



NUS-USPC Collaborative Project
Intersecting Mobilities: Southeast Asia from
the Perspective of Religious Mobility

Workshop on
**Muslim Networks and Mobilities
in Southeast Asia**
1-2 March 2018



Institute of Religion, Culture, and Peace
Payap University
Hotel Sugar Cane, Chiang Mai



CONTACT DETAILS

Convenors

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This two-day workshop on the historical and contemporary dynamics of Muslim networks in Southeast Asia is part of the broader comparative exploration of religious networks in Asia supported by a collaborative grant awarded by NUS and Université Sorbonne Paris-Cité. It is hosted by Irasec (Research Institute on Contemporary Southeast Asia, Bangkok), and Payap University Chiang Mai. The main objective of this workshop is to examine how the circulation of Muslim scholars (*'ulama*), Islamic learnings (*madrasah*, *pesantren*), books (*kitab*s), mystical brotherhood (*sufi/tarekat*) teachers and other institutions established by Islamic communities in the region since the 16th century that played a fundamental role in shaping regional networks of education and *da'wa* (Islamic propagation).

Studies on the networks of Islam in Southeast Asia remain heavily based on the intellectual history of Muslim scholars, printed culture and also hajj (pilgrimage), despite there are many other Islamic institutions, such as *waqfs*, and schools. Yet the perspective of these studies are conventional models focused on unidirectional flows between centre and periphery that locate Southeast Asia exclusively at the receiving end of Islam.

We aim to contest the way in which *'ulamas* and pilgrimage (*hajj*) have been conceived as the preeminent domains for the study of religious circulation in the context of Islam, turning the focus to the important role played by schools, mosques, *waqf* estates, orphanages, hospitals, and other institution that expanded the far-reaching networks of Islam in the region. As there is no increase in mobility without extensive systems of immobility, focusing on these institutions in Southeast Asia can offer an original interpretive lens to understand the importance of these nodes for the circulation and teaching of Islam.

Turning the research lens toward aspects of mobility and materiality, the workshop aims to offer a dynamic approach to the study of Southeast Asia Islam into multidirectional and circulation, which are limited in number. We also wish to explore the impact of technology as well as digital technology on Islam and the creation of increasingly networked Muslim societies of the 20th and 21st Century; as well as the complex financial and real estate arrangements that Islamic institutions embark on to sustain their projects toward the future. An approach to this project is from the perspective of religious mobilities highlight patterns of interaction where networks redefine arrangements of economic, social and religious life.

The workshop will combine contemporary ethnographic approaches with comparative historical research to trace the intertwining of transnational religious networks made possible by Islam in Southeast Asia. Contributions emphasize how technologies of mobility and networks that enable circulation made possible the historic consolidation of Muslim communities across the region, and are currently shaping the future of Islam in Asia.

THURSDAY, 1 MARCH 2018

10:30 – 11:00 WELCOME TEA & INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Suchart Setthamalinee, Institute of Religion, Culture, and Peace, Payap University, Thailand

11:00 – 12:30 PANEL 1

CHAIRPERSON **Suchart Setthamalinee**, Payap University, Thailand

11:00 Cross-Border Muslim-Community Networks:
Newly-Arriving Rohingya Displaced Migrants Entering into the Thai-Burma Borderland

Kunnawut Boonreak, Chiang Mai University, Thailand

11:30 Forced Mobilities in Southeast Asia and Representations of Islam:
A Case Study of the Rohingyas in Malaysia

Louise Perrodin, Université Paris-Est, France

12:00 Questions & Answers

12:30 – 14:00 LUNCH

14:00 – 16:00 PANEL 2

CHAIRPERSON **Claire Thi Liên TRAN**, IRASEC- Research Institute on Contemporary Southeast Asia, Thailand

14:00 Muslim Mobilities in Southeast Asia:
A Case Study of Chinese Muslim in Northern Thailand

Suchart Setthamalinee, Payap University, Thailand

14:30 Inclusive Dakwa through Humanitarian Activism?
Network of Islamic Charities in Southeast Asia

Amelia Fauzia, National University of Singapore

15:00 Interfaith Brokers and Entrepreneurs Internationalized Muslim Activists
and the Global Representations of Indonesian Islam

Delphine Allès, IRASEC- Research Institute on Contemporary Southeast Asia,
and Université Paris Est, France

15:30 Questions & Answers

16:00 – 16:30 TEA BREAK

16:30 – 17:00 COMMENTARY

17:00 END OF DAY ONE

FRIDAY, 2 MARCH 2018

10:00 – 12:00 PANEL 3

CHAIRPERSON **Amelia Fauzia**, National University of Singapore

10:00 *Not Just a House to Honour God:*
via Skype Mosques in the Malay World as Cosmopolitan Sites
Khairudin Aljunied, National University of Singapore

10:30 Hadrami Printing and Publishing Networks in Southern Thailand in the 21st Century
Holger Warnk, Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany

11:00 Questions & Answers

11:30 – 12:00 COMMENTARY

12:00 END OF WORKSHOP

Cross-Border Muslim-Community Networks: Newly-Arriving Rohingya Displaced Migrants Entering Into the Thai-Burma Borderland

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After the latest wave of Rohingya migrants arriving into Thailand in 2012, two hundred Rohingya have been reported living indiscernibly in Mae Sot town in Tak province, which is Thailand's one of the large and economically vibrant border hubs. The Rohingya migrants in this city have been helped by the networks of local Muslim community, which has facilitated their entry and stay in the town. Once the migrants decide to stay for a long term, they need to find jobs to survive. To be employed legally, the migrants need to procure work permit, however, newly-arrived Rohingya people lack legal documents and therefore are unable to secure work documents from the Thai government. The already established Rohingya community members assist the newcomers in finding jobs in cross-border trade sector. With assistance from local Muslim networks, the newcomers could illegally work as wage labourer at warehouses in Rim Moei Port, where most of the warehouses' owners are Pakistani and Arakanese Muslim.

I investigate the cross-border trade communities in this dynamic border town, by focusing on how being Muslim (who share the same religious practice and languages of Bengali and Burmese) has become a social capital for the newly- arrived Rohingya migrants and has further strengthened the cross-border networks of both the new migrants and established local communities. I argue that within the borderland context, where the sovereign power of the Thai State is not absolutely dominant, the local influences could challenge the formal (Nation-State) rules related to migration and work- permits. For instance, government officers and Muslim businessmen are willing to help and find jobs for the migrant Rohingya in Mae Sot. Sociocultural capitals as shared languages and religion are crucial elements that have enabled Rohingya (displaced) migrants to survive and integrate into the dominant or local society.

Kunnawut Boonreak is a PhD student in Social Sciences at Faculty of Social Sciences, Chiang Mai University, Thailand. He earned his MA in Social Sciences and Development from Chiang Mai University, through the partial scholarship of SEASREP Foundation. He is also a journalist and ethnographic filmmaker concerning ethnic minorities and transnational migrants. His research interests include Muslim minority from Myanmar in transnational context of migration.

Forced Mobilities in Southeast Asia and Representations of Islam: A Case Study of the Rohingyas in Malaysia

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Rohingya communities in Malaysia emerged in the early 1990s and have been building up since then. Even though many Rohingyas have been in the country for about 30 years, their representation remains that of a migrant, mobile population. The activation of Rohingyas networks between Malaysia, Myanmar and Bangladesh has been fueling a representation of protracted refugee population, partly to legitimize Rohingya's own presence in Malaysia. But the forced mobility of the Rohingya has also been mobilized by Malaysian political figures as a powerful tool to position themselves regarding other Muslim countries in Southeast Asia and beyond. In particular, this paper proposes to examine Malaysia's position relating to the Rohingya issue within the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. The extraordinary OIC meeting on the situation of Rohingya, convened in Kuala Lumpur in January 2017, may suggest an attempt on the part of Malaysia to take a more significant part in this intergovernmental faith-based organization. In this context, this paper explores how politically-constructed representations of a Muslim population's forced migration are mobilized to shape the international representation of Southeast Asian and particularly Malaysian Islam as inclusive. Thus, this paper explores the distinctiveness of forced mobility's influence on the organization, mobilizations and representations of Muslim networks in Southeast Asia.

Louise Perrodin is a PhD candidate in political science at the University of Paris-Est, France. She holds a research Master in political science and international relations from Sciences Po Paris. In her research, she focuses on international norms relating to the right to asylum based on the Malaysian case study.

Muslim Mobilities in Southeast Asia: A Case Study of Chinese Muslim in Northern Thailand

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The Muslim *Hui* in Yunnan, southwestern of China, has a considerable reputation for excelling long-distance commerce between Yunnan and Southeast Asia. In late 19th century, the large number of Muslim Hui migrated from Yunnan, to Burma and then settled in northern Thailand. However, the study of Chinese Muslim in northern Thailand is rare and has long been marginalized. This study will show how the identities of Chinese Muslim have been transformed when they moved across their homeland and how they connected some common culture with both their homeland and host society while strong hold of Islamic teachings from various mobilities. The study attempts to explore the diversities and transformation of Chinese Muslim identities in northern Thailand because of Islamic movements and mobilities of Islam in this regions during the past few decades. As a result, the construction of Chinese Muslim identities has divided into three major groups from different centers: China-Hanafi Muslim; India-Tabligh Jamaat; and Saudi Arabia-Salafi/Wahabi Muslims and each group has its own religious boundary.

Suchart Setthamalinee is the head department of Peace studies at Payap University, Chiang Mai and is a specialist of Muslim studies. He received his MA and PhD degree in Sociology from University of Hawai'i. His most recent books are entitled *Muslim Youths and in the Modern World* (ed 2015); and *In the Name of Islam: A Survey of Islamic Teaching on Peace, Violence, Family and Woman* (2017). His current researches focus on the case study of Uyghur in Xinjiang. He also serves at the sub-committee of the National Human Rights Commission for Southern Regions Affairs and is deputy director of Wasatiyah Institute for Peace and Development, The Sheikhu Islam Office of Thailand and vice president of the Islamic Committee of Chiang Mai.

Inclusive Dakwa through Humanitarian Activism? Network of Islamic Charities in Southeast Asia

Amelia Fauzia

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Disasters and humanitarian crisis unfortunately bring suffering, hardship, human loss and large-scale destruction. However, some of them may later offer blessing impact on peace building, development, and network in humanitarian activism. Disasters such as the Aceh tsunami (2004), the Mt Merapi eruptions (2006), Rohingya crisis (2012-) have indirectly encouraged and endorsed Muslim charitable organisations into an era of internationalization. Since the early twentieth century, the level of engagement of Muslim charitable organisations with NGOs and agencies from foreign countries has been massive, especially in terms of interactions with their fellows in Southeast Asia. They further take part in fundraising and relief assistance in other countries and establish regional and international associations as well as collaborations in advancing the practice of zakat, waqf, and humanitarian relief. The networks created as a result of such interactions are fluid, dynamic, multi-layered and 'cross-cutting,' including between state agencies, state-based Islamic charitable organisations and non-state Islamic charitable organisations.

This talk looks at the question of the role of humanitarian activism by Islamic charitable organizations and networking their created in Southeast Asian region. How faith/religion should be performed within humanitarian relief and development work? The talk is limited to the networks created by Indonesian organizations of Islamic charities during the last two decades. It shows that dakwa has been implemented in humanitarian activism which later drive the Muslim mobilities in the region and beyond.

Amelia Fauzia is a visiting senior research fellow at the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore. She is lecturer at Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University in Jakarta. Her research focuses on religion, movements and social change, specifically looking at the relationship between state and civil society. Dr Fauzia received her PhD from the University of Melbourne (2009) where she analysed the state and Muslim civil society through the practice of Islamic philanthropy. She has conducted research on philanthropy, democracy, women and disaster relief on Islam in Indonesia, and Southeast Asia more broadly. Among her publications are *Faith and the State, a History of Islamic philanthropy in Indonesia* (Brill, 2013) and 'Penolong Kesengsaraan Umum: Muhammadiyah charitable activism during the Colonial period Indonesia', *Journal of Southeast Asia Research* (2017).

Interfaith Brokers and Entrepreneurs: Internationalized Muslim Activists and the Global Representations of Indonesian Islam

Delphine Allès

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The global and local representations of Southeast Asian Islam are closely interrelated with the political and institutional contexts within which they are shaped. This observation is blatant in the recurring promotion of Southeast Asia as home to a “peaceful”, “moderate”, “tolerant” or “inclusive” brand of Islam. Indonesia and Malaysia have been the main sponsors of this narrative, in a global context marked by the salience of religious interpretations of world politics and the promotion of “moderate” religion as a solution to global disorders.

This context has provided ground for the international emergence of local religious activists, who take part in transnational debates over the contribution of religions to peace and reconciliation. Often co-opted by national governments, such actors take part in an increasing number of interfaith dialogue initiatives gathering religious leaders, civil society activists, academics as well as representatives of governments or international organizations. Their interactions contribute to the emergence of a category of interfaith dialogue entrepreneurs and globe-trotters, who travel to promote their conceptions of religion and peace. These actors also act as “norms brokers” between the local and global spheres of governance. Their transnational inscription increases their local momentum, while their connection with local contexts and civil societies contribute to the international recognition of their legitimacy.

This paper will address this process through the perspective of internationalized Muslim activists from Indonesia. It will look at individual trajectories to understand how a specific sphere of interfaith dialogue entrepreneurs has emerged, which skills or networks they mobilize to be recognized as legitimate dialogue partners, and how their activities contribute to transform the representation of Islam at home and abroad.

Delphine Allès is a professor of Political Science at the University of Paris-Est, France, and a research fellow at the Research institute on Contemporary Southeast Asia (IRASEC). She specializes in non-Western approaches of international relations and the interactions between international relations and religion. Her most recent book is entitled *Transnational Islamic Actors and Indonesia’s Foreign Policy. Transcending the State* (Routledge, 2015).

Not Just a House to Honour God: Mosques in the Malay World as Cosmopolitan Sites

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This paper argues that mosques are not just devotional places but also projections of the cosmopolitan outlook of Muslims in the Malay world.

This is evidenced, first, in the aesthetics and architecture of the mosques that draw upon so many religious and cultural traditions. I then show how the close proximity between mosques and other places of worship and the sharing of sacred spaces have ensured the continued vitality of cosmopolitanism among by Muslims and non-Muslims in the Malay World. For many generations, mosques have functioned as sites that sustain the spirit of mutual tolerance and cooperation between Muslims and other adherents of other faiths to ensure the safety and welfare of their communities.

Khairudin Aljunied is a tenured Associate Professor at the Department of Malay Studies, National University of Singapore. He specializes on the history of Southeast Asia, covering topics such as the Intellectual History, Religious Cosmopolitanism and Social Movements within and beyond the region. He received his Bachelors and Masters degrees at the National University of Singapore and completed his PhD at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London. In late 2013, he was a Fulbright Visiting Professor at Columbia University, New York. More recently in early 2015, he was a Visiting Professor at the Universiti of Brunei Darussalam (UBD). Dr Khairudin is currently working on two research projects. The first is a study of a renowned Southeast Asian scholar, Hamka, and his ideas on reforming Muslims in Southeast Asia. The second project explores Malay-Singaporean diaspora in Melbourne, London, Dubai and Toronto.

Islamic Printing and Publishing in Southern Thailand: Mobilities of People, Books and Knowledge

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This paper examines the Malay-Arab publishing scene of Patani in South Thailand since the 1930s with particular reference to the printing of religious books. Many of the publishers from Patani are of Hadramaut descent which have migrated and started their business from the 1920s onwards. They keep business networks in Malay-Arabic publishing in Southeast Asia which show similar patterns of Hadrami-Arab efforts all over the Indian Ocean as have been described by Ulrike Freitag, Engseng Ho, Anne K. Bang and others. However, many books seem to have circulated in a far greater range: Most titles currently sold in Patani are reprints and partly even enable the reader to identify where the text was originally published (eg. Cairo, Singapore, Penang). Furthermore the printed works clearly show a multidirectional flow of texts between Bangkok, Malaysia and Java, without allowing to identify a particular “centre” or a “diaspora” in the production of these texts.

Holger Warnk is Librarian since 1993 in the Department of Southeast Asian Studies at Goethe-Universität and has studied Social Anthropology, Southeast Asian Studies and Prehistory. He also works part-time lecturer in Southeast Asian Studies at Goethe University Frankfurt and the University of Passau. His research interests are the social, economic and religious history of colonial Southeast Asia, in particular the fields of education and printing in the Malay Peninsula, Southern Thailand and Indonesia (Sumatra, Moluccas, West Irian).

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