

Three essays, by K. Rajan, V. Selvakumar, and Sundares and A.S. Gaur, respectively, all highlight the subcontinent's seafaring history. Rajan's overview of trade in India during the late centuries BCE and early centuries CE draws from recent archaeological evidence of South Indian crafts and commerce. He argues that Kodumanal in Tamil Nadu was a major centre for artisanal activities in pearls, gemstones, and metals (especially iron), trade goods whose production appears to have grown through burgeoning commerce with Southeast Asia. He also recognises tin, essential for making bronze artefacts, as an import from Southeast Asia. Sundares and Gaur present evidence of underwater findings from coastal/port sites, e.g. Poompuhar, Mahabalipuram (the Nirappayarvu site), and Tranquebar. Their chapter also takes into account the history and impact of sea-level fluctuations along the eastern seaboard of India during the last 5,000 years. Selvakumar, noted for his contributions to the excavations at Pattanam, shows the influence of Southeast Asian ship-building techniques on seafaring in Kerala.

Other than these three chapters, the sea remains largely in the background in this volume, however, and there is no discussion of the historical geography of the eastern Indian Ocean. And, given the importance of material from Southeast Asian shipwreck sites, this volume could have contained an overview of findings from these sites. Contributors could also have paid more attention to what Romila Thapar has conceptualised as the reciprocity of 'cultural transactions', rather than unidirectional cultural flows.

The best aspect of the volume is that it tries to integrate the field-archaeological materials with epigraphic, art historical, and textual sources, without fixing the primacy of one category of sources over the other, and yet allowing the distinctive voices of different sources for the study of an exciting past which has a definite bearing on the present.

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*Living Islamically in the periphery: Muslim discourse, institution, and intellectual tradition in Southeast Asia*

By IKK ARIFIN MANSURNOOR

Banten: UIN Jakarta Press, 2011. Pp. xxi + 414. Bibliography, Index.

*Bangsa and umma: Development of people-grouping concepts in Islamized Southeast Asia*

Edited by YAMAMOTO HIROYUKI, ANTHONY MILNER, KAWASHIMA MIDORI and ARAI KAZUHIRO

Kyoto: Kyoto University Press and Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press, 2011. Pp. ix + 279. Illustrations, Maps, Bibliography, Index.

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Despite the rapid expansion of publications on Islam and Muslims in Southeast Asia, some problematic assumptions and characterisations persist. Within religious

studies, Southeast Asian Islam has so often been cast as peripheral to the larger story of the spread of Islam in world history. Scholars working within such a paradigm argue that the religious practices of Southeast Asian Muslims are all too often mere imitations or derivatives of the pure version of Islam found in the Arab world. From this, it follows then that more attention therefore should be given to scrutinising how Islam has been appropriated rather than to pay close attention to how ideas about piety in Southeast Asia have informed the growth of Islamic thought elsewhere. If such assumptions about the seemingly 'inferior' character of Southeast Asian Islam are not enough to consign studies on Islam in the region to the periphery, there exists the widely held notion that Southeast Asian Islam had experienced little, if any, radical change and revolutionary transformation. Academics who subscribe to such reasoning pay particular emphasis to the peaceful, calm and tolerant nature of Southeast Asian Islam since its inception up until today. Episodes of conflict, contests and contentions, whenever and wherever they did occur, are studied as mere aberrations rather than the norm of what Southeast Asian Islam is supposed to be. Put differently, to be Muslim in the Southeast Asia is to be meek and mild and not belligerent, assertive and combative.

The two collection of essays under review interrogate such assumptions and expand our understanding of Islam in Southeast Asia. Both books address questions of continuities as reflected in Malay-Muslim adherence to the idea of the global ummah and their commitment to establishing Islamic institutions such as mosques and Muslim schools. And yet, the authors of these illuminating studies address the ruptures, reinventions and dissension within the Southeast Asian Muslim community as they encounter new styles of thought from Europe, South Asia and the Arab World. In tracing the endogenous and exogenous factors that led to transformations in Muslim societies in Southeast Asia, these two volumes provide evidence that Southeast Asian Islam is a product of a fusion of horizons, which occurred through the interactions between local cultures and colonial modernity, through endless disagreements between defenders of tradition and advocates of reform as well as through the creative ability of Muslims in that part of the world in reinterpreting the ideals of Islam in order to suit their immediate needs.

Iik Arifin Mansurnoor's *Living Islamically in the periphery* navigates a vast expanse of geography and time, covering the history of Islam in Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia as well as the Jawah community in Mecca. His book is an admirable attempt at filling the gaps in the literature on Islam in Brunei, a backwater subject attracting little interest from Southeast Asian scholars. Parts I and II of the book enumerate the ways in which rulers, ulamas, and reformers played instrumental roles in defending traditions and initiating improvements to institutions such as the madrasahs and mosques. He skilfully demonstrates that Islam in Brunei cannot be properly understood without considering the global connections between Muslims in the kingdom and their brethren in faith in other parts of the Muslim world.

Parts III and IV develop these themes through studies of Muslim histories in Madura, Indonesia, Orientalist depictions of Muslims in Southeast Asia, debates over Muslim ethics and Islamic revivalism in Malaysia from the 1990s onwards. The breadth of Iik's intellectual interests will impress readers of these two sections.

His in-depth knowledge of recent debates about Muslim history and society in Madura in particular and in Southeast Asia in general is immense. At the core of these seemingly disparate essays is the examination of the interplay between politics, ethnicity, and the roles of social groups in the making of modern Islam in Southeast Asia and elsewhere. For Iik, change and reform in the Islamic world is contingent upon scholars and activists just as it is dependent on Muslim rulers and governments' responses to European hegemony in the colonial and postcolonial eras.

Although more modest in scope and more narrowly defined than Iik's book, *Bangsa and umma* is a gem in Southeast Asian studies and an indispensable text for anyone interested in the study of group consciousness among Muslims and non-Muslims. The nine essays display a blend of different scholarly traditions and an imaginative reconstruction of Southeast Asian Muslim history through the lens of identity politics by scholars based in the United States, Malaysia, Japan and Australia. Edited by four established dons in Southeast Asian Studies, the book takes on a chronological approach to examine the development of people-grouping concepts.

Part I features essays by Anthony Milner, Michael Laffan and Nishio Kanji. The three contributors highlight the fact that Southeast Asian Muslims in the precolonial period held unique ideas about their identities. *Jawi*, *kaum*, *peranakan*, *hamba* and *bangsa* were among the concepts that have been used by Southeast Asian Muslims. Evidence of the use of these concepts are found in many Malay texts written prior to the colonial era. While agreeing that such identities and identifications provide evidence of a process of localisation of foreign ideas into the Malay World, the three contributors stressed that Southeast Asians had redefined these concepts to differentiate their understanding of such concepts from their place of origins.

Part II of the book consists of essays by Tsuboi Yuji, Shinozaki Kaori and Ariffin Omar. The main driving theme of this part is the use of the *bangsa* signifier by Muslims and non-Muslims in Malaya through the colonial and postcolonial periods. The three authors examine the ways in which different groups in Malayan society have employed *bangsa* as a social category as part and parcel of their efforts to agitate for recognition and rights in the changing economic and social landscapes of Malaya. In the post-independence period, as Ariffin Omar aptly demonstrates, statesmen and advocacy groups deploy *bangsa* as a rallying tool to justify their communalist agendas. While the notion of *bangsa* is in itself problematic and always open to contestations and reinterpretations by academics and pundits alike, when used by politicians and bureaucrats to benefit certain groups in society over others, the *bangsa* category can give rise to injustice and the breach of rights of non-Muslims and minorities.

The last part of the book explores the ummah as an emerging concept. Yamamoto Hiroyuki directs his gaze on the indigenous people of Sabah, Nishi Yoshimi on the Acehnese and Kawashima Midori on the Moros in Southern Philippines. What comes out most clearly in this set of essays is the interchange between law and ethnic nationalism in the development of conflicts over space and territory in the different parts of Southeast Asia. It is obvious that, in the last four decades, Southeast Asia is confronted with the ascendance of many collectives that seek to transcend nationalist identities. One likely outcome of this progressive tendency to do away with nationalist and local identities towards the adoption of a wider and yet more compelling transnational identity is that Muslims in Southeast Asia are

becoming more predisposed to identifying themselves with events and groups in global Islam. Like *bangsa*, *umma* (or *ummah*) as a form of Muslim self-identity can be at once divisive and unifying. In Southern Philippines, for example, the movement led by Muslim separatist groups to identify their struggles as part of the overall battle for the *umma* meant that non-Muslims are regarded as the 'other' in a society whose existence serves as a liability for the cause of Muslim unity.

Both books ought to be included in course syllabuses on Southeast Asia. The authors of these essays show us that the study of Muslims as well as the other groups that populate the region is far from peripheral and detached from the study of Islam as a whole. Rather, studying Muslims in Southeast Asia could provide us with windows to understanding how Islam as one of the fastest growing religions is lived and debated about. The contestations of identities and of interpretations explored in these books will undoubtedly serve as a basis of comparison to explore and unravel what it means to be Muslim in the world.

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*Contestations of memory in Southeast Asia*

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*Contestations of memory in Southeast Asia* is a collection of ten chapters dealing with the eclectic post-war and post-colonial development of selected Southeast Asian countries. The authors include sociologists and anthropologists examining three case studies from Singapore, two from Indonesia, and one each from Burma, Laos, Vietnam and the Philippines.

The introductory chapter addresses 'the stakes involved in memory', with an emphasis on the interplay and machinations involved in the creation of memory, history, and identity among the various ethnic groups from the Second World War through to the present. Indigenous power relations within each nation impacted and continue to have an impact on the deconstruction and reconstruction of historical memory and 'truth'. The creation of memory, whether personal or as a product of 'hegemonic narratives', is indivisibly linked to enduring 'contestations' and with that the quest and very meaning of 'truth'. The editors 'propose that the problem of memory cannot be uncoupled from the problem of truth. Truth, however, is an elusive concept ...'.

'Part II: Nationalism and the construction of destinies' examines the official constructions of history as nationalist exercises of identity-making replete with conscious and unconscious acts of selection and with considerable impact on the emerging nations. The chapters by Sharon Seah Li-Lian's 'Truth and memory: Narrating Viet Nam' and Dayang Istiaisyah bte Hussin's 'Textual construction of a nation: The use of merger and separation' deconstruct historical narratives long accepted as 'dominant truth' rather than 'dominant narrative'. Seah analyses the reconstruction of the