘radicals’, although such categorizations may be rather misleading and inaccurate in relation to Indonesian Muslims for a number of reasons, one practical one being that the beliefs and practices of many Muslims may combine or even overlap. It has been argued that in reality the bulk of Indonesian Muslims are moderate-conservatives, thus forming the Islamic mainstream, with which most adherents of both NU and Muhammadiyah, the two largest mass Muslim organizations in Indonesia, are arguably associated.

Professor M. C. Ricklefs has also come up with very interesting findings in a survey he conducted with his team in the Eastern Javanese town of Kediri. Out of 300 respondents, when asked to name the ‘category’ with which they would associate themselves, slightly over 50 % regarded themselves as pious (*santri*), while only seven percent associated themselves with the abangan strand. To the surprise of the team members, about a quarter of respondents proposed completely different self-identifications: national (*nasional*), neutral (*netral*), ordinary (*biasa*), lay (*awam*) or general (*umum*) Islam. In other words, a substantial proportion of the representatives voiced their refusal to be connected with a particular ‘type’, expressing in the same vein that they regarded themselves as good Muslims, without adhering to any particular *aliran* or organization<sup>69</sup>. A very similar perception was gained by the author of this chapter, who observed during his two-month stay in the Javanese city of Yogyakarta in 2012 that many people, mostly from the lower and lower-middle classes, despite the evidence of a strengthening of Islamic credentials in all walks of Javanese society, replied in a similar manner, adding such comments as: “*Saya Islam saja.*” (I [worship] only Islam.), “*Saya bukan NU atau Muhammadiyah.*” (I am neither NU nor Muhammadiyah.), or “*Saya utamakan Islam Pancasila.*” (I personally prefer Pancasila Islam.). While my personal semi-structured and spontaneous interviews were insufficient in terms of providing comprehensive research material, they are sufficiently

68 For more information on pop preachers and the piety of modern Muslim classes in Indonesia, see, for example Hoesterey (2012).

69 Ricklefs, in Fealy & White, 2008, p 129.

illustrative of a trend and do reveal a picture similar to that depicted by the findings of Professor Ricklefs. Several of my interviewees also commented on their degree of unhappiness in relation to the increasing activities of the Islamic ormas (*organisasi masyarakat*, social organizations), recalling the times of Soeharto, when neither the FPI nor any similar organization was operating in their area. On the other hand, a cab driver, who proudly informed me that his wife was about to deliver their child, upon being asked whether they had held a *selamatan tujuh bulanan* – a Javanist ritual held in the seventh month of pregnancy to secure a blessing for the unborn baby and his mother, retorted that they no longer performed such rituals as they are un-Islamic.

In spite of the developments analyzed above, these findings suggest that the religious situation in Indonesia, and also other countries in the region, is highly complex and that, even though the majority of the Indonesian Muslim population may be moderately conservative, resistance to rigid forms of puritanism is growing. The resistance comes from various sources, including the more liberal strands from within both the *Muhammadiyah* and the NU, from the adherents of *kejawén*, from the *Jaringan Islam Liberal* (the Liberal Islam Network, JIL) and other groups, who regard the rigid, puritanical forms such as those promoted by the *Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia*, the *Front Pembela Islam*, or supporters of the *Partai Keadilan Sejahtera*, as un-Indonesian, too ‘Arabized’ and generally unsuitable for the local cultural milieu. Many scholars suggest, therefore, that the existing friction within the *umma* between the adherents of global Islam, represented by the *dakwah* and *Salafi* Islam, and ‘Indonesian Islam’, i.e. the localized and indigenized form of it (*Islam pribumi*), sometimes referred to recently as *Islam Nusantara*, will develop into a deeper level of polarization<sup>70</sup>. Ricklefs even fears a larger conflict since there are historical precedents, the latest and by far the most severe occurring in the period 1965–1966, when thousands of *abangan* PKI-sympathizers were massacred by militias linked to NU *santri*.

However, while these events were the consequence of a multi-causal crisis occurring in the early 1960s, and therefore deserve a deeper analysis, in this brief introduction we need to contend with the statement that the *Nadhlatul Ulama* has undergone a tremendous change in this respect. As a matter of fact, it has even become the most outspoken proponent of religious pluralism and tolerance in Indonesia, with the former chair and also president of the Republic of Indonesia, the late Abdurrahman Wahid, being renowned for his efforts to secure the protection of minorities such as Christians, Shi‘i Muslims and Ahmadis.

Although the NU is far from monolithic, the topical concept of *Islam Nusantara* is going to be the main theme of the upcoming NU *mukhtamar* (congress) in August 2015<sup>71</sup>. Its proponents are strongly convinced that the form of Islam they promote is much more suitable for Indonesia. In addition, they argue that although the *ulama* in many other countries, such as Afghanistan, Somalia, Libya, Iraq and Yemen are

70 For more information on this issue see works by Muhammad Ali, M. C. Ricklefs or Feillard & Madinier, for example.

71 <http://www.aktual.co/sosial/meneguhkan-islam-nusantara-untuk-peradaban-indonesia-dan-dunia-jadi-tema-muktamar-nu>

clearly very learned, their Islamic knowledge and orthodoxy has not helped them to secure peace in any of these countries. On the other hand, the nationalistically oriented *ulama* of the NU have contributed to the unity of Indonesia, symbolized by the concept of the *Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia* (NKRI).<sup>72</sup> Generally, although some of the NU *ulama* may still be categorized as conservative, on the whole, NU as an organization has done much to uphold the multi-cultural and multi-religious character of Indonesia. Therefore, future developments are certainly going to be turbulent and it remains to be seen whether this mass organization of traditionalist Javanese Muslims and their allies will succeed in containing the conservative or even rigidly puritan trends which are gaining an ever-stronger footing in various socio-cultural arenas. With the support of some top political figures, such as the non-sectarian incumbent president, Joko Widodo, and the reasonable Minister for Religious Affairs in the person of Lukman Hakim Saifuddin<sup>73</sup>, the chances are somewhat higher than under the previous Yudhoyono administration, which yielded to the radicals and ultraconservatives more than was necessary. Only time will tell.

While Indonesia has lately, despite tensions, conflicts and intolerance, shown signs of attempting to maintain its plurality, both across society and within the *umma* itself, neighboring Malaysia has conversely been heading in the opposite direction. In spite of being very deft at upholding its image as a pluralist, multi-ethnic country on the international scene, the statements by top Malaysian representatives, intended for the consumption of the domestic Muslim audience, have suggested the contrary. Even Prime Minister Najib Razak, arguably regarded as a moderate politician, recently voiced, on several occasions, controversial opinions denouncing liberalism and pluralism as dangerous and unsuitable for Malaysian society and as some of the “biggest threats for Muslims in the nation today” (November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2012). In an earlier speech the same year, at an assembly of 11,000 imams and mosque committee members, Najib stated that: “... pluralism, liberalism – all these ‘isms’ are against Islam and it is compulsory for us to fight these” (July 19<sup>th</sup>, 2012).<sup>74</sup> What does this gravely anti-pluralistic rhetoric actually imply? What does it reflect? My opinion is that this discourse essentially reflects the ever-increasing mutual ties that exist between the ruling Malay-Muslim party policies and the Islamist ideologies, which have been slowly incorporated into the Malay-Muslim mainstream. It probably also indicates the growing dependence of the Malay-ethno-nationalist leaders on the Islamic sector for support, since they have been losing the popular vote in recent years<sup>75</sup>.

72 Ibid, the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia.

73 Saifuddin is known to have a more conciliatory approach than his predecessors, such as Suryadharma Ali, on engaging with minority religious groups, including Shi'ite and Ahmadi Muslims, with whom he is said to have taken part in the breaking of the fast during Ramadan. Yet, more importantly, the minister has announced a plan to draft a bill that would afford unprecedented protection to religious minority groups (<http://ahmadiyahatimes.blogspot.cz/2014/11/indonesia-religious-affairs-minister.html>).

74 <http://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/opinion/2012/11/12/why-we-need-religious-pluralism/>

75 This is also the argument of Farish A. Noor, *The Malaysian Islamic Party PAS 1951–2013: Islamism in a Mottled Nation* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2014), who claims that PAS has succeeded in pulling UMNO quite far to the right.

(As a matter of fact, they already lost it in the country's 13<sup>th</sup> General Election that took place in 2013, with the ruling coalition only receiving 47 percent of the votes. Nonetheless, they have still managed to retain their parliamentary majority, most probably due to gerrymandering and other political maneuvering.) Simply stated, the only major remaining significant difference between UMNO and the Islamist opposition in terms of promoting Islamic policies is the intention to implement *hudud* law, which represents an important "constitutive identity marker for PAS"<sup>76</sup>. However, the most recent debates in Malaysia have shown that the government, probably in an effort not to displease the conservatives, has started to claim that they do not reject its implementation, but are only postponing it until a more appropriate time.

The increased level of debate regarding the implementation of *hudud* law in Malaysia probably has a strong connection to the latest development in Brunei Darussalam since on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014, the country enacted a *Syariah* Penal Code, which includes *hudud* (related to non-violent offences) and *qisas* (violent offences) penalties<sup>77</sup>. Brunei Darussalam has thus become the first ASEAN country to implement a strict form of Islamic Criminal Law, where the "most drastic provisions carry maximum penalties such as stoning to death for offences like apostasy, adultery, homosexual intercourse, and blasphemy. Punishments for theft include the amputation of limbs"<sup>78</sup>. There has been a vivid debate concerning the reasons for this invasive step, which is out of the scope of this introduction to analyze, but as of writing, no such penalty has been carried in Brunei so far. It is also worth noting that, whereas in the previous legal model the *Syariah*<sup>79</sup> Code applied only to Muslims, the newly legislated *Syariah* Penal Code Order 2013 (*Perintah Kanun Hukuman Jenayah Syariah* 2013), also includes numerous provisions and punishments for non-Muslims, which apply to a "wide range of offences pertaining to blasphemy, missionary work, sexual behavior, public eating in Ramadhan, and for disrespect of the government's religious truth".<sup>80</sup>

This move, rather unsurprisingly, has provided a great boost and source of inspiration for Malaysian Islamists, particularly those from the state of Kelantan, whose government has been dominated since the 1970s by the Islamist opposition party PAS, and whose representatives now frequently travel to Brunei Darussalam to learn about the Bruneian experience regarding the implementation of *hudud* law. Finally, without trying to sensationalize this rather unprecedented move on the part of the Bruneian government, it should be mentioned that it is actually not Malaysia, but Brunei Darussalam, which represents probably the most monolithic state in the world in terms of state control and intervention in religious, i.e. Islamic, affairs, for it exerts control over Islam in an almost totalitarian manner at *all* levels. This degree of sur-

76 Müller, 2015.

77 <http://time.com/107012/brunei-sharia-hudud-sultan/>

78 HHRCA, 2015, p 79. Available at [http://hrrca.org/system/files/Book%20of%20Keeping%20the%20Faith\\_web.pdf](http://hrrca.org/system/files/Book%20of%20Keeping%20the%20Faith_web.pdf)

79 While we prefer to use the form *shari'a* throughout the book, in this case we follow the Bruneian usage.

80 Ibid, p 79.

veillance means that there is a complete ban on the dissemination of any materials related to Islam without prior written government approval and zero tolerance for un-licensed mosques, preachers and publications.<sup>81</sup> In enforcing this, the government is assisted by a wide range of Islamic institutions, ranging from the Ministry for Religious Affairs to the State Mufti Department, to the Religious Council, and to the Faith Control Section. Furthermore, in the prosecution of religious and moral offences, there has also been close cooperation with the Royal Brunei Police Force (RBPF) and the Brunei Internal Security Department (BISD). Thus, both in Malaysia and Brunei, Muslims are now exposed to greater levels of surveillance regarding *Syariah* offenses, such as *khalwat* (close proximity) and consuming alcohol and non-halal products<sup>82</sup>. As Dominik Müller summarizes the situation, in the light of this discourse it is probably time to rethink and reformulate one's notions regarding the stereotypically tolerant, inclusive, pluralistic and progressive nature of Islam in Maritime (Malayo-Muslim) Southeast Asia<sup>83</sup>.

Obviously, the socio-religio-political situation in Indonesia and other Muslim-majority countries of Southeast Asia is very complex and this brief introduction only aims to provide a limited and hardly comprehensive overview of the process of Islamization. We have tried to cast some light on the general overall development of a process that actually started more than half a millennium ago, with some attention being paid to how the mainstream developments have gradually evolved. The ensuing content of this edited volume, presented in the form of eight individual chapters, aims to explore some forms of Islam that currently exist in Southeast Asia, with special focus on those that are mainly positioned on the fringe, i.e. outside the mainstream.

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81 Müller, 2015.

82 HHRCA, 2015, p 79.

83 Müller, 2015.

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