INDONESIA

1

INTRODUCTION

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In August 2012, a crowd of Sunni Muslims (Islam's largest denomination) attacked a community of minority Shiite Muslims in the Sampang regency on the island of Madura, part of East Java. They burned down dozens of houses belonging to Shiite members and killed two people. Views of what caused the violence differed greatly. Government officials declared the attacks to be rooted in a "family conflict"; human rights activists held that the attack was carefully planned in advance and that a deep-seated mistrust towards members of the Sy'ia community concerning their religious beliefs was at the root of the Sy'ia–Sunni violence.[1] They asserted that the violence was triggered by a group that had intended to stop a number of Shiite students from returning to their boarding school in the town of Bangil, East Java, after spending the holidays marking the end of the fasting month of Ramadan at home. After the Shiite students had reported the threats to the local police, around 1,000 attackers burned down their village.[2]

The assault evoked memories of a similar incident in late 2011, when the home and *pesantren* (local boarding school) of a Madurese Shiite leader by the name of Tajul Muluk were destroyed. Tajul had been facing accusations of preaching that Islam's holy book, the Qur'an, was not God's original scripture and that its true and final version would only be revealed to the Mahdi, the prophesied redeemer of Islam at the end of times. In response to the charges, the local branch of the Indonesian Ulama Council (Majelis Ulama Indonesia [MUI]) released a *fatwa* (legal ruling) declaring Tajul's teachings to be "deviant". The local district court subsequently charged

Tajil with "defamation of religion", which carries a maximum sentence of five years in prison.

These two incidents took place against a backdrop of increasing religious segregation and intolerance in Indonesia. Various surveys suggest that an increasing number of people harbour feelings of resentment and suspicion towards people of different religious convictions, in particular if these happen to live in the same neighbourhood. The most recent survey (at the time of writing), publicized in October 2012, put that share at 67.8 per cent.[3]

Indonesian officials' responses to the Madura assaults followed those of other cases of inter-religious conflict. Minister of Religious Affairs, Suryadharma Ali, condemned the violence whilst calling on Shiites to convert to Sunni Islam in order to avoid persecution. Minister of Home Affairs, Gamawan Fauzi, suggested relocating the victims of the attacks to the mainland of East Java to prevent similar conflicts in the future. Mutawakkil Alallah, a local leader of the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Indonesia's largest Muslim organization, said: "Shiism is against human rights and they [Shiites] despise Islam. … Banning them is not the solution, but we want Shiites to abstain from worshiping publicly." And further: "If they do not enter the public sphere and keep [their religious activity] within their own home, they will be safer."[4] At the same time, to various extent many of the main Muslim organizations issued counter-statements distancing themselves from accusations of blasphemy by individual representatives, thereby pointing to deep divisions within both these groups and Indonesian Muslim society in general.

DIVERSE MAJORITY, HYBRID IDENTITIES

An overwhelming majority of Southeast Asian Muslims (96 per cent) live in Indonesia and Malaysia.[5] Indonesian Islam is formally homogeneous in its religious outlook with about 86 per cent of Muslims being Sunnites of the Shafi'i legal school (*mazhab*), yet both Islam and Indonesian society in general are characterized by a profusion of belief patterns, cultures, and languages.[6] The remaining religions are made up of Protestants (6 per cent), Catholics (3.5 per cent), Hindus (1.8 per cent), Buddhists (1 per cent), and around 0.6 per cent whose religious beliefs are not clearly defined but effectively consist of indigenous, syncretic and animist beliefs and sects (*kebatinan* or *aliran kebatinan*). Indonesian citizens are required to declare themselves as a follower of one of the six officially acknowledged religions (*agama*) in their ID cards.

It is a scholarly truism that Indonesian Islam is highly varied in outlook and practice. It embraces and incorporates a wide array of domestic and foreign influences, from the localized and district-bound to the pan-Islamic, from ecumenist to *jihadist* readings. By comparison, Islam's role in politics has historically been smaller in Indonesia than in Malaysia. As Fealy (2005, p. 153) writes: "In Malaysia, Islamisation has resulted in greater Islamism and legalism; in Indonesia it has had more pluralistic and liberal manifestations." What is more, with a Muslim population of a comparatively small 60 per cent Malaysia is statistically the more diverse country, yet "it is the least tolerant of any state towards its majority population, legally allowing no Malay at all to be other than a Sunni Muslim" (Reid 2011). This intimate association between an ethnicity and a particular creed is absent in Indonesia.

Notably argued by Olivier Roy, literal and conservative expressions of faith are flourishing, pointing to a disassociation between communities of various faiths and their socio-cultural identities. Religions break away from their cultural roots — a *deculturation* process in which individuals consciously abandon a particular culture or certain cultural characteristics (Roy 2010).

Any study on religious diversity in today's Indonesia and Malaysia is set against the background that Muslims in these countries have become more self-consciously Islamic in the last twenty-five years or so — an Islamization that is both momentous and ongoing (Ricklefs 2008; Ricklefs 2012). This process went along with a widening and fortification of religious observance; it was accompanied by "a strong political will for increased public expression of Islam" (Bush 2012) and with the "[e]stablishment of dogmatic forms of religion on the rise" (Reid 2011). It has resulted in the historical Southeast Asian trademark of religious and cultural diversity being juxtaposed against and challenged by a contrary trend towards religious conservatism and mutual religious exclusivism, an increasing appeal of "pure" belief models, and the resulting scepticism for local accommodations towards religious scripture and apprehension towards inter-religious mingling (Reid 2011). According to Roy (2010):

> What we see today is the militant reformation of religion in a secularized space that has given religion its autonomy and therefore the conditions for its expansion. Secularization and globalization have forced religions to break away from culture. It was instrumental for establishing "a system of religions that are competitive and mutually exclusive".

"Indonesia today can be aptly described as bi-polar", write Robin Bush and Budhy Munawar-Rahman in chapter 2. This can be understood as a general observation of the country's dual position as a stable democracy and regional economic hub on one hand yet plagued by unrelenting woes such as the seemingly ubiquitous corruption in all levels of society and pervasive legal uncertainty. Yet "bi-polar" also aptly captures Indonesia's uneasy fluctuation between a traditional devotion to pluralist religious ideals and a tendency towards religious bigotry and state meddling in religious affairs.

The picture appears to be paradoxical in more than one regard. Islam's popularity and appeal is on a continuous rise; Islamic politics, however, is not — in fact, measured by popular support for Islamist parties (i.e., parties adopting Islam as party ideology), it is on the decline. The popular vote for Islamist parties dropped from 21 per cent in the 2004 general elections to 16.5 per cent in 2009 and thus back to the level of the Islamist share in the first post-New Order democratic polls in 1999. If one adds the vote of Indonesia's Islam-oriented parties (parties that are linked to large Islamic organizations but have not adopted Islam as party ideology), the 2009 result looks even worse, with a decline from about 36 per cent in 1999 and roughly 37.5 per cent in 2004 to 29 per cent in 2009.

The Soeharto government (1966–98) had endorsed Islamic cultural expressions whilst keeping a tight grip on its political aspirations. In Malaysia, by contrast, both the Malay-nationalist UMNO (United Malays National Organization) and the Islamist PAS (Parti Islam Se-Malaysia), made the promotion of Islam and its intrinsic connection with Malay identity a key agenda, at times outdoing each other in their claim for Islamic authenticity (Fealy 2005). This distinction appears to be gradually recoiling. Many Indonesian Muslim voters today perceive religious interests as adequately represented by non-Islamist and by nationalist parties. Islamist parties have lost a good share of their distinctiveness as mainstream, and supposedly "secular" parties have increasingly adopted pro-Islamic agendas in their party platforms. These parties have increasingly moved towards a pro-Islamic ideological middle ground in recent years by assuming a strong economically nationalist cum Islamic identity (Platzdasch 2009*a* and *b*).[7] Traditionally, proponents of a formalist and legalistic role of Islam have regarded Islam's history in the modern Indonesian state with a sense of victimization which colours their position towards religious minorities, especially Christians (Platzdasch 2009*b*, chapter 2). As Bush (2012, p. 189) summarizes this multifaceted dynamic between the ongoing pro-Islamic drift on one side and pluralist traditions on the other: "Religion is obviously an issue on which feelings run

deep, and the Muslim community has often felt that it has not received the political recognition it is due. At the same time, Indonesians of all religions are strongly proud of, and committed to, the pluralist nature of their society…."

STATE INFRINGEMENT: "PROPER" AND "IMPROPER" RELIGION

Even in 1945, the architects of the then-infant Indonesian Republic appeared deeply aware of the latent precariousness of the combustible religious and ethnic mixes of its peoples. Its legal foundation came about after intense debate and ideological quarrel, settling on a constitution that "kept *sui generis* religion at bay of the political system or defined it in neutral terms" (Kersten 2011). This, Kersten highlights, did not equal a banning of religion from the public sphere but rather sought to exercise control and circumscribe the parameters in which religions and beliefs would be allowed to operate. Hence, as Steinberg (2006, p. 14) points out, and stressing the contrast to the largely secularized public spheres of much of the western world, Indonesia "continue[s] to draw upon religious institutions and authority to shape their several cultures, societies and governmental structures".[8] In Indonesia, state infringement in defining what is religion and what is not indeed dates back to independence. To a large extent, it has been carried out through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, which has largely been acting as a Ministry of Islamic Affairs since the 1970s. From then on, the Indonesian state has been reinforcing an official, majoritarian, version of what religion, including Islam, constitutes and what the acceptable doctrinal boundaries of religious beliefs are.

Indonesia's constitution recognizes six religions (classified as *agama*): Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, the latter only added by a presidential decree in 2000. Unlike in Malaysia, Islam does not formally have a special status in the constitution yet the first principle of the Pancasila — "the belief in the One All-Powerful God" — is an avowal to monotheism and as such was a concession to Islamic majority sentiment in the early days of the Republic.[9] Older religions centring on spirit worship, syncretic, and mystical belief systems (*kebatinan*) are officially deemed inferior and undeserving of the *agama* label. They are thus given lesser official treatment, and they have "not being institutionalized in the modern sector" (Picard and Raillon 2011; Kersten 2011). Being officially part of

the six recognized faiths — mostly Islam and Christianity — adherents of these beliefs thus exist essentially as administrative phantoms of a veiled religious identity. Those customs and practices linked to the beliefs that preceded the arrival of the world religions are captured in the term *adat*. Although intrinsically linked to syncretism and local beliefs, *adat* managed to sustain a more positive connotation that those beliefs themselves were able to manage.

Progressively more throughout the last decade, Indonesian lawmakers and the government have appeared susceptible to the insistence that "beliefs" are dangerous to the establishment of a "proper", officially acknowledged, form of "religion". In Indonesia in reality this only affects Islam. These "beliefs" remain under the domain of the Ministry of Education and Cultures unlike the official religions, which operate under the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Agnosticism and, especially, atheism remain officially non-existent, partly because of the officially cultivated and widely cited association with communism, partly because of the similarly cultivated, romanticized depiction of the Indonesian populace as a "religious peoples" (*umat beragama*). This rests on a thinly veiled model adopted from the Islamic heartland where pre-Islamic indigenous religious communities were not part of the "people of the book" (*ahl al-kitab*) and thus had little or no rights in the Muslim-dominated society they lived in. Altogether, in Indonesia there are, as Reid notes, "no congenial precedents" for today's non-conformist main offshoots of "proper" religions. Examples are the Islamic Ahmadiyah sect, Shiism, or the Jehovah's Witnesses, which are not being recognized as separate Muslim or, respectively, Christian, communities (Reid 2011).

TOLERATION AND CONFLICT

State patronage of Islam stresses the boundaries of religious faith and promotes a set of fundamental convictions that all Muslims should have in common. It sanctions the moral and historical supremacy of a murkily defined majority-Islam. It is also endorsing a mindset that "mainstream" Muslims are under threat and that they must be protected from "improper" religious readings. It sets political incentives for conservative agendas perceived as convenient resources for political moblization and support. This is, referring to Roy and the *deculturation* of religion, contributing to a gap between the believer and the non-believer as individuals in religious communities no longer believe in sharing either religious practice or common values; it has contributed to stereotypization and segregation

along religious fault lines, thereby aiding social disturbances and legal injustice.

Mob violence such as in the cases outlined at the beginning of this introduction has often been left unpunished, creating disdain of Indonesia's dearly held claim to be not merely a religiously tolerant but a lawful society (*negara hukum*). Over the last five years or so, Indonesia's legal and constitutional impasses regarding religious freedom have become more apparent and increasingly the topic of academic debate. This debate has highlighted the inherent contradictions and omissions of Indonesia's 1945 constitution, challenging common wisdom that the country protected and guaranteed full religious freedom (Crouch 2011; Platzdasch 2011). Indonesia has made headlines for attacks against minority Islamic groups (particularly Ahmadis and Shiites) and the jaundiced eye of government officials for Islamist groups and their agendas including the forced closure of churches, especially in the province of West Java and in the larger Jakarta area. External criticism over these matters often reveals considerable levels of national sensitivity and, among parts of both the Muslim and nationalist sections, a feeling of cultural defeat. Overall, Indonesia has frequently been making international headlines for wrong reasons. Inter-religious conflicts and a mixture of failure and unwillingness by government officials to respond adequately are eagerly picked up by the foreign press, eclipsing achievements in other areas and damaging the country politically and economically.

The chapters in the Indonesia section of the volume demonstrate that a state-sanctioned form of Islam and the state's interference into religious matters has impacted on the lives of non-Muslim as well as on Islamic minorities (in other countries, a similar role is being played by a particular ethnic or linguistic section of the population). Some of these writings at the same time show the remarkably enduring diversity of beliefs and practices, which contrast with the more singularly purifying discourses amidst the solidification of a legal-bureaucratic Islam in Malaysia. They thus present case studies of smooth as well as of antagonistic spheres of coexistence. They cover the stance of Indonesia's two largest Muslim organizations — NU and Muhammadiyah — on religious pluralism and tolerance; internal Islamic doctrinal discourses and legal and constitutional impasses for full religious freedom in Indonesia. They deal with Muslim and Christian rivalries over public space, specifically, inter-religious disputes over obtaining permission to build places of worship, and the potential significance of local customs (*adat*) to rise above inter-religious conflicts, using the case of the Moluccas. Other chapters explore the rich diversity

of Indonesia's Muslim community itself, with one chapter discussing the doctrinal bearings of the Chinese Muslim minority. Other contributions debate opposing views on the question of religious freedom on the basis of the precarious situation of the Islamic Ahmadiyah sect, the persistence and idiosyncrasies of minority syncretist forms of Islam in the far east of Java and on the island of Madura, northeast of Java.

Chapters 2 and 3 deal with the inherent plurality of Indonesian Islam and critically examine Indonesia's dedication to full religious freedom, inter-religious tolerance, and Islamic moderation. In chapter 2, Bush and Munawar-Rahman establish the track records of Indonesia's two largest Islamic social movements, the traditionalist-orthodox NU (est. 1926) and the modernist-reformist Muhammadiyah (1912) with regard to attitudes towards both Islamic and non-Islamic minorities. NU and Muhammadiyah are of particular significance since they, Bush and Munawar-Rahman highlight, "have tremendous authority" in the country. Both organizations are often being classified as main proponents of a mainstream Islam in a country "beset by increasing contradictions and polarisation". The authors therefore argue that a predictable moderate voice from NU and Muhammadiyah was indispensable. They present a positive "historical record" arguing that both organizations have traditionally sought to "avoid the extremes of any interpretation or debate". They also, however, detect a discrepancy between NU's internal discourse, described as a centre of "progressive" Islamic thought and its external action, as "one rarely sees [NU] using its political and social clout to advocate strongly for minority rights or religious freedom…". They portray Muhammadiyah as inherently more coherent in its positions on religious minorities yet "more conservative on issues of pluralism and religious freedom". As examples for NU's and Muhammadiyah's stance on religious minorities, Bush and Munawar-Rahman examine positions over quarrels on the construction of churches and the status of Shiites and Ahmadis.

Supriyanto Abdi's chapter probes further into the constitutional legal framework for religious freedom in Indonesia, especially Law No. 1/PNPS/1965 on the "Prevention of Desecration of Religion and/or Blasphemy", which is sometimes seen as a main obstacle to full religious freedom in Indonesia. The Law prohibits and criminalizes religious interpretations or practices that are considered non-standard and deviating from the core tenets of six religions adhered in Indonesia. The author then portrays the liberal Muslim support for some of the core principles in international human rights discourse on the right of freedom of religion or belief such as the principle of equality or non-discrimination and the

principle of state neutrality. In an increasingly competitive "market of ideas" and a religiously conservative and uncooperative state, he argues, the broader appeal of liberal Muslims' views on religious freedom, however, remains limited.

The manner in which Islam is invoked in the discourses on Ahmadiyah and freedom of religion is the subject of Andy Fuller's chapter. He draws on material from the mainstream liberal media as well as from texts that seek to condemn liberal thought. Fuller detects a "polyvocality" in contemporary discourses on Islam in Indonesia amidst a "negotiation and re-negotiation of Islamic thought" process in which the state, law, and Islamic authority cross paths. Reminiscent of various other chapters in the volume that highlight the ambiguities in Indonesian society and politics today, Fuller sees this polyvocality as indicating richness, yet the discourses also appear to be mutually exclusive.

Chapter 5 by Helen Pausaker examines the moral panic about Indonesia's infamous Pornography Law from 2008. Boosted by *deculturation*, Muslims have increasingly voiced the uniqueness of various values, such as sexual modesty, to their religion, and perceived as a communal duty, not an individual one (Roy 2010). The bill drew support from both Islamist and nationalist groups and parties and was opposed by an alliance of religious minorities, liberal Muslims as well as many secular and leftist intellectuals and artists. Pausaker argues that the pressure that resulted in the implementation of the bill "shows the increasing influence by conservative Muslim groups, following the decline of authoritarian social control in post-Soeharto Indonesia". The Yudhoyono government has allowed bodies such as MUI to assume a greater political role and has consulted their leaders for advice on religious matters. Many of MUI's *fatwas* are reissues of older edicts without having had a comparable political significance in the past. Significantly, Pausaker demonstrates the political rationale behind the bill as cases prosecuted under the law only targeted particular individuals regarded as "soft targets", leaving other persons and the underground pornographic market untouched.

The conflicts between religious communities over building places of worship are the topic of Melissa Crouch's chapter. Crouch concentrates on the province of West Java (and especially the city of Bogor) where difficulties have been the most severe in recent years. She examines the role and effectiveness of the two main bodies involved in these matters: the Inter-religious Harmony Forum, largely responsible for issuing permit applications for constructions at the regional level, and the Ombudsman, which has the authority to deal with public complaints against the regional

government. Crouch illustrates the high level of intricacy of these issues by particularly investigating the Bogor Church Permit Case. She shows that the Harmony Forum has worsened the strain between the religious communities through its anti-Christian stance. While legal challenges to the Forum's recommendations might in other cases stand a good chance for success, she further shows that favourable court decisions often do not result in action on the ground if there is a potent political opposition to them.

A fitting following entry to the discussion of the previous chapter, En-Chieh Chao highlights an intriguing dialectic in her contribution: parallel to the shift of the traditional forms of Islam towards more conservative forms of religiosity, previous members of mainstream churches have been flocking to puritan expressions of the Christian faith which makes Pentecostalism the fastest growing religion in the world today.

The author made the Central Javanese city of Salatiga her case study. Salatiga goes by the moniker "a Christian city", due to its comparatively high number of Christians (21 per cent). Chao's research centres around competition over the religious identity of the city with many Muslims feeling marginalized by the Christian population despite the former's numerical dominance. She describes "miracle discourses" as central to the Pentecostals' claim that their existence in the Salatiga community rested on divine legitimacy. She sets these discourses against the "perennial worries of Muslim leaders" regarding the Christian mission and concludes that "peaceful co-existence will demand constant renegotiations".

In her chapter on post-war Ambon in Indonesia's far eastern Maluku Islands, Birgit Bräuchler writes that she intends "to deconstruct the simplified image of a harmonious traditional past versus religious strife that neglects the diverse and complex processes of negotiation", in which the conflict lines of religion and *adat* continue to interact and compete against a background of daily interaction of people from different religious communities. She writes about continuing "high expectations towards the integrative character of *adat*" as a shared tradition of its inhabitants, illustrated by a detailed depiction of a traditional village union in Ambon. But Braeuchler also emphasizes the contradictions and exclusivist potentials of *adat* itself, "a fact that is not sufficiently taken into account". She writes that inter-religious relationships in Ambon were in the past based on passive tolerance and that inter-religious dialogue was missing. This, she argues, made it easier for religion to become the mobilizing force for violence in a culture where daily needs, *adat*, and religion coexist and simultaneously compete with each other.

The concluding three chapters present studies of the plurality and diversity in Islam itself. In his study on "Chinese Muslim Cultural Identities", Hew Wai Weng deals with the underlying theme of what Roy (2010) calls *inculturation* (as compared to *deculturation*), seen as an undertaking to reconcile a religious belief with traditionally non-Islamic cultural elements, in Hew's case "Chinese culture". Hew points to the inclusion of Chinese converts in various Muslim organizations, the popularity of Chinese Muslim preachers in Indonesia and highly symptomatic developments such as the celebration of the Chinese New Year in mosques. He sees in these phenomena evidence of Islam's tolerance towards different expressions of culture. By accounts of the views and teachings of various Chinese Muslim notables, he at the same time demonstrates that Chinese Muslim cultures are overall "tending towards religious conservatism" whilst embracing some forms of what the author calls "cosmopolitan Islam".

The continued existence of a small cluster of villages adhering (seemingly in contrast to larger overall trends) to a mythical and animist folk religion amidst a community and a region (Banyuwangi in East Java) that is overwhelmingly following the traditionalist-orthodox NU's brand of Islam is the topic of Nicholas Herriman's chapter. The author highlights conformity to what he terms "NU Islam" as the principal feature of the region and describes its pre-eminent characteristics. Herriman's account of this "conformity" is more a conformity to a notion and ideal (that of "NU Islam") rather than a standardized adherence to a particular doctrine. It is one of mutual toleration amongst the majority NU Islam and between that majority and the minority (the village animists), with purifying campaigns of what he calls "Middle Eastern style puritans" amongst the villagers constituting a potential source for future conflict.

The final chapter by Yanwar Pribadi covers a community on the periphery of this volume's topic in a sense that its members represent most blatantly a gap between cultural and religious markers. His chapter deals with the *blater*, a distinct subset of people home to the island of Madura. Pribadi describes *blater* as "feared local strongmen with a high position in society and who are held in awe by the local population". *Blater* are often employed in private security services. They enjoy access to local political and religious leaders, especially *kiai* (Islamic scholars and leaders) with whom they establish "mutually beneficial relationships". *Blater* follow a lifestyle that one would normally describe as "un-Islamic". Yet a considerable number of *blater* claim to have a background in local *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools); and they observe a variety of *quasi*-religious rituals,

which Pribadi describes in considerable detail. Their self-perception is that of being "mystical-syncretist Muslims", and as such they are both an integral part and markedly diverge from the majority orthodox Muslims of their shared homeland.

Notes

1 The activists came, among others, from Indonesia's Setara Institute Bhinneka Tunggal Ika National Alliance Forum (ANBTI).

2 "Two Dead in Sunni-Shiite Mayhem in Madura", *Jakarta Post*, 27 August 2012; Sumanto Al Qurtuby, "A Camouflage for Religious Violence", *Jakarta Globe*, 2 September 2012.

3 The survey was conducted amongst people with a senior high school or lower grade. "Survey Reveals Rising Religious Intolerance in Indonesia", *Jakarta Globe*, 22 October 2012.

4 "Attacks on Shiites Stemmed from Family Conflict: Government", *Jakarta Globe*, 28 August 2012.

5 Indonesia has a population of about 230 million and is the world's largest Muslim country.

6 The Sjafi'i school is the dominating Muslim law school in Muslim Southeast Asia. The other schools are the Hanafi, Hanbali, and Maliki.

7 Paradoxically, it is often the secular-nationalist parties that have supported the application of *shari'ah* by-laws on a local level. This is despite that religious matters are under the authority of the central government. This is unlike in the federal state of Malaysia where federal courts can apply their own *shari'ah* laws.

8 Malaysia even presents a stronger case in point.

9 The remaining principles are humanitarianism, nationalism, democracy, and social justice.

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