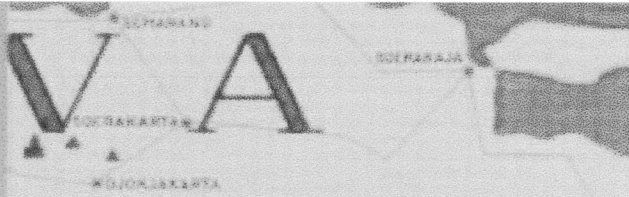ROUTLEDGE
HANDBOOKS

Routledge Handbook
of Southeast Asian History

Edited by Norman G. Owen

20

ISLAM IN MODERN SOUTHEAST ASIAN HISTORY

Muhamad Ali

Southeast Asia is today home to about 230 million Muslims, almost half of the region's population and about 20 percent of the world's Muslims. Muslims constitute 88 percent of the population in Indonesia, 67 percent in Brunei, 58 percent in Malaysia, 14 percent in Singapore, and 5 percent or less in other countries in the region. More Muslims live in Indonesia than in any other country of the world. Viewed from the centers of Islam in the Middle East, Southeast Asia is geographically peripheral, but it is a crucial region that needs to be understood in its own terms.

The Islamization of Southeast Asia was not an unchecked, linear, uniform process, but rather one that proceeded in fits and starts over the millennia, influenced to varying degrees by Arabs, Indians, Persians, Chinese, and local peoples themselves. Islam penetrated Southeast Asia mostly in a peaceful manner, although some political coercion did occur. As a result of the multi-interpretability of the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad's tradition, Islam has become complex, diverse, and dynamic. In Southeast Asia, it continues to be generally moderate, as seen by its accommodative and adaptive attitudes toward various local, ethnic, national, and global cultures.

In recent decades there has been an Islamic resurgence in Southeast Asia: the growing popularity of Muslim women's dress, notably the headscarf, increasing mosque construction and attendance, rising sales of books and magazines on Islam, proliferating use of Islamic symbols, a growing number of pilgrimages to Mecca (*hajj*), and greater interest in formalizing Islamic law and Islamic banking. At the same time, however, liberal strands have emerged, counter-arguing the political and symbolic dimensions of Islam. Thus Southeast Asian Islam has struggled within itself as much as it has struggled with outsiders. This phenomenon has taken new form recently, but contention between Muslims in the region has long existed.

Patterns of Islamization

Before Islam, from the first to fourteenth century CE, Indian civilization dominated Southeast Asian religion, arts, and written language (scripts). Later on, the decline of Hindu and Buddhist kingdoms such as Srivijaya and Majapahit collided with, and to some extent stimulated, the rise of Islamic kingdoms in Sumatra, the Malay Peninsula, and Java. The questions of how and when Islam came to Southeast Asia has been the subject of much scholarly debate.

In 1281 the Moroccan traveler Ibn Battuta claimed to have seen an Islamic king, the Sultan of Sumatra, who was a follower of Shafi'i legal thought and Sunni theology, but surrounded by "infidels" (Drewes 1985: 16). Bengal, Gujarat, South India (both Coromandel and Malabar), Persia, China, and Arabia have all been mentioned as possible origins of Islam in Southeast Asia.

At a 1963 conference, Malay and Indonesian scholars discussed whether Islam entered Indonesia for the time directly from Arabia during the first century of the *hijrah* (seventh/eighth century CE). Arab *ulama* (scholars) played the crucial role in Islamizing local rulers and peoples, directly and indirectly. As Dutch scholar Snouck Hurgronje observed, "Arabs who lived in South India, especially those who passed for descendants of the Prophet under the name of Sayyid or Sharif, later found a welcome opportunity to demonstrate their organizational ability. As priests, priest-princes, and as sultans they often put the finishing touches to the formation of the new realms" (Drewes 1985: 8–9, 15–17).

Assisted by regular monsoon winds and sea trade networks, Islam came first to the ports of Southeast Asia, before penetrating the interior. Coastal city-states – usually clustered around a fortress, royal compound, mosque, and commercial area – became centers for the transmission of Islamic ideas to the peasant interior (Reid 1993: 2: 133). Several patterns, not necessarily exclusive, suggest how Islam arrived and spread within the region. The first pattern is top-down: Muslim preachers and teachers converted local kings – Hindu, Buddhist, or animist. For example, an Arab preacher, Sayyid Abd al-Aziz, succeeded in converting Parameswara, the founder of Malacca (Melaka), to Islam. The king proclaimed the *shahada* ("There is no god but God, and Muhammad is his messenger"), adopted an Islamic name (Sultan Muhammad Shah), and married a Muslim woman. His conversion was probably an attempt to create more favorable climate for trade, thus attracting more Muslim merchants to visit his new port, which in fact became a great commercial center and nucleus of Islamic expansion in Southeast Asia until its seizure by the Portuguese in 1511.

Arab preachers also converted the rulers of Sulu, in the Philippines, in the second half of the fourteenth century. Local kings soon adopted and adapted Arab and Persian titles to claim prestige (Majul 1985: 48–57). A ruler's conversion marked his membership of the wider world of *Dar al-Islam* (house of Islam), thus increasing his political legitimacy among his subjects and widening his economic network. Networks were further strengthened by marriage linkages, either with previously Islamized kings or newly Islamized Hindu or Buddhist ones. Rulers in Mataram, south Sulawesi, Buton, Lombok, Sumbawa, Magindanao, and southern Borneo also adopted Islam.

Islam did not always expand peacefully. Sometimes Muslim rulers, like the Mataram monarchs of Java, tried to conquer their non-Muslim neighbors (Ricklefs 1985: 39). In the seventeenth century the ruler of Gowa (in Sulawesi [Celebes]) waged a war against the rulers of Bone, Soppeng, and Wajo, who had not converted to Islam. He saw Islam as a political ideology, influenced by the Persian idea of the ruler as "a representative of God on earth," which he believed gave him a mandate to convert everyone within his reach (Andaya 1981: 33–5).

Malays often referred to themselves as the servants of the *raja* (Sanskrit) or *sultan* (medieval Arabo-Persian). Sultans were owners of the land and patrons of the law. "The Ruler was the expounder on earth of laws," a fourteenth-century Trengganu inscription tells us. The ruler of Pasai adopted the title Sultan and proclaimed himself "God's shadow on Earth," and the rulers of Kedah, Trengganu, and Johor took the title "Helper of the World and of the Religion." The Sultan of Pahang claimed he was "disseminating both Islamic and *adat* (customary law)." Javanese rulers, such as Agung (1603–46), also acquired the title of Sultan,

linking them to the Prophet Muhammad. Another medieval political appellation was that of "Perfect Man," embraced by some rulers of Malacca and Aceh. However, from the eighteenth century onwards more *shari'a*-minded Muslims, such as Wahhabis from Arabia, came to challenge such mystical beliefs, deemed to be "un-Islamic" (Milner 1985: 25–31).

A second pattern of Islamic propagation and conversion occurred when independent teachers or traders preached, settled, and built mosques. Later on, especially in the nineteenth century, learning spaces such as *pondok, surau, pesantren,* or *madrasah* were also established. In the *pondok* system, teachers were always powerful; knowledge and power were intertwined. The site of learning might consist of a mosque, the teacher's house, a boarding house or dormitory for pupils, and land to cultivate, because agriculture was part of daily life. The syllabus – goals, curriculum, and Arabic textbooks – was designed by the teacher. Instruction consisted of the reading or recitation of texts by teachers, which was then followed by pupils. Customarily, pupils had to memorize texts (such as Qur'anic verses, *hadith* [the sayings or actions attributed to Muhammad], and Arabic grammar and sayings) and recite them in front of their teachers. Some texts were in *jawi* (Malay written in Arabic script), so pupils also had to learn that. Teachers were regarded as the highest authority, and classical Islamic knowledge was to be preserved by memorization rather than studied analytically. Teachers interacted with the wider community in the mosque through sermons on Fridays and every day after the morning and evening prayers (Ali 2006: 40).

Many of the teachers were wandering Sufi who came to Southeast Asia as followers of one or more orders (*tariqah*). They came from Persia, India, Arabia, Malay, Sumatra, Brunei, Ternate, and other regional centers. In Java, the best-known early carriers of Islam were the *wali sanga* (nine saints), during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. They represented diversity, for each saint was unique in teaching and character. Islamic orthodoxy constantly contended with pre-Islamic beliefs, to the extent that some Sufi masters who believed in pantheism (the unity of God and men), such as Sheikh Siti Jenar and Ki Cabolek, became martyrs. One of the nine saints, Sunan Kalijaga, demonstrated a tolerant, accommodating character in his preaching by using *wayang*, the Hindu–Buddhist shadow puppet theater (Ricklefs 1985: 27). Sheikh Siti Jennar preached a liberal mystic faith later known as *"Islam Abangan"* (red Islam), which was condemned as a heresy by the other eight saints, who preached *"Islam Mutihan"* (white Islam). Beneath such competition, eclecticism remained the rule.

Two general types of Islam can be discerned in this early period: mystical and legalistic. Some religious elites tended toward mysticism, but the majority adhered to legalistic Islam, which provided greater certainty in terms of personal issues. Legalism was also strengthened by the role of Islamic judges (*qadis*) in applying Islamic law on behalf of sultans. In the southern Philippines, the *shari'a*-minded were more prevalent, but in other Islamic communities, such as in Sumatra Barat, local tradition and Islamic law went hand in hand.

The third pattern was more elitist: propagation of Islam through writing on legal, political, and cultural issues in Arabic or in local languages, such as Malay. Hamzah Fansuri (d.1590) presented himself as one united with God: "Hamzah is poor and naked; A sacrifice, just as Isma'il; Neither Persian nor Arab; Yet in constant union with the Eternal One" (Riddell 2001: 108). Other Sufis criticized his pantheism. The polyglot Nuruddin ar-Raniri (d.1658), son of a Malay mother living in Aceh and a Hadhrami Arab father living in Gujarat, wrote some 30 books. He tried to harmonize mysticism and obedience to the *shari'a*, but criticized "pantheists" and "Muslim splinter groups" as heretic and "polytheistic," even issuing a *fatwa* (opinion) declaring the pantheists to be infidels (*kafir*). Another scholar, Abdur Rauf al-Sinkili (d.1693) also tried to reconcile "outer knowledge" and "inner knowledge,"

shari'a and Sufism, criticizing the alleged pantheism of Hamzah Fansuri, but reminding his readers of the danger of accusing others of being infidels (Azra 1992: 346–458).

From the early twentieth century Southeast Asia has seen the rise of popular Islamic reformism in both Arabic and local journals. Reformism, the idea of revitalizing Islam in new settings for all fields of life, came from Mecca, but also, especially from the nineteenth century onwards, from the University of Al-Azhar, Cairo. Reformists called for a return to the Qur'an and *hadith*, and the promotion of *ijtihad* (reasoning), rather than *taqlid* (imitation); they believed that Islam was not confined to God–human relationships but included social relationships. In Kelantan, Malaysia, the journal *Pengasuh* (Guidance), written in *jawi*, contained reformist ideas, criticizing pre-Islamic practices such as "witchcraft" and offerings during the harvest, which they saw as signs of Malay "backwardness." It argued for religious reform and hard work, promoting Malay education, ethics, language, history, and politics. These ideas were brought by graduates from Cairo either directly to Kelantan or indirectly, through journals published in Singapore and Penang. Although not read by ordinary Muslims, these journals were influential in scholarly circles, not only disseminating reformism, but also maintaining connections throughout the world of Islam.

Islam and local tradition

The acceptability of Islam in Southeast Asia was due to its ability to tolerate numerous pre-Muslim beliefs and practices. The requirements of conversion varied, but generally converts were expected to fulfill some basic religious duties (prayer, fasting, giving alms, the *hajj*), to abandon pre-Islamic deities, pork, and alcohol, and to be circumcised (Reid 1993: 2: 141). Practices might be more or less strict, but no stories of Muslims destroying temples and statues are reported. Muslim converts were introduced to one God, but kept worshiping older gods, spirits, and ancestors, reflecting the selective borrowing and creative adjustment characteristic of Southeast Asians from the pre-colonial to the present times.

Pre-Islamic cultural legacies such as the *wayang* and the Hindu god Vishnu continued to thrive, co-existing with Islamic elements. Islam succeeded in Java largely because it adapted successfully to the main configurations of pre-existing religions. The Javanese liked the idea of appropriating powers from various, often conflicting, sources. The nineteenth-century version of the *Babad Tanah Jawi* says, "at the time many Javanese wished to be taught the religion of the Prophet and to learn supernatural powers and invincibility" (Ricklefs 1985: 40).

In south Sulawesi (Indonesia), the Bugis had a unique world view, reflected in the epic *La Galigo*, which contains a wide range of knowledge important to the court and villagers, such as the practice of "feeding the gods," a ritual ceremony before marriage. It features several godly couples living in heaven and the underworld, and narrates the activities of these god-rulers, who became the progenitors of the royal families of south Sulawesi. It also contains information on the religious practices and rituals of the transvestite *bissu* priests who acted as shamans, mediating humankind with the world of spirits and gods. As in many other Muslim societies, Bugis believed in multiple gods, practiced shamanism, and believed in Allah. Because the old beliefs were "animistic" and "polytheistic," three *ulama* from Sumatra came to Sulawesi to preach to the court the Islamic doctrine of *tauhid* (Oneness of God), but used a local term for a supreme God and related Muhammad to the *La Galigo* hero Sawérigading. They combined Allah with a local term of nobility, *karaeng* (so it became *karaeng Allah ta'ala*), and introduced the people to mysticism and certain ritual prayers (Koolhof 1999: 366–84).

In such Muslim societies, it is common to find Islamic ritual styles defined as ancient ancestral *adat* (tradition) and local custom lauded as part of Allah's plan for the world. In the

southern Philippines, during the fasting month of Ramadan, while waiting for the midnight meal, Muslim young men make and play with bamboo cannons similar to those found in Christian areas during the Christmas season; after the fifteenth day of the fast some smoke or chew betelnut. In the Malaysian state of Kelantan, traditional practices remained strong, especially in villages and remote areas. Their term for local culture is *adat* or *urf tempatan*, Arabic words that have come to be used for indigenous traditions, in opposition to *shari'a* or *agama* (religion). In south Sulawesi they say, "*adat* is based on *shari'a* and the *shari'a* is based on the Qur'an."

In southern Thailand and northern Malaysia, *adat* commonly refers to different local traditions, the most popular being *wayang*, ritual drama, and indigenous magicians and ritual specialists (*bomoh*). These continue to appeal to the villagers, although strict local *ulama* see them as "un-Islamic." The puppeteers respond that the *wayang*'s message derives from Islamic sources, and performances are often held during Islamic festivals, such as the Prophet's Birthday and the end of Ramadan. Some *ulama* appear ambivalent, condemning the *wayang* as un-Islamic while proudly noting its vitality and significance as a Malay identity marker.

Islam, colonialism, and reformism

The colonial powers – Portuguese in Malacca, Dutch in the Indies, British in their Malay dominions, Spanish and then Americans in the Philippines – shaped the transmission and application of Islam in different ways. Islam served as a source of resistance against "infidel" colonizers in Aceh, Banten, Java, Sulawesi, Sulu, and elsewhere, helping to shape Southeast Asian nationalisms. In the Philippines it was the catalyst for the struggle of the "Moros" (Moors) – Muslims of the south – not only against Spaniards and Americans, but also against Christian Filipinos, seen as their perpetual enemies.

In their Southeast Asian colonies the Dutch and the British had differing effects on Islamic organizations, education, and legal systems. In Malaya the British left the administration of justice among their Malay subjects to sultans, *ulama*, and pre-colonial leaders, treating Islamic jurisprudence as the principal source for legal procedures for Malays. A whole new class of *ulama, imams,* and *qadis* was organized and recognized thanks to British administrative reforms. The Council of Religion in Kelantan was involved in many areas of activity: mosques, cemeteries, *zakat* (alms giving), *waqf* (religious endowment), *nazr* (vows to deed property), and education. With the Sultan's permission, the Council opened a modernist school, Madrasah Muhammadiah, offering subjects in English, Arabic and Malay (Yegar 1979: 93, 212, 249–50). Many of the students continued their education at the prestigious Malay College in Kuala Kangsar, the Penang Free School, or Sultan Idris Training College.

The Dutch, on the other hand, interfered considerably in the administration of justice among their Muslim subjects in the Netherlands East Indies. They codified *adat* law and made it the chief source of legal precedents, thus limiting the domain of Islamic jurisprudence. This divergence in colonial policy has led to significant contemporary differences; for example, the autonomy of the various states of the Federation of Malaysia is much greater than that of the various parts of the Indonesian Republic, especially in Islamic matters. Malaysia has also adopted Islam as the national religion, whereas Indonesia has not.

From the early twentieth century, Muslims in Indonesia were organizationally plural, with the rise of economy-oriented Sarekat Islam (1912), modernity-oriented Muhammadiyah (1912), and tradition-oriented Nahdlatul Ulama (1926) providing alternatives to religiously neutral nationalists and socialists of the time. These organizations were influenced by Middle Eastern Islamic reformism, but their dynamic was local and national. During the Dutch era,

reformism not only transcended ethnic boundaries but also served as a rallying point for anti-colonialism and Islamic nationalism. Modernist involvement in the political sphere challenged the colonial regime, which attempted to restrict "political" Islam while allowing "cultural" Islam.

Muslims in the majority

Despite common concerns, such as a return to the "purity of Islam" and a perception of internal crises and external threats, there are significant differences among Islamist groups in Southeast Asia today. The most widely publicized are the radicals, who emerged because of dissatisfaction with existing Islamic organizations. Factors contributing to their rise included economic deprivation, cultural gaps (e.g., Western vs. Middle Eastern education), and governmental suppression (by the likes of Ferdinand Marcos and Suharto [Soeharto]), which led to disillusionment and frustration. Connections with international networks also played a part; in Indonesia many radical Islamist groups, such as the Army of Holy War, the Front of Islamic Defenders, the Council of Indonesian Islamic Fighters, and the Community of Muslim Brothers of Indonesia, were led by men of Arab descent. *Jemaah Islamiyah* (literally "Islamic Congregation"), linked with Al-Qaeda, has never appealed to many, let alone the majority, because of its violent ideology.

Throughout Southeast Asia, Islamism is commonly associated with Salafism, the idea of returning to the early Muslim tradition, but Salafism is normally religious, rather than political, in orientation. Some Muslims in Indonesia endorse Salafism but support secular parties such as Golkar, the leading party during the regime of President Suharto (1967–98). Other Salafists regard Islam as a purely transnational faith, one that transcends political boundaries. Such pan-Islamism has appealed to a few Southeast Asian Muslims since the nineteenth century; both British and Dutch colonizers worried about its potential threat to their sovereignty. It continues up to the present, as represented by the *Hizbut Tahrir* (Party of Liberation), which speaks of an "Islamic State" or "Islamic transnational leadership" (caliphate), yet does not promote these ideas through participation in domestic politics. Pan-Islamism, however, has never attracted more than minor support, especially since the fall of the Ottoman Empire.

Muslims are the majority in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei, but the relationships between Islam and the state are by no means identical in these countries. Indonesia is neither an Islamic state, nor purely secular, but endorses the Pancasila ("Five Principles") as its state philosophy. There is much debate about whether Malaysia is an Islamic state or a secular state; though the constitution stipulates that Islam is the state religion, it also recognizes religious plurality. Both the Malaysian Federal government and the opposition parties contest each other's politics of Islamization. In Malaysia, religion and ethnicity are closely interwoven; to be Malay is to be Muslim. If a Chinese or Indian wants to be fully integrated into Malay society, he or she must speak Malay and adhere to the Malay religion, i.e., Islam. Brunei is an Islamic monarchy, with Islam as its official religion, but has both Islamic and civil laws.

In Southeast Asia, Islamic law is primarily concerned with private matters (such as marriage and inheritance), with some commercial dimensions, and is generally only applied to Muslims. Although Islamic law was often "localized" by governments, colonial-influenced civil laws and customary laws continued to co-exist with it. Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Brunei, and Singapore all have separate Islamic Courts apart from the national civil courts, and departments for religious affairs in charge of Islamic rituals and calendars, Islamic education, mosques, alms-giving, pilgrimage, and other religious, personal, and familial affairs (Hooker 1983: 160–82). Some Muslims have pushed governments to implement Islamic law

more completely, although they have never succeeded. Recently, with decentr alization and regional autonomy in Indonesia, some provinces and districts adopted the idea of "constitu-tionalizing" Islamic law, though others argue that such an idea has political, rather than purely religious, motives. In Malaysia, the states of Kedah and Trengganu decided to im-plement strict Islamic law, although *shari'a* criminal law has not been enforced, because it contradicts Federal law.

The de-politicization of society during the authoritarian New Order period (1967–98) in Indonesia proved effective in preventing most Muslims from turning to "political Islam" then. Yet after the collapse of the New Order many seized the opportunity to participate in the political process. They learned from moderate Muslim clerics, such as the Egyptian Yusuf Al-Qardhawy, that democracy and Islam were not incompatible. Most Indonesian Islamists nowadays are politically moderate; in the 2004 parliamentary election, their parties consti-tuted about 20 percent of the electorate, but were hardly unified. They are concerned about Islamic international problems, but have not forsaken their Indonesian identity; for most Muslims, to love one's country is part of faith. Events such the American war in Iraq and the Israeli–Palestinian conflict have become major issues, but not in domestic politics, because the Islamists realize that all Indonesians oppose the war in Iraq and reject the Israeli occupation in Palestine.

Mainstream Islam in Malaysia also remains moderate. Then Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi (2003–9) asserted that Malaysia was not taking the path toward extremism, though this claim does not imply an absence of conflict among Muslims. Ethnic prejudices still exist, though government privileges given to Malays – called *bumiputera* (children of the soil) – in the field of education, business, and public administration to bring them up to the level of the other ethnic groups have generally been successful. Differences and prejudices have not turned into social unrest, and since the 1969 riots there have not been any significant racial, ethnic, or religious clashes. When compared to Indonesians, Malaysian Muslims as a group are educationally and technologically more advanced; Malaysia is "Islamic modern" (Peletz 2002: 20–1).

Dakwah movements, such as the Malaysian Islamic Youth Organisation, with the slogan, "Islam first, Malay second," have played an important role in shaping the religiosity of contemporary Malays. The current popularity of headscarves among Malay women, the importance of *halal* (permissible) food, the popular use of Arabic names, and the establish-ment of Islamic banks and universities show an increasing "Islamic hegemony," the outcome of both civil and state Islamization programs. Politically, most Malays (and other Malaysians) support the "National Alliance" (Barisan Nasional), while the Pan-Malayan Islamic Party (PAS) gains its major support in Kelantan and predominantly rural areas. The dominance of the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) within the Alliance assures privileges for Malays. Yet "political Islam" and "cultural Islam" still struggle in Malaysia. There are differences between PAS under Nik Abdul Aziz and UMNO under Mahathir Mohammad (prime minister, 1982–2003), Badawi, and the current prime minister, Najib Tun Razak. Recently, when UMNO promoted "Civilized Islam" (*Islam Hadhari*), claiming that cultural, economic, and scientific approaches to Islam would improve Malay competitiveness and prosperity, PAS leaders challenged this by promoting "Islamic Civilization" (*Hadharah Islamiyyah*), which stresses Islam as the totality of life, a view they insist UMNO has marginalized.

More liberal Muslims also challenge conservatives in Malaysia. Sisters in Islam and smaller non-government organizations have recently tried to promote values such as human rights, religious tolerance, and what they consider substantive religiosity. TV programs and art

performances show a combination of tradition and modernity in the presentation of Islamic themes. Such problems as corruption, vote-buying, moral decadence, and social injustice continue, however, so although the government has thus far played a moderating role in ethnic and religious affairs, it may yet succumb to even stronger Islamist pressures.

One state that retains traditional governance is Brunei Darussalam, still virtually an absolute monarchy. The sultan remains the supreme authority in both politics and religion, and most Bruneians seem to respect his office. The government is controlled by Malays, the economy by Chinese, and many modern projects by Westerners. Brunei has a Department of Religious Affairs that focuses solely on Islam, seen as a means for maintaining the status quo rather than forging radical changes in society. In practice, some of Brunei's policies seem quite conservative, others relatively progressive. Islam is the national religion, but there is a freedom of worship, and some 40 percent of the populace is non-Muslim. The government supports the Palestinian struggle and refuses to grant work permits to any foreigners known to be Jewish. Bruneians are encouraged to don traditional Malay Islamic clothes, yet women are given equal access to most public professions, such as education, police, and the armed forces. Both Islamic law and (British) secular law are used, but Islamic law applies only to Muslims, and offenders are charged in Islamic Courts, most commonly for *khalwat* (intimate contact between unmarried men and women) and violating the fast of Ramadan. *Halal* food laws are strictly enforced. The government constantly emphasizes the need for Islamic piety and issues warnings against Islamic extremism, seen as deviationist and aimed at destroying Bruneians' pure belief. At the same time, there are still *bomohs* reciting spells, healing the sick, and providing charms against evil spirits.

Muslims in the minority

Where Muslims are in the minority, a different picture emerges. In the southern Philippines, southern Thailand, Myanmar (Burma), and Cambodia, Muslims are confronted with choices between integration and secession, compromise or conflict. There is no bridging the chasm between Muslim minorities unwilling to live under non-Islamic rule and majority governments unwilling to relinquish any sovereignty over their domains, but Muslim minorities can and do live peacefully under the rule of non-Muslim authority where religious toleration and plurality are respected.

In the Philippines, Muslim Filipinos' struggle with non-Muslims became more intense after the coming of Spaniards (with their Christian Filipino allies) in the sixteenth century. The Spaniards and the Muslims of the south engaged in centuries of wars: in the early twentieth century, Americans waged military campaigns to pacify the South; since independence, particularly after Marcos declared Martial Law in 1972, the "Moros" have risen up again. Muslim Filipinos are divided into some ten ethnolinguistic groups, differing in languages, degree of Islamization, contacts with the non-Muslim world, dress, and customs. Conflicts also arise from political and economic factors (such as old rivalry between the Sultanates of Sulu and Maguindanao); there are traditionalists and modernists; there are secessionists (who want complete independence), ideologues (who seek justice, equity, and religious freedom), and some just plain outlaws. Broadly speaking, however, the Bangsa Moro ("Moro Nation") has been able to use Islam as a rallying point, differing primarily over the question of whether its goal should be full independence or greater autonomy within the Republic of the Philippines. The intervention of the OIC (Organisation of Islamic Cooperation), which saw the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) as akin to the PLO in Palestine, has complicated the situation, but Malaysia, representing the OIC, played an important role as broker in

the most recent (2012) settlement with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, which carried on the struggle after the MNLF accepted semi-autonomy.

Muslims in southern Thailand are another ethnic minority fighting to preserve their identity. Malay society in Thailand is economically underdeveloped and isolated from the Buddhist mainstream; it sees itself as part of a great Malay community in Southeast Asia and the Islamic world. The Thai government and the Muslims have yet to work out a balance between preserving national unity and celebrating ethnic and religious diversity. Since the seventeenth century, Thai kings have had Muslim advisors for Islamic affairs, and today Muslims in Thailand have *shaikh al-Islam*, who presides over a national council of Islamic affairs, pronouncing *fatwas*, administering mosques, fixing dates for Islamic festivals, and issuing *halal* certificates.

Muslims constitute just 4 percent of the population of Myanmar, but are ethnically, culturally, and socio-politically diverse. There are four major Muslim groups: Rohingya (on the border with Bangladesh), Panthay (Chinese Muslims), Pashu (Malay), and other South Asians, as well as some Burmese converts (*zerbadee*). Arab, Persian, and Indian traders might have reached Burma as early as the eighth century, but historical records can be traced back only to the fifteenth century, when Muslims often served as court officials. British rule helped South Asian Muslims to migrate to Burma, but under Burmese rule (and "Buddhist nationalism") many of them felt discriminated against; they were denied citizenship through the 1982 law on national races and suffer restrictions on such Islamic activities as the *hajj*. The Rohingya, in particular, have long demanded ethnic, religious, and civic rights and territorial autonomy (Lambrecht 2006: 23–29). More recently, the Rohingya have continued to suffer from what Amnesty International consider human rights violations under the Burmese military rule, raising Islamic solidarity around the world and provoking international calls to address the issues of refugees and citizenship.

In Cambodia, Muslim minorities, mostly Chams, have struggled to practice their religion amidst political upheavals, such as the genocide by the Pol Pot regime during the period 1975–9; belief in Allah was not compatible with submission to the Angkar, the supreme organization of the Khmer Rouge. Today, however, they live more harmoniously in a Buddhist milieu. They have mosques, *imams*, schools, and teachers from different backgrounds, including Cairo, Medina, Kelantan, and India, and have asked assistance from the Islamic world through organizations such as the OIC.

Singapore, once the center for Islamic publication in Southeast Asia, shows how Muslim moderates can exist in a secular environment. The Constitution of the State of Singapore of 1963 stated that the government should exercise its functions in such a manner as to recognize the special position of the Malays, the indigenous people of the state. With its highly urban character and predominantly Chinese population, Singapore became Southeast Asia's most thriving entrepreneurial state and a global communications center by the early 1990s, though this was done at some cost in personal liberties and stringent controls on the media. Some 68 mosques now stand as important bulwarks of Muslim identity and community integrity. Though their main function is as places of prayer, many mosques also have *madrasahs* and pre-school centers and provide diverse educational, social, and economic services.

Muslim communities in Singapore tend to be moderate in their religious beliefs and practices and progressive in economic and social behavior. The Union of Singapore Islamic Teachers posits that it is obligatory to obey a non-Muslim leader officially appointed via a democratic and legal process in matters that do not contradict the religion and the principles of universal justice, while the Council of Islamic Religion in Singapore articulates a vision of "a community of excellence that is religiously profound and socially progressive." Most Singaporean Muslims oppose radicalism and terrorism; as one (Malay) woman said,

We as Muslims should not be defensive about the misperceptions linking Islam to terrorism; it is our responsibility to explain that Islam has nothing to do with terrorism; if the terrorists claim themselves as Muslims they have misinterpreted some of the Koranic verses; but for us the terrorists are not truly Muslims because the meaning of Islam itself is peace.

Hassan 2003: 3

Conclusion

Islam in Southeast Asia today is to a large extent the product of its history – spread more by words than by warfare and generally accommodating of global and local traditions. It was brought to the region by preachers, traders, and teachers from different origins over many centuries, which resulted in the emergence of various strands, mystical and legalistic, traditionalist and modernist. Sufism eased the acceptance of Islam among local peoples, while *shari a*-minded teachings led to more strict observance. In the contemporary era, Southeast Asia has seen more Islamic popular preaching, mass education, and book translations from the Middle East and South India, contributing to the greater pluralism of Islam. Broadly speaking, Islam in Southeast Asia from its origins to the present has tended to be moderate, in the sense that radical ideologies and violence do not constitute normal realities. Muslim majorities have provided some freedom of religion to non-believers, while conflicts between Muslim minorities and other majorities, Buddhist or Catholic, have been more political than religious. Radical ideologies, such as the pan-Islamic caliphate movement, have also emerged, but have attracted few followers, since most Southeast Asians tend to be pragmatic and realistic, and mainstream and some liberal Muslims have arisen to respond to Islamism, thus creating more colorful and dynamic Islam.

Muslims in Southeast Asia may be divided between Islamists who see Islam as a total way of life, and others who see Islam more as a cultural religion than a political ideology. Fragmentation has become the norm; the resolution of such divergence is still unknown, but we must be wary of attempts to judge from afar. In Indonesia, for example, a vocal, aggressive minority on one hand, and a passive, silent majority on the other have misled outsiders into regarding Islam as moving inevitably toward radicalism. In the Philippines, Islam has become the focus of international concern, because of the struggle of the "Moros" against what they view as oppression and colonialism – yet as of this writing, a fragile peace between the national government and the Muslim South is in place again. Islam in Southeast Asia is forever both global and local; we can only wait and see how these tendencies will work themselves out.

References

Ali, Muhamad (2006) "Transmission of Islamic knowledge in Kelantan," *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 79, 2: 39–58.

Andaya, Leonard Y. (1981) *The Heritage of Arung Palaka: a history of south Sulawesi (Celebes) in the seventeenth century*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.

Azra, Azyumardi (1992) "The transmission of Islamic reformism to Indonesia: networks of Middle Eastern and Malay-Indonesian 'ulama in the seventeenth and eighteenth century," PhD dissertation, Columbia University.

Drewes, G.W.J. (1985) "New light on the coming of Islam to Indonesia," in Ahmad Ibrahim, Sharon Siddique, and Yasmin Hussain (eds.), *Readings on Islam in Southeast Asia*, 7–19, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Fealy, Greg and Hooker, Virginia (eds.) (2006) *Voices of Islam in Southeast Asia: a contemporary sourcebook*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Geertz, Clifford (1968) *Islam observed: religious developments in Morocco and Indonesia*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1968.

Gowing, Peter G. and McAmis, Robert D. (eds.) (1974) *The Muslim Filipinos*, Manila: Solidaridad Publishing House.

Hassan, Muhammad Haniff b. (2003) *Muslim . . . moderate . . . Singaporean*, Singapore: PERDAUS and Al-Khair Mosque Management Board.

Hooker, M.B. (ed.) (1983) *Islam in South-east Asia*, Leiden: E.J. Brill.

Ibrahim, Ahmad, Siddique, Sharon, and Hussain, Yasmin (eds.) (1985) *Readings on Islam in Southeast Asia*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Koolhof, Sirtjo (1999) "The 'La Galigo': a Bugis encyclopedia and its growth," *BKI (Bijdragen Koninklijk Instituut)* 155, 3: 362–87.

Lambrecht, Curtis (2006) "Burma (Myanmar)," in Greg Fealy and Virginia Hooker (eds.), *Voices of Islam in Southeast Asia: a contemporary sourcebook*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies

Majul, Cesar Adib (1985) "An analysis of the 'genealogy of Sulu'," in Ahmad Ibrahim, Sharon Siddique, and Yasmin Hussain (eds.), *Readings on Islam in Southeast Asia*, 48–57, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Milner, A.C. (1985) "Islam and Malay Kingship," in Ahmad Ibrahim, Sharon Siddique, and Yasmin Hussain (eds.), *Readings on Islam in Southeast Asia*, 25–35, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Peletz, Michael G. (2002) *Islamic Modern: religious courts and cultural politics in Malaysia*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Reid, Anthony (1993) *Southeast Asia in the age of commerce, 1450–1680*, vol. 2: *Expansion and Crisis*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Ricklefs, Merle (1985) "Islamization in Java: fourteenth to eighteenth centuries," in Ahmad Ibrahim, Sharon Siddique, and Yasmin Hussain (eds.), *Readings on Islam in Southeast Asia*, 36–43, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Riddell, Peter G. (2001) *Islam and the Malay-Indonesian World: transmission and responses*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

Woodward, Mark R. (1989) *Islam in Java: normative piety and mysticism in the Sultanate of Yogyakarta*, Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press.

Yegar, Moshe (1979) *Islam and Islamic Institutions in British Malaya, 1874–1941*, Jerusalem: Magnes Press.