




Religion in Southeast Asia



**AN ENCYCLOPEDIA
OF FAITHS AND CULTURES**

SUNAN KALIJAGA
YOGYAKARTA

Jesudas M. Athyal, Editor

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STATE ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY
SUNAN KALIJAGA
YOGYAKARTA

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An Encyclopedia of
Faiths and Cultures



JESUDAS M. ATHYAL, EDITOR



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Communication, the Office of Laity, the Office of Theological Concerns, the Office of Education and Student Chaplaincy, the Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, the Office of Evangelization, the Office of Clergy, and the Office of Consecrated Life.

The Central Secretariat of FABC is located in Hong Kong and the Documentation Centre in Bangkok. The Documentation Centre plans to house and preserve all books published by the FABC as well as dissertations and other publications referring one way or the other to the Federation. The FABC Documentation Centre includes a conference room that can seat about 40 persons, a library and several small offices.

The FABC has a rich history of action and reflection in Southeast Asia. During the last four decades, the organization has produced a wealth of pastoral documents that stresses the importance of the local churches, enculturation and dialogue. The FABC documents repeatedly stressed "the triple dialogue"—with the poor, with local cultures, and with local religions. According to Stephen Bevan, the organization has yielded an impressive body of documents that are incredibly rich, amazingly visionary, and truly worth careful reading and study. As best they could and as often as possible, the Asian bishops wrote that successful evangelization requires building local churches upon local cultures, languages, and practices. In Southeast Asia, the FABC is involved in the difficult task of being a Christian organization that is also sensitive to the challenges of the pluralist context and yet seeking to meaningfully participate in the efforts to build a just and participatory society.

Jesudas M. Athyal

See also: Calungsod, Pedro; Christian Conference of Asia; Christianity; Contextualization; Iletto, Reynaldo C.; Interreligious Relations and Dialogue; Jesuits; Religion and Society; Ruiz, Lorenzo; Sin, Cardinal Jaime Lachica.

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FEMINISM AND ISLAMIC TRADITIONS

In the midst of the emergence of a democratic society and the growing influence of Middle Eastern Islam in Southeast Asia, the Southeast Asian Islamic feminists are proposing a new paradigm and concepts about gender equality in Islam.



Indonesian Muslim students take part in a rally in Semarang, Central Java, on September 4, 2014, to mark World Hijab Day. During World Hijab Day, Muslim women foster religious tolerance and understanding concerning why Muslim women wear hijab. (WF Sihardian/NurPhoto/Corbis)

Indeed, they criticize the gender ideology that was promoted by the New Order as well as Islamists or *Salafi* revivalist groups. In addition, they argue that Islam could be a source of gender equality if Muslims interpret religious texts properly and contextually. If not, it might be possible that Muslims' understanding of the Islamic texts will create further gender problems in Southeast Asia.

The contemporary notion of Islamic feminism emerged in the early 1990s in various locations around the world, including in Indonesia, contemporaneous with the growth of Western literature on women in Islam (Badran 2005). There are various definitions of Islamic feminism. In the Indonesian context, Sinta Nuriyah Abdurrahman (as cited in Doorn-Harder 2006) posits herself as a feminist who considers *Pancasila*—the official ideology of the Indonesian state, which means “five principles”: monotheism, humanitarianism, unity, democracy, and justice—and Islamic belief to be the foundations of her actions. She states that: “I am a feminist according to Indonesia’s state ideology of *Pancasila*. That means that I base my action on my belief as a Muslim . . . My goal is equality between men and women, because it says in the Qur’an that men and women are each other’s helpers” (Doorn-Harder 2006, 37).

One research finding reveals that Indonesian Islamic feminists encourage women not only to be active members in the public sphere, but also to keep harmonious and happy families. Imbuing a family with blessing, democracy, and love for each other is among the goals of Indonesian Islamic feminists (Jamhari and Ropi 2003).

Furthermore, this research showcases Indonesian Islamic feminists' struggle for equality in public life and equipollence in domestic life (Jamhari and Ropi 2003).

When discussing feminism and religious traditions in Islam, the terms "Islamic feminist" or "Muslim feminist" should be called into question. According to Cooke (2001), "Islamic" is more relevant than Muslim, because "Islamic feminist" suggests an Islamic tradition being considered by feminists, whereas "Muslim feminist" may simply refer to feminists who embrace Islam but do not necessarily practice its tenets. Cooke further describes an "Islamic feminism" as "a particular kind of self-positioning that will then inform the speech, the action, the writing, or the way of life adopted by someone who is committed to questioning Islamic epistemology as an expansion of their faith position and not a rejection of it" (Cooke 2001, 59–61).

Muslim feminists debate the terms "Islam" and "feminism"; that is, whether or not the heritage of Islam is compatible with feminism, or whether a person can combine the Islamic belief with feminist conviction at one and the same time. The debate connects with the historical polemic between the Islamic world and the West, which sees some people perceiving that feminism is West-based and that Islam has its own values. Debate focusing on the compatibility between "Islam" and "feminism" shapes the formation of self-identity among gender activists in Southeast Asia, for example, referring to themselves as "feminists." According to Doorn-Harder (2006), young Indonesians who may have worked with nongovernmental organizations and have been influenced by Western feminists are more comfortable being called "feminists" than members of the older generation: "Younger women who are active in NGOs call themselves 'feminists.' What exactly the term 'feminist' means is not always clear. Many Indonesians and women . . . [of the] older generation are not comfortable being called feminists—it calls up images of western supremacy, individualism, and selfishness" (Doorn-Harder 2006, 36–37).

Saparinah Sadli, one of the older-generation activists, said: "I am reluctant to use [the term] Indonesian feminism because I am not sure that we have developed an Indonesian theory of feminism" (Sadli 2002). However, she refers to Musdah Mulia, who is younger than Sadli, as an "Indonesian Islamic feminist" (Mulia 2005). In the Indonesian context, reluctance to be called a feminist derives from the stigma attached to the feminist label. Feminists manifesting leftist (Communist) or liberal tendencies are seen as promoting individualism, selfishness, and immoral behavior such as free sex (Doorn-Harder 2006): they are thought to be anti-men and sympathetic toward lesbianism (Sadli 2002).

Whatever their identity—feminist or nonfeminist—people assume that Muslims who are feminists should consider the religious texts, the Qur'an and Hadiths, as resources in their discussions. Since Islam has a fundamental role in Muslim society, its proponents might fail to promote gender equality if feminists fail to first consider the Islamic paradigm, norms, and values in their struggle or works. Non-Muslim scholars such as John Esposito and Miriam Cooke too maintain that discussion about women and gender in Islam has to be situated within an Islamic paradigm (Cooke 2001; Esposito and Mogahed 2007).

As a matter of strategy, Muslim feminists employ historical and hermeneutical approaches to justify their understanding of gender equality. The historical

approach establishes a social, intellectual, and religious space wherein it is possible to deconstruct gender inequality interpretation. The hermeneutical approach allows Islamic feminists to find the true message in Islamic texts focusing on the context in which the text was written, the grammatical composition of the text, and the worldview of the text (Wadud 1999).

Muslim feminists believe that Islamic texts respect both men and women equally and that they are the source of gender equality. They argue that many Muslims understand gender equality in the texts inappropriately, because they have interpreted them exclusively from a male perspective for centuries. The Muslim feminist scholar Asghar Ali Engineer (1992), in his book *The Rights of Women in Islam*, asserts that the Islamic feminist movement is an action of putting back justice between the sexes as respected in the era of the holy Prophet Muhammad. For this reason, employing hermeneutical and historical approaches, Muslim feminists tend to reread the texts emphasizing notions of equality and justice in men's and women's roles in the society, seeing them as "complementary and egalitarian rather than hierarchical and unequal" (Afsaruddin 1999, 23).

Prominent gender activist and Islamic scholar Nasaruddin Umar, in his work *Qur'an untuk Perempuan* (the Qur'an for Women), argues that when people read the Qur'anic verses addressing gender issues such as polygamy, inheritance, witnesses, reproductive rights, women's right to divorce and the public role of women, they will gain the impression that these verses are misogynistic. However, if people scrutinize them more closely, using "the analytic methods of semantics, semiotics and hermeneutics, and paying attention to the theory of *asbab nuzul*" (the reason why the verses were revealed), they will see that these gender verses are part of the process of creating justice and that the texts do not discriminate against women (as cited in White 2006).

In the Malaysian context, women activists from late 1945 joined with men against the British government's proposal for future colonization. They had moved from "the relative seclusion of their families and their home to involvement in national life" (Manderson 1980, 1). As a result, several women were appointed to the State Council in Johor, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, and Perak in the 1950s (Manderson 1980). However, this achievement was rejected by some sections of the Muslim community by saying that women and girls were forbidden to be active in public events. Radical demands made by women for reformulation of *shari'a* (Islamic laws) were swiftly set aside. Religious feminists, including Sisters in Islam, took part in the establishment of the National Women Coalition (NWC) in 1992 (Ng, Mohamad, and Tan 2006). In 1999, *Reformasi Era* women's groups, including an Islamic organization through WAC (Women's Agenda for Change), launched 11 demands (women's charter) ranging from land to sexual rights (Ng, Mohamad, and Tan 2006).

Alimatul Qibtiyah

See also: Aisyiyah and Nasyyiatul Aisyiyah; Bhikkhuni, Dhammananda; Indonesia; Malaysia; Oka, Gedong Bagus; Santo, Ignacia del Espiritu; Sexuality; *Shari'a*; Sisters in Islam; Women; Women's Monastic Communities.

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FREEDOM OF RELIGION

Freedom of religion is a concept that supports the freedom of an individual or group to practice, worship, and believe in public and private. Today, the concept is strongly associated with human rights. Throughout history, the idea of religious coexistence has been institutionalized and practiced in different ways. Related concepts, mostly stemming from religious backgrounds and condemning deviance, are apostasy, blasphemy, and heresy. In its human rights-based conceptualization, religious freedom includes the right to determine one's own religion and the right to leave a religious group. Many consider it a fundamental right. In contemporary Southeast Asian countries, controversial political debates evolve around different interpretations of this right, often regarding the situation of religious minorities but also members of religious communities who are considered deviant either by the state or by politically powerful groups.

Ideas of religious coexistence have a long history. Well-known examples are the Achaemenid Persian Empire around 550 BCE, in which Cyrus the Great encouraged the practice of local customs and religious freedom and the Edicts of Asoka. Asoka the Great protected freedom of religious worship in the Maurya Empire in the third century BCE. Muslim tradition evokes the Covenant of the second Caliph Umar, the Constitution of Medina, and tolerates non-Muslims through the concept of *dhimmi*,

In recognition of his distinguished contributions, he was awarded a number of honors, among which are the Harry Benda Prize, the Ohira Prize, the Philippine National Book Award, and the Fukuoka Asian Culture Prize. In 2012, the Ateneo de Manila University conferred the prestigious *Gawad Tanghal ng Lahi* award on Ileta in recognition of his contributions to the study of Filipino cultural and social life.

Julius Bautista

See also: Christianity; Colonialism; Education; Morality; Nationalism; Orientalism; Philippines; Postcolonial Theory; Singapore; Study of Religion.

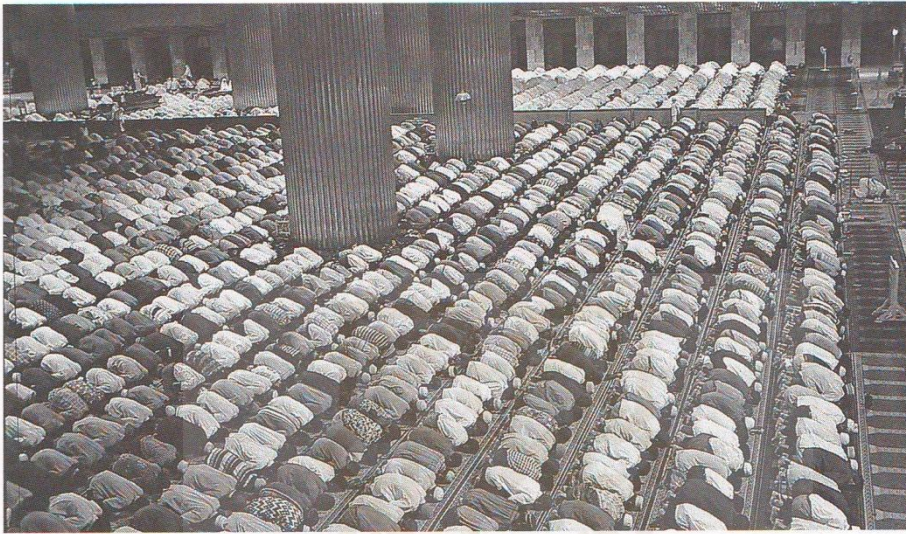
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INDONESIA

The Republic of Indonesia (*Republik Indonesia*) is a country in Southeast Asia, straddling the equator whose capital city, Jakarta, is the most populous city in Southeast Asia. Its neighbor to the north is Malaysia, and to the east is Papua New Guinea. The country has approximately 17,000 islands, of which 6,000 are inhabited; 1,000 of these are permanently inhabited, according to the U.S. Department of State. The country has 33 provinces with over 206 million people in 2000; this increased to 238 million in 2010, of which 51.17 percent are male and 49.83 percent female. Indonesia is the world's fourth-most populous country after China, India, and the United States. The population distribution of the larger islands are: the island of Sumatra, which covers 25.2 percent of the entire Indonesian territory and is inhabited by 21.3 percent of the population; Java, which covers 6.8 percent of the territory and is inhabited by 57.5 percent of the population; and Papua which covers 21.8 percent of the territory and is inhabited by 1.5 percent of the population.

Indonesia is the country with the largest Muslim population in the world—203 million adherents. Indonesia is followed by Pakistan (174 million), India (161 million), and Bangladesh (145 million). During the last three decades of 1971–2000, Muslims have increased in population. The percentage of Muslims



Muslims bowed in prayer at the Istiqlal Mosque in Jakarta. Over the last several decades, the Muslim population has steadily increased in Indonesia. (hasim/iStockphoto.com)

increased from 87.51 percent in 1971 to 88.22 percent in 2000. The percentage of Christians has also increased, from 7.39 percent in 1971 to 8.92 percent in 2000 (Suryadinata et al. 2003). The other religious groups, according to the 2000 census, are Hindus, 1.81 percent; Buddhists, 0.84 percent; and others, 0.20 percent (Suryadinata et al. 2003). Indonesia is a multiethnic society with more than 1,000 ethnic/subethnic groups, but only 15 of these groups reach more than 1 million. The two largest ethnic groups, based on the 2000 census, are Javanese, 41.71 percent; and Sundanese, 15.41 percent. These are followed by Malay, 3.45 percent of the total population; Madurase 3.37 percent; Batak, slightly more than 3 percent; and Minangkabau, 2.7 percent (Suryadinata et al. 2003). Indonesia's national motto, "*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*" ("Unity in Diversity"; literally, "many, but one"), articulates the diversity of ethnicity and cultures, and the understanding of religion that shapes the country.

Pribumisasi Islam (Indigenization of Islam) is an attempt to de-ideologize Islam and locate it within the framework of the pluralistic Indonesian society. With *pancasila* as the national ideology, every socioreligious group has equal right to contribute to the Indonesian state and society with their own values. In this connection, Islam should be one of the complementary components of the state, and Muslims should develop a national consciousness. *Pribumisasi* encourages the understanding of Islam in accordance with the local context. It affirms that religion that meets the contemporary demands will not be uprooted from the Indonesian culture and tradition.

Bambang Budiwiranto

The popular belief systems in Indonesia before the arrival of Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity were animism and dynamism, which believe that all creatures such as mountains, sea, stone, trees, and human beings have soul and power. Such power sometimes is useful and sometimes is dangerous. Hinduism was introduced to Indonesian at around the second century by Indian traders. Sri Agastya is one of the known leaders who introduced Hindu to the community. The Kingdom of Kutai in East Kalimantan is proof that the influence of Hinduism had existed in Indonesia since the fourth century. Since the eighth century, Hinduism developed in Bali, and until today, Bali is known as the island of gods. The Prambanan temple is one of the known Hindu temples in Yogyakarta. The golden age of the Hindu-Javanese civilization was during the Majapahit Kingdom in the fourteenth century.

Buddhism was brought to Indonesia around the fourth century when Indian traders arrived on the islands of Sumatra, Java, and Sulawesi. Around 423 CE, Monk Gunawarman came to Java to spread Buddhism. One of the known kingdoms that embraced Buddhism was Kaling or Ho Ling which had a woman queen, Ratu Sima. The world's largest Buddhist monument, Borobudur, was built by the Kingdom of Sailendra, and around the same time, the Borobudur temple also was built. The temple is considered one of the "Seven Wonders of the World." Many tourists, not only Buddhists or Hindus but also other religious adherents, come to visit these temples every year.

There are several theories about when Islam was introduced to Indonesia. One of them is that Islam came to Indonesia in the seventh century, and it gives the evidence that there is a trader community from the Arab region in Baros village at the coast of North Sumatra. Further, the first kingdom run by Muslims, at around the ninth century, was in Perlak (Hasmy 1993). Another theory explains that Islam came to Indonesia from Gujarat in India, and yet another states that the religion spread through the west coast of Sumatra and then developed to the east in Java in the thirteenth century. This period saw kingdoms being established with Muslim influence, namely Demak, Pajang, Mataram, and Banten. By the end of the fifteenth century, 20 Islam-based kingdoms had been established, reflecting the domination of Islam in Indonesia until the present time, although some of these kingdoms do not have any power. Today, the majority of Muslims live in Java and Sumatra, which comprise almost two-thirds of the total Indonesian population. Around 98 percent of Muslims in Indonesia are Sunni followers. There are other sects such as Syiah and Ahmadiyya.

Woodward (2001) argues that the current phenomena of Indonesian Islamic thought can be classified into five variants: (1) indigenized Islam, in which a group formally identifies itself as Muslim, but in practice, tends to syncretize religion with local cultural systems; (2) the traditional Sunni Islam of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), which highlights the classical, legal, theological and mystical texts, and whose adherents usually come from *pesantren* (Islamic boarding houses) and rural areas and accept a local culture as long as Islamic values are not contested; (3) the Islamic modernism of Muhammadiyah, which concentrates on modern education and social agendas and rejects mysticism, and whose adherents are mostly from

the urban areas; (4) Islamist groups, which promote a highly politicized and anti-Western interpretation of Islam, whose discourse centers on *jihad* and *shari'a* law, and who are most commonly found on university campuses and in large urban areas; and, (5) Neo-modernism, which tries to discover an Islamic foundation for many types of modernity including tolerance, democracy, gender equity, and pluralism, and whose adherents are concerned more with Muslim values and ethics than with the law. NU was established in Surabaya in 1926 to strengthen traditional Islam. This organization is seen as traditionalist due to its being supported by people in the rural areas. *Pesantren* in this classification refers to NU-affiliated *pesantren*. It has a membership of approximately 40 million (Saeed 2005). Muhammadiyah is an Indonesian Islamic organization representing a reformist socioreligious movement and advocating *ijtihad* (creative interpretation of the Qur'an and Hadith). The movement, founded in 1912 by Ahmad Dahlan in the city of Yogyakarta, is one of the two largest Islamic organizations in Indonesia and has 30 million members (Saeed 2005). Although the leaders and members of Muhammadiyah are often actively involved in shaping the politics in Indonesia, it is not a political party

In terms of the way Indonesian Muslims understand religious texts, there are three categories: literalist, moderate, and progressive/contextualist. The literalist category usually tends to have literal and conservative ideas and to represent Islamist groups. The last category, the progressive/contextualist, refers to the "liberal" orientation, of which the majority of followers are neo-modernist. The moderate category spans the position between the other two. The term "progressive/contextualist" refers to the neo-modernist orientation that usually employs a contextual approach and has a liberal progressive orientation. According to Abdullah Saeed, neo-modernists espouse three dominant ideas:

First, neo-modernists assert that the Qur'an was a text revealed at a certain time and in a certain context and circumstances, which it reflected and responded to. This idea de-emphasises the total "otherness" of the Qur'an that the classical tradition stressed so strongly. Second, they argue that the Qur'an is not exclusively a book of law but an ethical-moral guide, with both particular and universal dimensions. The particular dimension is limited in scope and is essentially a reflection of the context in which the Qur'an was revealed: the cultural, historical and legal aspects directly related to the situation in Arabia at the time. The universal dimensions are related to areas that are not bound by [the] specific context of seventh-century Arabia. The third idea relates to [the] emphasis that classical Muslim scholars placed on certain aspect of the Qur'an, and which neo-modernists argue should be re-thought. (Saeed 2005, 9)

The Neo-modernists, who are committed to the idea that the worth of a human being is measured by the person's character (Safi 2003), argue that Muslims need to learn and adopt Western advances in education, science, and politics to strengthen and modernize the Muslim community. Neo-modernism combines knowledge and respect for classical learning with receptivity to modern ideas, including Western influences (Barton 1995). Progressive Muslims have produced a growing body of literature that reexamines Islamic tradition and addresses pluralism issues on both theoretical and practical levels (Esposito 1998). They argue that a

needed (Esposito 1998). Based on their philosophies and strategies, it may be suggested that *pembaharuan* (the movement toward the renewal of Islamic education, doctrine, and practice in order to make them more participatory and inclusive for Muslims in the contemporary society) is closely allied to the philosophy and strategies proposed by activists in the gender equality movement in Indonesia. It is important to note that in this context, the affiliation to various organizations and the orientation of people's thought do not always coincide. For example, not all people from NU or the Muhammadiyah organization have moderate orientation.

Like other religions, Christianity, both Catholicism and Protestant, was also brought by immigrants, specifically the Portuguese, Dutch, and English, starting from the sixth century. The main areas of mission were in eastern Indonesia, such as in Maluku, North Sulawesi, Nusa Tenggara, Papua, and Kalimantan. Later, Christianity spread from the coastal ports of Borneo, and missionaries arrived among the Torajans on Sulawesi. Parts of Sumatra were also targeted, most notably the Batak people, who are predominantly Protestant today (Aritonang 2004). Three provinces in which Protestants make up more than 90 percent of the population are Papua, Ambon, and North.

In terms of the country's basic religious condition, *pancasila*, belief in the one and only God, is the first principle of Indonesia's philosophical foundation. According to the law, the Indonesian constitution guarantees freedom of religion as stated in Article 29: "(1) The State shall be based upon the belief in the One and Only God, (2) The State guarantees all persons the freedom of worship, each according to his/her own religion or belief." However, the government recognizes only six official religions (Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism). The law requires that every Indonesian citizen hold an identity card that identifies that person with one of these six religions. Indonesia does not recognize agnosticism or atheism, and blasphemy is illegal. Because of that, religious values and the interpretation of religious texts are quite influential aspects on the country's political, economic, and cultural life. In 1965, there was a conflict between the Indonesian government and the Indonesia Communist Party in which thousands of people were killed. One of the results of this tragedy was that President Suharto issued the New Order law, according to which every citizen has to have an ID card that mentions their religion. This policy impacted on the increasing number of people who converted to one of the six official religions.

Since independence, Indonesia has had the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA), which has the responsibility for tolerance among religious adherents as well as their practices. Many of the state religious schools and universities are under MORA management. At the nongovernmental level, the country has *Majelis Ulama Indonesia* (MUI) or Indonesian Ulema Council. MUI's members consist of representatives from religious organizations such as NU, Muhammadiyah, Syarikat Islam, Perti, Al Washliyah, Math'laul Anwar, GUPPI, PTDI, and DMI dan Al Ittihadiyyah. Lately, MUI issued a fatwa about "deviant sects" such as Ahmadiyya and syiah, creating discrimination in the society against these organizations. Another tragedy happened on August 2012, when the local community attacked and burned the residence of a Syiah's follower. Two people were killed and hundreds lost their

houses in that event. Yet another tragedy was the terrorist bombing on October 12, 2002, at a nightclub in Bali that killed more than 200 people, mostly tourists.

Alimatul Qibtiyah

See also: Ahmadiyya; Animism; Atheism/Agnosticism; Buddhism; Christianity; Communism; Hinduism; Islam; Localization of Hinduism in Indonesia; Muhammadiyah; Nahdlatul Ulama; Oka, Gedong Bagus; *Pesantren*; *Shari'a*.

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INTERRELIGIOUS RELATIONS AND DIALOGUE

Most of the Southeast Asian nations have one religion as a significant majority with a scattering of other religious traditions. Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei, for instance, are dominated by a large Muslim majority, whereas Thailand and Indochina are predominantly Buddhist in character. The Philippines is mostly Roman Catholic, with a significant minority of Muslims in the island of Mindanao. Further, in all these countries, there are a number of tribes that follow their tribal religious heritages that have not received the national recognition they deserve. In most of these countries, religious and ethnic identities are closely related so that interreligious issues also become interethnic issues.

By and large, Southeast Asia has had interreligious harmony for much of its post-colonial history. More recently, however, the use of religious or ethnic identities for political purposes has resulted in tensions and conflicts. In response, governments

There were periods of time in Southeast Asian history when religious traditions living side by side in mutual respect and tolerance was taken for granted. But the advent of religions with exclusive claims and evangelistic zeal, and the increased use of religious sentiments for political ends have radically changed the situation, calling for conscious efforts to promote interfaith relations and dialogue.

S. Wesley Ariarajah

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MUSLIMAT NU

Muslimat Nahdlatul Ulama (Muslimat NU) was established on June 15, 1938, as part of the women's wing of Nahdlatul Ulama, but officially Muslimat NU was validated by Muktamar NU (National Congress of NU) in 1946. Muslimat NU became autonomous from the NU organization in 1952. Its vision is the existence of a society that is committed to the welfare of all in Indonesia, that is inspired by Islamic teaching and that also has Allah's blessing. The goals of Muslimat NU are to increase Indonesian women's awareness as Muslims and as Indonesian citizens; to improve the quality, independence, and devotion of women; to increase women's awareness of their duties and rights according to Islam; and to support NU's goals. The adherents of this organization mostly come from the *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) in Indonesia, and geographically, the majority are grounded in rural areas (Jamhari and Ropi 2003). One of the important achievements of Muslimat NU after gaining autonomy in the 20th National Congress in Surabaya was that the organization challenged the *pengadilan agama* (religious court) that had discriminated against women in cases of polygamy, divorce, and inheritance. In 1959, Muslimat NU succeeded in removing the *tabir* (physical partition) between men and women in the National Congress (Jamhari and Ropi 2003). In the first election in 1955, 10 percent of the NU members in the Parliament were women from Muslimat NU. Another contribution was that in 1969, Pimpinan Besar Syuriah NU (the supreme religious leadership in NU) decided the main principles of family planning in Indonesia as recommend by Muslimat NU.

One of the well-known activists of Muslimat NU, Khofifah Indar Parawansa, was the minister of Women's Empowerment of Indonesia during the presidency of Abdurrahman Wahid. In response to the United Nations' declaration of the Decade for Women and because of the demands of the local feminist nongovernmental organizations, she changed the name of the ministry from "Mentri Peranan Wanita" (Ministry for the Roles of Women) to "Mentri Pemberdayaan Perempuan" (Ministry of Women's Empowerment). This meant that she shifted the paradigm from women as objects of national development to women as subjects of national development. The most significant contribution of Parawansa as minister was the Presidential Instruction on gender mainstreaming in national development. Gender mainstreaming is a major strategy to ensure that women and men gain equal access to, and participate equally in development (Surbakti 2012). This instruction, which applies to all ministries, armed forces, police forces, high courts, heads of local governments, and heads of all government agencies, aims to mainstream

gender in the planning, formulating, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating of all national development programs. Together with other NU affiliate organizations such as Fatayat NU, Rahima, and FK3 (Forum Kajian Kitab Kuning), the Muslimat NU is deeply committed to the gender issue.

Alimatul Qibtiyah

See also: Aisiyyah and Nasyyatul Aisiyyah; Education; Feminism and Islamic Traditions; Indonesia; Islam; Muhammadiyah; Nahdlatul Ulama; *Pesantren*; Reform Movements; Religion and Society; *Shari'a*; Women.

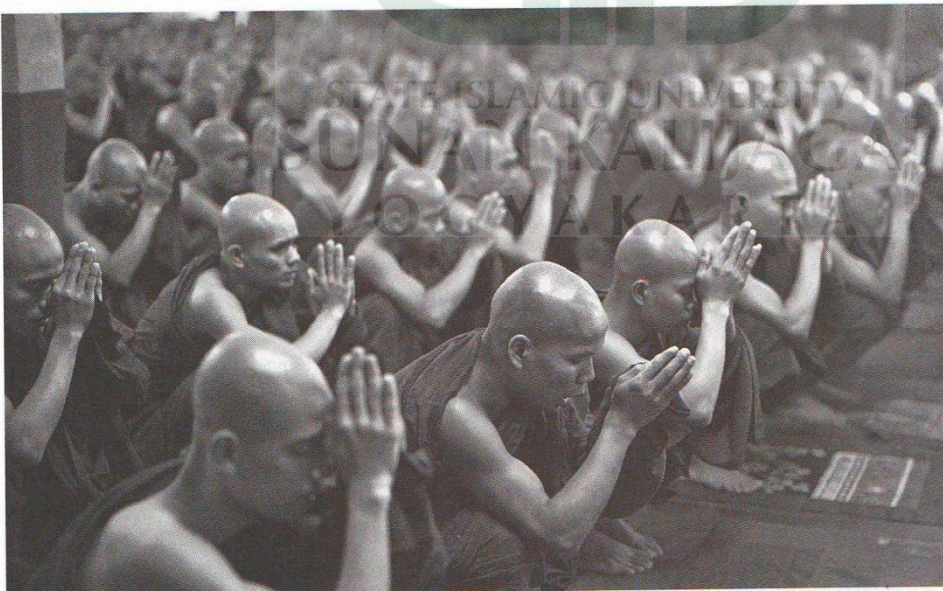
Further Reading

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MYANMAR (BURMA)

Myanmar (Burma) is a Southeast Asian country that borders India, Bangladesh, Laos, Thailand, and China, a country Rudyard Kipling described as a land quite unlike any other. The land Marco Polo referred to as “The Golden land,” a land of legend, golden pagodas, and glorious temples, has recently drawn global media attention resulting from the people’s response to authoritative military rule,



Burmese monks pray together at Kha Khat Wain Kyaung monastery, which is one of the three largest in the country, on December 13, 2011 in Bago, Myanmar. Approximately 90 percent of the Burmese population practices Buddhism and the monks number well over 500,000. (Paula