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Michel Picard and Rémy Madinier (Eds.) *The Politics of religion in Indonesia: syncretism, orthodoxy, and religious contention in Java and Bali*. London and New York: Routledge. 2011.

This volume, edited by two French scholars associated with the *École Française d'Étrême Orient* (EFEO) in Indonesia, adds some much needed detail to the grand narrative of religion in this largest Muslim nation-state of the world. Most of the relevant accounts so far have been dominated by speculations over the history of the Islamization process, the role of Islam in resisting colonialism and in post-independence state-building, and present-day challenges of the country's religious pluralism. The present work provides a number of case studies from Java and Bali arguing, that even in this age of the globalized practice of religion, the local performance of ritual and localized manifestations of religious practice still matter deeply.

Subscribing to the thesis that religion is always “mediatized by the state and its religious politics” (p. xi), the editors detail the complexity of Indonesia's religious situation; in the introduction, editor Michel Picard problematizes the use of the Sanskrit-derived term *agama* as the equivalent of “religion.” Criticizing the Eurocentric normative character of the term, he also contends that it lacks descriptive and analytical accuracy, as the term is typically reserved exclusively for scriptural religions with universalist pretences (i.e. Christianity and Islam) and excludes Indonesia's many indigenous belief systems (*kepercayaan*). Specifically, Picard claims that the use of the term *agama* disregards the significance and resilience of indigenous systems of belief and the ways in which such systems have influenced the practices of Christianity and Islam in Indonesia, namely by creating unique, local forms of these “world religions.” For example, says Picard, the enduring indigenous beliefs of Javanism (*kejawen*), when incorporated into the practice of Islam, create a religious performance referred to as *kebatinan*, a local form of Islam that the term *agama* fails to capture. Other forms of co-mingled religious practices similarly influenced by indigenous beliefs emerged in the 1970s under the names *kejiwaan* and *kerohanian*. From the 1980s onward, however, these local manifestations of religion have been challenged as less than “authentic” Islam by traditionalist, modernist—and increasingly Islamist—Muslims. Even these recent developments continue to reflect the – in the eyes of the editors – felicity of the term ‘mystical synthesis,’ introduced by the leading expert on Javanese history, Merle Ricklefs. Whereas Javanism felt the squeeze of both state authority and (self-proclaimed) Islamic orthodoxy in both colonial and post-colonial times, the Balinese fared only slightly better as they managed to receive recognition for their religious practices as *agama*.

The first part of the volume is dedicated to Java and opens with co-editor Rémy Madinier's discussion of the spread of Christianity in the early twentieth century. The narrative revolves around the Jesuit missionary Franciscus van Lith, a staunch advocate of the adaptation of Catholicism to the cultural settings of Java. Van Lith favored an emphasis on Christianity's “animist-Hindu-Buddhist (that is, non-Islamic) dimension” (p. 32). Stressing continuities between religious practices rather than differences, this strategy enabled van Lith to bridge the *Kristen Londo* and *Kristen Jowo* varieties of Javanese Christianity. Opposed to swift baptism of the indigenous population, he focused instead on education and, in particular, the training of a new Catholic elite. In spite of the Church's suspicions of van Lith's “flexible spiritual identity” (p. 43), his approach proved to be highly successful, contributing in no small measure to the saint-like standing he still enjoys among Indonesia's Catholic minority, which attributes its disproportionately large political influence largely to van Lith.

The merging of Islam with local religious practice has not been quite as seamless. Andrée Feillard's “The constrained place of local tradition” examines the discourse of the

largest Traditionalist Muslim organization, *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU), and its effects on Java's Islamization. Feillard depicts the NU as generally attempting to "[underline] continuity" among practitioners of Islam rather than "rupture and confrontation" among them (p. 48). She also tracks the origins of the migration of many traditionalist Muslims back to their indigenous cultures and belief systems (*pribumisasi*) in the 1980s and a similar migration among the Reformists in the 1990s. Her inquiry leads her to issues of the bi-monthly periodical *Berita Nahdlatul Ulama* ("News of the Nahdlatul Ulama" or BNO), published between 1936 and 1939. There, Feillard finds the first evidence of a traditionalist attempt to define Islam, using "a very exclusive definition of religion" (p. 51); the publications also included discussions of the relationship between custom, local tradition (*adat*), and Islamic law, emphasizing a separation between the two (pp. 60-64). Feillard's investigation refines Ricklef's "mystic synthesis" and shows that as early as the 1930s, "the NU was crossed by divergent identity currents," foreshadowing the later tensions between conservative proponents of increased Islamization of law and "post-traditionalist" defenders of the republic's Pancasila doctrine in the early twenty-first century (p. 68).

The contribution by Robert Hefner on Java's syncretic *abangan* sketches the eventual demise of what once was one of the most successful manifestations of "non-standard Islam" to survive into modern times. Hefner attributes the collapse of this religious practice to a phenomenon he refers to as "religionization": a process of transforming local beliefs and practices—in this case Islamic in origin—into a "standardized, textual, and deterritorialized form" of religion (p. 72). He identifies nineteenth- and twentieth-century Islamic reformist movements as well as Indonesia's Ministry of Religion as key players in domesticating the "differentiation of local custom from universal religion, premised on the idea that the former may not supersede the latter" (p. 73). Hefner's analysis draws attention to factors that are both endogenous and exogenous to Islam, including epistemological contrasts between the local and the global, and the impact of centrifugal political processes that superseded local religious organizational structures. This nationalization of *abangan* did not completely snuff out the existence of localized religious practices, however, because on the fringes, breakaway new faiths "known as mystical cults of 'interiority' or *kebatinan*" emerged (p. 83). Aside from repressing centripetal socio-cultural forces, says Hefner, the religionization of Islam was also used as a bulwark against communism and to resist the wave of conversions to Christianity in the 1950s and 1960s. Recently, a counterforce stressing pluralism has been forming among new generations of Muslim intellectuals associated with the higher Islamic education system and centripetal trends in the party politics of post-1998 Indonesia.

The "return of Pancasila" is further explored in François Raillon's investigation of the rivalry between secular and Islamic norms. Due to the "noisy posturing of Muslim radicals" and the "de-Javanization" of Indonesian politics, the present-day "pro-Pancasila" secular camp has so far not received the attention it merits (pp. 92-93). Sketching the history of constitutional challenges to Pancasila since its introduction in 1945, Raillon highlights new threats to the doctrine as a direct result of the efforts of Islamic fundamentalist groups such as *Laskar Jihad* and *Front Pembela Islam* and the pan-Islamic *Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia*, which has been particularly effective in penetrating student circles, as well as the electoral success of the Justice and Prosperity Party (PKS), which calls for a central role for Islam in public life. Although in the 1980s, the New Order Regime had re-affirmed Pancasila as the indisputable state doctrine, it was only in 2006 that a broad coalition of intellectuals and activists asserted citizen support for Pancasila by signing the *Maklumat Keindonesiaan* or "Declaration of Indonesianess." Coming on the back of the condemnation of pluralism, secularism, and liberalism by Indonesia's conservative Ulama council, this was a civic act of defiance, protesting against the erosion of the core principles underlying the national doctrine. In Raillon's interpretation "a growing group of mainstream Indonesians is fighting back against puritanical interpretations of Islam's role in society" (p. 99), resisting what he

even calls the “creeping Talibanization” of Indonesia (p. 97). President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono jumped on the bandwagon by declaring, “Pancasila is final!” (p. 101). According to Raillon, the once domineering doctrine cast in a distinctly Javanese mold is now being refined and reconstructed into a more relativist discourse decentering Javanese culture. The current government system has been also re-engineered and reinvented as a softer version of its predecessor, with an integrative flair that is more accommodative of pluralism. However, at the same time, Raillon says, the pressures of pragmatic politics will continue to require compromise on such lofty principles.

The second part of the volume is dedicated to the exploration of Bali. Whereas contemporary Javanese struggle to respond to deterritorialized Islam, the Balinese faced their own challenge in balancing between the centripetal and centrifugal forces affecting their Hindu beliefs and practices. Returning to the topic detailed in his introduction, Picard discusses the shift from the use of the phrase *Agama Bali Hindu* to *Agama Hindu Bali* among Balinese Hindus during the colonial period. Indeed, the existence of two such close terms, so carefully considered and selected, indicates the extent to which the local Balinese tradition (*adat*) was linked to the practice of religion (*agama*)—in this case Hinduism. Picard concludes that “the inability of the Balinese to dissociate *agama* from *adat* does not stem solely from the polysemy of these terms, but also from the fact that up until then, the Balinese did not regard religion as a bounded field that could be demarcated from other aspects of life” (p. 121). In spite of an emerging consensus among the Balinese, it was not until 1958 that *Hindu Bali* was recognized as *agama* by the Ministry of Religion. However, this was not the end of it. In the course of the 1960s, there was a shift towards the more inclusivist designation *Agama Hindu*, accompanied by an increasing alignment with India, which reached its culmination in the 1990s as a reaction to the Islamic resurgence radiating from Java. This in turn invited a counter current reaffirming Balinese identity and a return to *Agama Bali Hindu*.

The stress on continuity within the Islamic discourses discussed in the first part of the volume is taken up once again in the second part by Andrea Acri, who makes a case for a textual-historical approach to link pre-modern religious discourses to “Balinese Hinduism” (p. 142). This discussion reminds one of the challenges posed to Clifford Geertz’s taxonomy of religion in Java by a younger generation of anthropologists such as John Bowen, Robert Hefner, and Mark Woodward, who advocated an integration of textual studies into ethnography. Acri makes a similar case for the appreciation of texts to dispel the misconception that Balinese Hinduism is all about ritual, by pointing at the rich literary legacy and suggesting an “alternative approach to scripturalization” (p. 149).

Before veteran ethnographer Brigitte Hauser-Schäublin brings the book full circle to Picard’s introduction with a discussion of how political actors on Bali use the terms *adat* and *agama* in the post-Suharto era, Annette Hornbacher’s “The withdrawal of the Gods” offers a fascinating insight into spirit possession. In spite of the decline of the phenomenon, the chapter shows that performance and ritual remain important to our understanding of localized manifestations of contemporary religiosity. The contributions of these German anthropologists also draw attention to the commodification of religion and its manipulation by the Balinese to assert local identity, for example through the *Ajeg Bali* (Bali Stand Up) initiative in the face of regional (Javanese) political hegemony and the global challenges such as radical Islamism.