

Panel: Islamic daily practices and popular culture in Southeast Asia

(Organized by Susanne Schröter and Susanne Rodemeier)

Rodemeier, Susanne (Germany: Goethe-University Frankfurt) *Islam on Java or Javanese Islam: Negotiating the principals of living in social harmony* (rodemeier@em.uni-frankfurt.de)

My hypothesis is that following the ‚return of religion‘ in post-secular societies a ‚return to tradition‘ has begun to set in. In the long run the lines of tension and conflict will not be adequately circumscribed by the dichotomy ‚the West and the Rest‘. Instead new actors will begin to take on important roles among ‚the Rest‘, roles that set them critically not only against the ‚West‘ but also against certain currents ultra-conservative, Arab-inspired Islam. In consequence, various currents of reformist Islam will gain importance, currents that draw their strength from (indigenous) tradition. Whether this ultimately amounts to the formation of an influential counter movement or even has the potential to become such a movement is the question to which I turn in presenting my case material taken from the Javanese city of Jogjakarta.

Jogjakarta was chosen as a site to do field research, because it was here that the form of mystical Islam, long referred to as *kejawen* but today more often referred to as ‚Javanese-ness‘, had profound impact on local engagements with tradition, religion and politics and has served to emphasize actors‘ rootedness in a culturally specific, Javanese form of Islam. According to my informants, living in the Javanese way pursues the ideal of a life in social harmony. This includes tolerating other peoples‘ religious practices, be it as Muslim or as member of another religion.

In my talk I will focus on multiple social negotiations from the *kejawen* point of view. Nowadays it is not an easy task to define the own *kejawen* position. A follower of *kejawen* regards himself as being rooted in the local tradition, being a religious person, and at the same time, being modern. Furthermore, Muslim followers of *kejawen* are under considerable pressure as they often have to justify their practices when challenged last but not least by reformist Muslims. My talk will be a presentation of a work in progress. I will begin by outlining my findings concerning what is regarded as specifically Muslim in Javanese daily private life, as well as in important public communal events. The main focus will lie on those activities which are meant to strengthen the Javanese ideal of living in social harmony without conflicts. I will analyze these findings in relation to my special interest concerning the way Javanese Muslims fulfill their ideal of being religiously tolerant. Among the questions pursued are: Which groups are asking for tolerance? Who is being accused of intolerance? What measures are undertaken to strengthen the Javanese ideal of harmonious, conflict-free co-existence?

Nef, Claudia (Switzerland: University Zürich) *Mobilization strategies of different Islamic student organizations in Indonesia* (Claudia.Nef@access.uzh.ch)

Recent scholarship on religion and media has examined the constitutive role played by modern technologies in forming religious practices through different ways of mediation. The question of how religious movements use media as part of their religious practice, as well as how media constitute the religious individual as well as society, have been subject to debate. A growing body of scholarship provides insights into how religious individuals and communities are formed and emphasise new opportunities for them to discuss their viewpoints in public due to easier access to electronic mass media, but also because of reduced production costs of print media. These studies have also highlighted that religious movements face increasing challenges in their identity construction and presentation, as the public space is becoming more contested.

The question, however, how different religious movements, adhering to the same religion, construct their identities in competition with and relation to other groups, received less attention. The primary aim of this paper is to fill this research gap by revealing dynamics at work inside the Islamic community. By drawing on almost two years of fieldwork between 2005 and 2009, I seek to examine the formation of Islamic identities of different Islamic student organisations active on the campus of the renowned Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

Modern media technologies open new ways for self-representation and identity construction, causing more diverse, and at the same time less clear-cut cleavages between different organisations, for example in the specificity of their every-day practices and discursive forms. In my paper I argue that Islamic student activism in Indonesia is not disappearing, as recently suggested by some scholars, but is taking on new forms. New media technologies provide different possibilities to articulate themselves in public, to embrace a political role, and hence change the patterns of Islamic student activism.

Schröter, Susanne (Germany: Goethe-University Frankfurt) *Covering the aurat and hiding women's beauty? Islamic gender norms and fashion practices.* (suschroet@aol.com)

Veiling and Islamic dresses are defined as a duty for pious women in current Islamic discourses. Being convinced of the Qur'anic order that the believing women should lower their gaze and guard their modesty more and more Southeast Asian Muslim women feel uncomfortable wearing blue jeans and t-shirts in the public. They started wearing *jilbab* or *hijab*, long skirts and sometimes even gloves, socks and the *niqab*, instead. However, far from covering their beauty they just change the style of showing their feminine charms. An expanding Islamic beauty industry, Islamic lifestyle magazines and Islamic guidebooks subvert the idea of invisibility and protection into a new sexy dress code.

With my paper I examine how Islamic moral discourses are transformed through consumerism and how gender norms are challenged and reformulated through practises.

Angeles, Vivienne SM. (USA Philadelphia: La Salle University) *Piety, Fashion and Consumption among Malay and Filipino Muslimah* (angeles@lasalle.edu)

Malaysia and the Philippines were affected by the Islamic resurgence of the mid-1970s which, in turn reinvigorated not only the practice of Islam but also the sense of belonging and identity of Philippine and Malay Muslims. Although constituting the majority in Malaysia and a significant minority in the Philippines, Muslim women in both countries have been increasingly manifesting their Muslim identity through the use of the Islamic dress.

In the case of the Philippines, Muslims before the 1970s were mainly confined to the southern parts of the country and represented tribal communities with their own ethnic clothing that reflected their respective tribes. However, with the growing labor export especially to Saudi Arabia that has introduced many Filipinos to Islam, there is a rising number of converts who not only take the religion but also use the Islamic dress as defined by Saudi Arabia. Many converts and traditional Muslims are now using the *abaya* and *hijab*.

To the Malays, Islamic revival and political developments in the country have contributed to the growing popularity of the use of the Islamic dress. Their Islamic dress however is not an "import" as is the case in the Philippines, but rather, reflects the evolution of the Malay dress to conform to the Malaysian Muslim interpretation of Quranic verses and the Sunnah on modesty.

This paper will do the following: first, look at the evolution of the Islamic dress in Malaysia and the Philippines. Second, explain how changes in the preferred mode of dress by Malay and Philippine *Muslimah* have generated new patterns of consumption and at the same time given rise to a new fashion sense that include the use of accessories, and third, demonstrate how this evolving mode of dress is perceived by both Malay and Philippine Muslim women as identity markers. These developments have contributed to the growth of a sector of the fashion industry that caters to Muslim women.

Research for this paper was conducted in the Philippines and Malaysia as part of a project on visual expressions of Islam.

Becoming Muslim: Interfaith marriage and conversion to Islam in Malaysia

The numbers of conversions to Islam are increasing not only in Malaysia. Muslim converts or 'new Muslims', called *saudara baru* (new brother/sister) or revert in Malaysia, face numerous difficulties upon converting to Islam. Since Islam is not only contested and politicized in Malaysia, but has become a point of worldwide interest, they are entering a highly debated field. In the West, Islam has taken over the symbol of the 'other', formerly occupied by Communism during the cold war. Not only in the West but also among non-Muslims in Malaysia prevails the stereotype of 'all Muslims are terrorists'.

In today's Malaysia religion and ethnicity are highly contested. Not only prevails a permanent obsession with 'race' that is claimed to be the heritage of British colonialism, but race is also connected to religion in the Malaysian context. The Federal Constitution of Malaysia defines a Malay as a Muslim and this led to the perception of Islam being associated largely with the Malay community. Furthermore, Malaysian Islamic law restricts a Muslim only to marry a Muslim and thus non-Muslims have to convert to Islam before marrying a Muslim. Since Islam is most commonly associated with the Malay community, non-Muslim parents, either Chinese or Indian, would object to their children embracing Islam. The 'dinosaur-like' perception of *masuk Islam* = *masuk Melayu* (entering Islam equals entering Malayness) still prevails in the minds of some non-Muslims.

The sociological understanding of conversion (Wohlrab-Sahr 1999) would not include those new Muslims who embraced Islam in order to get married. According to Wohlrab-Sahr, conversion includes taking over a new paradigm in the sense of a radical transformation of the worldview which has tremendous consequences for the social identity of the person and is often connected to a crises in life.

In my paper I would like to discuss the personal consequences of religious conversion as well as the specific Malaysian context. The editor of the Malaysian magazine *Off the Edge* claimed that nowadays 'Two Malaysias' exist, the Muslim Malaysia and the non-Muslim Malaysia. A convert is thus not only leaving his former religion when embracing Islam. I argue that after converting they will find themselves somewhere in between the Muslim and the non-Muslim Malaysia. My aim is to look at this 'hybrid' space that converts are entering.

Lit.:

Off the Edge (2010), *This is about power not faith*, Issue 61, January 2010.

Wohlrab-Sahr, M. (1999), *Konversion zum Islam in Deutschland und den USA*, Frankfurt/New York: Campus Verlag.

Hardjana, Antonius Ario Seto (Germany: Goethe-University Frankfurt) *Celebrating the Chaos: Campursari as a Case Study of Cultural Reproduction in a Post-Authoritarian Society. A study of Javanese Islamic Society in Indonesia.* (seto_hardjana@yahoo.com)

Besides its heterogeneity, one of the general descriptions of Javanese society that could be inferred from a study of its literature is its strong Hindu background that is now fused within the majority group of 90 percent Muslims. This is also reflected in the debatable classic classification generated by Geertz (1976) that identified the division of Javanese society into three broad continua of *santri* (religious group), *abangan* (Hindu-Islam syncretism), and *priyayi* (nobility). This general description strongly correlates to the daily life practices of the society, including music.

Local traditional music in Java has always been associated with *gamelan*. Gamelan was described by Jaap Kunst (1891-1960), an early scholar on the subject of Java, as a music that is not only melodious in the sense aesthetical beauty, but also a contemplative medium of preaching, teaching, and magic and classified as an enjoyable event, attached to life-ritual celebrations as a medium of contemplation and reflection on the ideals and norms of life.¹ The development of gamelan itself mainly took place in the two major Javanese court cities, Yogyakarta and Solo.

Although hybrid culture is not a new subject in Southeast-Asian culture given its location between India and China, among Javanese cultural products, *gamelan* orchestras are considered to be the original form of local production (Sumarsam, 1995).

Debates within Javanese society arose about whether the new music is a development of Javanese music or a violation of the aesthetical standard of Javanese music. It has been argued by musicians and cultural studies scholars that *campursari* performances have less sophisticated aesthetical standards or even more classified as moderate instead of sophisticated or refined. On the other hand, many scholars, especially social scientists, view the music as a representation of cultural liberation vis a vis cultural hegemony that stretches into hundreds of years of history.

To summarize, the debates surrounding *campursari* lies on two axes. One criticizes *campursari* and its performances for its immorality, unrefined culture and playful hybrid mass culture. The other believes that it is a liberating music that rest in a position where all stakeholders of the culture can participate. While history shows that sensuality and hybrid cultures are not new facts in Javanese society, the notion of *campursari* as a liberal culture is also trapped within the discussion of the political insensitive mass culture. As music could be considered a representation of society (Frith, 2004), assessing the phenomena of *campursari* becomes gains significance in attempts to understand the social dynamics of Javanese society. Whilst it is a new development resulting from previous musical development in Java, the subject(s) of *campursari* also exists as a cultural artefact representing social change in society.

Previous research on *campursari* hardly considers the involvement and reception of the user (audiences, listeners, *campursari* players) and underestimates the importance of their explanation as an emic perspective. Therefore this research would raise a general question: How does the Javanese society observe this matter? What does *campursari* actually represent? To answer those general questions the thesis will evaluate these questions:

1. How does the *user* view and evaluate *campursari*?
2. How does the *user* view the practices within *campursari* and its relation to daily life? Is there a decoupling between morality-religious conduct and cultural guidance on one hand and daily practices on the other? What are those practices?
3. How does the user perceive sexuality? Is it a commodity? Or it is a resurrection of Javanese tradition? What does it mean for their lives? What does this mean for women?
4. Is *campursari* a new form of cultural liberation?

What correlates the new music in Java with the factual social change?

¹ In Hatch, Marty. "Towards a More Open Approach to the History of Javanese Music." In *Indonesia* 27(Apr.), 1979: 136.

Pamungkas, Arie Setyaningrum (Germany: Humboldt University Berlin) *The Dakwah media in post Suharto Indonesia: From Politics of Identity to Popular Culture (The Case of Ummi)*. (arietia@yahoo.com)

The emergence of the dakwah media in post Suharto Indonesia remarks not only the rebirth of Islamism as a socio-political consequence from the downfall of the Suharto regime in 1998, but also indicates the call for dakwah for a broader audience through the work of media as a profit-making industry. Hence, the increasing popularity of new form Islamic media is achieved through the adoption of pop culture as its main strategy for not only gaining a nationwide readership but also political constituencies.

Prior to 'Reformasi' – the reform era, some of the dakwah media operated underground and used to be community-based media associated with the tarbiyah movement in 1980-1990s embracing the ideology of neo-salafism especially which is taken from the Ikhwanul Muslimin influenced by Hasan Al-Banna thoughts. After the fall of Suharto, the tarbiyah movement have appeared in social and political movements shown by the emergence of various Islamist groups, e.g: Laskar Jihad, Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), Front Pembela Islam (FPI), Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI) etc. There is also one Islamic Political Party, Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (PKS) which is born from the tarbiyah movement. The dakwah media such as 'Ummi' has helped to establish constituencies for the tarbiyah movement particularly which ideology supports the political agenda of the establishment of the Daulah Islamiyah (Islamic State) in Indonesia.

Under the Suharto period, Ummi appeared as the first radical Islamic magazine targeted women and youth as readership. The propaganda made by Ummi adressed not only against the Suharto's policy especially which affected family as a core social unit but also encouraged the readers to join in the political community of the dakwah movement called the 'halaqoh'. During this period, the dakwah call made by Ummi was aimed at preparing political constituencies through the introduction of the marhalah dakwah (the dakwah strategy) to built a community based on the identity of neo-salafism (Ikhwanul Muslimin). From 1989 to 2001 Ummi had been strictly applying the Hijab culture (the Shari'a sexual segregation) in which women were disanvantaged from the media appereance and males were dominant in the media production. It is shown by the fact there was no female representation in the Ummi visualisation during that period.

Surprisingly since 2001 up to now Ummi has appeared as more less radical compared to other Islamist magazines and thus achieved more readership. By adopting pop culture and referring to other 'secular' female magazines Ummi began the efforts of popularizing Islamic symbols which accommodate the ideological values aims at concerning 'public morality' against what is considered as the negative impacts of globalization in Indonesia. It can also be said that the birth of other media products based on the genre of Islamic pop culture in recent Indonesia is directly or indirectly facilitated or influnced by Ummi. One famous example is the Forum Lingkar Pena, the community of Islamist writers who produce pop Islamist publications through novels (including chicklit, teenlit) where publications are available in the mal bookshops everywhere in Indonesia.

By studying Ummi, it is interesting to locate gender in the discourse of politics of identity in which issues of public morality are the center of competing claims towards the representation of national identity in recent Indonesia. It is also interesting to trace the representation of Ummi as the dakwah media as an iconic product of popular culture in the framework of postnationalism.

Budiyanto, Ary (Indonesia: UGM Yogyakarta) *Consuming Islamic Images. The politics of contemporary Indonesian Islamic culture industry.* (yrelief@yahoo.com)

What explanation that one may see the booming of Muslim outfits industry that more and more trendy? Here and there, we are seeing Islamic clinics that offer Islamic herbs and supplements for our health. A services that popularly known as prophetic medicines (*al-tibbun al-nabawi*). Islamic cosmetics shop, beauty salon spa exclusively for Muslim girls, to various trainings on popular psychology that offering solution our Islamic motivation and personality (MQ Management, ESQ) are in everyday newspapers ads. There on may join trainings and services of Islamic spirituality such as *Ruqyah, Shalat Khusus, or Sufism class*. Islamic banking services, integrated Islamic school system (*Sekolah Islam Terpadu*), the Islamic book publishers and publishings, Islamic cinematic films, Islamic music industries, and Islamic mass media products in internet, print, radio, and TV programs), all of its today is obvious kind of Islamic industry that bustle, compete, and sell well along with the 'secular' products. For secular criticist scholars that always refer to Karl Marx's thesis (1976: 319-322), may see this phenomenon of "Islamic industrial products as a form of obvious practice of religious commodification. These commodity products are clearly a capital product and in its turns it will persuade the fetishism attitude of the consumer. Indeed, this Islamic commodity products are produced, distributed, and consumed not just for its utility value but also filled with others values: i.e.: identity, faith solidarity, piety, or even spirit and militancy of Jihad and dakwah or propagation. This article analyzes further this everyday consumption behavior of contemporary Muslim Indonesian through the lenses of Theodor W. Adorno and Horkheimer on *mass mentality* and *culture industry* and Jean Bauderillard idea of *individual in consumer society* within the field of Islamic culture industry of Indonesia.