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The Bureaucratization of Islam and its Socio-Legal Dimensions in Southeast Asia: conceptual contours of a research project

The Bureaucratization of Islam and its Socio-Legal Dimensions in Southeast Asia: conceptual contours of a research project[1]

Dominik M. Müller[2]

Abstract

This paper presents the conceptual contours of the Emmy Noether Research Group project "The Bureaucratization of Islam and its Socio-Legal Dimensions in Southeast Asia". The project views the *bureaucratization* of Islam not simply as a formalization, expansion, and diversification of Islamic institutions, but as a social phenomenon that far transcends its organizational boundaries and informs dynamics of social and cultural change alongside transformations of the very meaning(s) of Islam in state and society. It places the state's "classificatory power" and its societal co-production and contestation at the centre of attention and aims to synthesize functional approaches with hermeneutic modes of analysis. While the bureaucratization of Islam is always embedded in and shaped by power-political constellations and political processes, it simultaneously produces social and doctrinal meanings that are unique to its specific discursive arenas.

The paper first introduces the anthropology of bureaucracy and elaborates on the absence of studies from this field on state-Islam relations in Southeast Asia; it also considers the potential of bringing these two streams of scholarship into a fruitful dialogue. Second, it presents a case study in Brunei, focusing particularly on Islamization policies, the bureaucratization of a national ideology, and their workings on the micro level. Third, the paper moves on to a regional comparison by illustrating how similar matters are treated very differently by Singapore's Islamic bureaucracy, despite partially shared features. After a brief note on methodology, the paper concludes that the presented work, while anchored in Brunei and Singapore, has implications for a wider study across, and potentially beyond the region.

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Introduction

Despite widespread notions that Islam – unlike the Catholic Church – lacks centralized leadership and institutions, there are formalized Islamic hierarchies in various contemporary settings, particularly, but not exclusively, in states where Islam has gained a position of political power. Following the transnational waves of Islamic resurgence since the late 1970s, state-sponsored bureaucracies operating under the name of Islam have become increasingly influential societal actors in Muslim-majority countries where Islam enjoys constitutional status as the state's official religion, such as, for example, Brunei Darussalam (henceforth Brunei), Iran, Morocco, and Malaysia. Bureaucratic influence has also become significant in more "secular"[3]-oriented countries like Indonesia, Singapore, and Turkey, where state actors have empowered state-funded "administrative" bodies in diverse ways to guide and influence Islamic discourses and regulate matters of religion and morality in the public sphere in accordance with their political interests. Although a legal definition of bureaucracy would understand it as exclusively consisting of certain state-institutions in the public administration, the term also has a much broader anthropological usage.[4] In this sense, many non-state or only indirectly state-linked Islamic organizations and movements, as well as (for example) Islamic educational and financial institutions, also have sophisticated institutional hierarchies, decision-making procedures, and certification systems that are essentially bureaucratic in nature. In Southeast Asia, the politics of bureaucratizing Islam are particularly salient in those countries where Muslim populations are considered politically significant either in a majority situation as dominant forces or as minorities that are seen by some state actors as potentially destabilizing, namely in Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore.[5]

The Emmy Noether Research Group, which was established at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology under the author's leadership, will investigate "The Bureaucratization of Islam and its Socio-Legal Dimensions in Southeast Asia" based on ethnographic fieldwork in these five countries.[6] Dating back to conceptual preparations by the author and exchanges with the MPI's

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[3] Depending on one's understanding of the notion of secularity, even the most religiously defined contemporary nation states are inevitably "secular" – an argument that has also been made by in the context of Islamist movements. see e.g. Iqtidar 2011. A similar argument is made in an article by Maznah Mohamad (2010), where she insists that the legal Islamization and bureaucratization of Islam in Malaysia implies a "secularization of the Sharia". On the complex nuances of the concept in present scholarly (as opposed to political/public) discourses, see Künkler and Shankar 2017 (drawing upon Taylor 2007, but applying his work "beyond the West"); and Neo 2018, forthcoming.

[4] I am grateful to Kerstin Steiner for sharpening my awareness of this difference. See also Heyman's (2004: 489) insistence on including private firms into our category of "bureaucracy". For an exemplary study of a *non-state* bureaucracy operating in the name of Islam, see Reetz 2008.

[5] The cases of the state-sponsored bureaucratization of Islam in Thailand and Myanmar – institutionally most prominently manifested in the office of the Chularajmontri and the Islamic Religious Affairs Council of Myanmar – are no less important, but cannot be covered by the Emmy Noether Project.

[6] The Emmy Noether Group consists of Dominik Müller (Principal Investigator), Fauwaz Abdul Aziz (PhD candidate, fieldwork in the Philippines), Timea Greta Biró (PhD candidate, fieldwork in Malaysia), Rosalia Engchuan (PhD candidate, fieldwork in Indonesia), and Annika Benz (undergraduate student member, working on Indonesia/China).

Department 'Law & Anthropology' since 2014, the project started in October 2016, and the group of three PhD students and an undergraduate student researcher began its work in April 2017.[7]

This working paper outlines the conceptual contours of the Emmy Noether research project and introduces its novel approach to studying the bureaucratization of Islam from an anthropological perspective. It views the *bureaucratization* of Islam (henceforth BoI) not simply as a formalization, expansion, and diversification of Islamic institutions, but as a much wider *social phenomenon* that *far transcends its organizational boundaries*. As the BoI is integral to the state's exercise of *classificatory power*, which is necessarily co-produced and contested in society and thus entails interlocked top-down and bottom-up processes, the bureaucratic imposition of formalized categorical schemes of Islam has consequences that deeply affect the everyday life of various social actors, the role of Islam in the public sphere, the formation of Muslim subjectivities, and the *very meaning(s)* of Islam in state and society. In this transcending capacity, the BoI is inextricably interlinked with a *bureaucratization of knowledge* and the related processes of systematizing and reflecting, which Eickelman (1992, 2015: 605) has called the "objectification" of Muslim knowledge, resulting in "a significant reimagining of religious and political identities"[8] across wide parts of the Muslim world. Accordingly, the project considers how the BoI coincides with characteristic epistemic modes of understanding, discursive framing, and organizing the social world.

The BoI necessarily operates with characteristic forms, codes and procedures, a "language" of modern state bureaucracy. Changing forms, however, cause changes on the level of meanings, as, by definition, there is a mutually informing and semantically productive relationship between form and meaning (think of McLuhan's famous 1964 phrase that "the medium is the message"; cf. Pirie 2013: 55 in the context of law). The BoI therefore entails a transformative rewriting, i.e., a translation into the codes, procedures, and symbols, or "language" of bureaucracy – and simultaneously produces its very own social meanings that are, to some extent, unique to specific discursive arenas. Considering the multifaceted nature of this transformative re-writing of Islam, the Emmy Noether project will analyse functional (i.e., power, control, legitimacy, resources, and interests) as well as hermeneutic dimensions (i.e., related to meaning and knowledge production as

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[7] My research on the BoI started, under that title, during a DAAD post-doc fellowship at Stanford University in the first half of 2013 and was initially envisioned as a comparative study between Brunei and Malaysia. I further developed this project under a post-doctoral research position I held at the Cluster of Excellence "Formation of Normative Orders" at Goethe University Frankfurt from July 2013 until September 2016, then primarily focusing on Brunei, before I broadened its empirical and theoretical scope and transformed it into a comparative group project under the DFG Emmy Noether Programme at the MPI for Social Anthropology in 2016. My preliminary work benefitted greatly from a workshop I attended in 2014 entitled "The Bureaucratization of Islam in Muslim States and Societies", organized by Aaron Glasserman and Mirjam Künkler at the Center for Interdisciplinary Research in Bielefeld, and from the feedback I received as a visiting scholar presenting my BoI-related work at the Asian Studies Centre (ASC) and the Centre for Socio-Legal Studies at the University of Oxford in 2014. Finally, I presented this Emmy Noether project for the first time at the ASC in Oxford, which has been its supporting cooperation partner since the application period, in November 2016. The project's second cooperation partner, the National University of Singapore's Centre for Asian Legal Studies, has also substantially contributed to its preparation and development. I have furthermore received helpful comments for the development of the project's framework at conferences and institutes in Toronto (AAS 2017), Seoul (AAS-in-Asia 2017), Oxford (EuroSEAS 2017), Leipzig (Oriental Institute), Zürich (Southeast Asia Meet Up 2017), and on several occasions at the MPI in Halle.

[8] Following this concept, Islam "has implicitly been systematized (…) in the popular imagination, making it self-contained and facilitating innovation. Questions such as 'What is my religion?', 'Why is it important to my life?', and 'How do my beliefs guide my conduct?' have become foregrounded in the lives of large numbers of believers (…) These transformations also mean that 'authentic' religious tradition and identity are foregrounded", but also "questioned, and constructed rather than taken for granted", with mass higher education and mass media facilitating that process (Eickelman 2015: 605).

well as symbolic) and study them in relation to each other.[9] This goes beyond established notions of bureaucratization of religion, which primarily focus on instrumental and power-related aspects and often view bureaucratization as a top-down strategy for politically controlling Islam and neutralizing religious opposition. I will argue that our analysis should not be limited to these functional aspects (in spite of their undeniable importance), or narrowly focus on the topics that other disciplines studying state-Islam relations are mainly interested in: official policies and the discourses of political and religious leaders, elites, and high-ranking decision-makers. We should also not reduce our analysis of the social phenomenon of BoI to the mechanical logics of interests, competition over (material and non-material) resources, incentives, and reflexes; rather, we would benefit from simultaneously investigating the complex production of social meanings that goes along with such bureaucratization processes, the specific local discursive contexts that generate these meanings (which naturally have translocal and transnational dimensions[10]), and the social and cultural changes with which these processes interact. Bureaucracies should furthermore not be portrayed as monolithic actors based on questionable assumptions of a "unitary state" (cf. critiques in studies of the anthropology of the state, such as Gupta 1995; Kirsch 2003, 2008; Bierschenk 2010; Bierschenk and de Sardan 2014). They represent multilayered, complex, and in many ways *productive* sites of social and political contestation where multiple voices compete, embedded within the equally contested larger discursive settings of the nation states in which they operate.

Using the case of Brunei as an example, I will lay out the research group's analytic framework for a collaborative anthropological study of the BoI in a comparative perspective. First, I will introduce some relevant themes and epistemic interests of the anthropology of bureaucracy (henceforth AoB) and elaborate on the absence of theoretical discussions in this field that draw on studies of bureaucracies operating in the name of Islam, particularly in Southeast Asia. Second, I will present a case study from Brunei with empirical data gathered in the preparations and early phase of the project. Third, a brief regional comparison will illustrate how another state-Islamic bureaucracy, namely in Singapore, treats certain matters very differently, despite some shared features (or "family resemblances", Pirie 2013, see also the Appendix on regional comparison and some methodological notes). Finally, I will offer concluding remarks on the relevance of these case studies from Brunei and Singapore for the larger project of studying the BoI as a social phenomenon transnationally across (and potentially beyond) the Southeast Asian region.

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[9] Here, I follow Pirie's (2013) critique of the power paradigm in the anthropology of law. Her compelling plea to reconcile it with the hermeneutic tradition, with an emphasis on the latter, can also be applied to the anthropology of bureaucracy and the state. Notably, Clifford Geertz pointed out the weakness of "functional" approaches in the study of religion and social change as early as 1957, albeit targeted at a different generation of opponents representing a very different type of "functionalist" anthropology. See Geertz 1957: 32.

[10] For a brief but excellent overview addressing how even Islamic transnationalism and "the universal language of Islam" remain often (but not necessarily) rooted in "their respective national borders" and sometimes "linked to (formalized) state organizations", while in other cases, "nonstate organizations" like the Muslim World League "help create common ideological communities that transcend state and national frontiers" in no less bureaucratized ways, i.e., "through their formal presentation of Islamic issues and standardization of language and approach", see Eickelman 2015: 604–605.

Bringing the Anthropology of Bureaucracy to the Study of State-Islam Relations in Southeast Asia: existing and envisioned roads of enquiry

Government-sponsored attempts to bureaucratize Islam and parallel strategies by non-state Muslim groups to engage in bureaucratization practices are acquiring growing political significance and public attention across the globe – be it in Europe, Central Asia, the Middle East and North Africa, or China.[11] In Malay-speaking Southeast Asia, however, the quest for "order" appears to be particularly strong.

The Study of State–Islam Relations in Southeast Asia
Although there is a large amount of literature on Islamic governance and state-related sharia (the common Malay spelling is *syariah*) politics in Southeast Asia, relatively few anthropological studies contribute to these debates. The existing empirical ethnographic research is mostly confined to investigations of a single country, province, institution, or movement,[12] and in many cases the BoI is presented descriptively as an empirical fact (or as a mere side note in a particular context), but not conceptually reflected upon as an analytic phenomenon and process; nor are the descriptions based on ethnographic fieldwork among bureaucrats and bureaucracies.[13] While other disciplines have produced remarkable collaborative and comparative works on Islam, law, and the state in and beyond the region (most notably Lindsey and Steiner, 2012; Otto 2010; Possamai, Richardson and Turner 2015), so far there is no larger comparative or theory-producing anthropological work on the BoI that transcends country-specific case studies, either in the Southeast Asian context or beyond. This is regrettable, as there can be no doubt about the influential role that the modern nation state has played, and continues to play, in the revival of Islam in the region. Anthropological perspectives and methods could generate distinctive insights into these processes.

For many involved bureaucratic institutions, developing categorical schemes of Islam (often including schemes of religiously framed morality), and establishing regulations for Islam-related public communication and practice are foundational concerns. Due to context-specific environments and power structures, the bureaucracies' approaches to interpreting, regulating, and administering the doctrinal and social meanings of Islam differ widely, reflecting its character as a contested discursive tradition wherein hegemonic truth claims and the politics of orthodoxy are inseparably intertwined with asymmetric power relations and the disciplining mechanisms that accompany this (cf. Asad 1986). As we shall see, the AoB can serve as a productive foundation for studying social dynamics between Islam and the state.

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[11] On Europe, see e.g. Ferrari and Bottoni 2014; for a recently published study on Morocco, see Wainscott 2017. On China, Aaron Glasserman is presently producing unprecedented work; on the state-management in China in the Xinjang province, see Hann 2012.

[12] Several outstanding country-specific studies – some of which are authored by anthropologists – on Islam-related legal and institutional politics in the region must be credited. They include, among others, Bowen 2003 (Indonesia, anthropology); Cammack and Feener 2007 (Indonesia); Feener 2013 (Indonesia); Liow 2009 (Malaysia) and especially his descriptive chapter on the "The Malaysian State and the Bureaucratization of Islam", 43 ff.; an edited volume by the anthropologist Hefner 2016, and Hefner's numerous other writings related to this context (Indonesia, anthropology); Iik Arifin Mansurnoor 2008 (Brunei); Peletz 2002 (Malaysia, anthropology); Lily Zubaidah Rahim 2009 (Singapore); and Norshahril Saat 2015 (Singapore). On the political role of bureaucracy in Southeast Asia beyond religious matters, see e.g. Emmerson 1978 and Evers 1987. For an outstanding edited volume on the nation-stateization of Islam in Southeast Asia in the 1990s, see Hefner and Horvatich 1997.

[13] For partial exceptions in which bureaucratizing Islam is explicitly addressed and to varying extents reflected upon as a phenomenon in national contexts, see Sharifa Zaleha Syed Hassan 1985; Maznah Mohamad 2010: 505–24; and, most notably, the excellent fieldwork-based studies by Peletz 2015 and Sloane-White 2017.

Here orthodoxy is decidedly not meant to imply a binary opposition vis-à-vis heterodoxy, hybridity, or even "folk Islam" (all of which resembles the distinction between big and small traditions, see Redfield 1941); rather, we understand it in an Asadian sense of being "not a mere body of opinion but a distinctive relationship – a relationship of power" which exists "in all Islamic traditions" (Asad 1986: 22). In his classical essay arguing for an "anthropology of Islam", he defined orthodoxy as "the way (…) powers are exercised, the conditions that make them possible (social, political, economic, etc.), and the resistances they encounter (from Muslims and non-Muslims)" (ibid.). Our project posits that such orthodoxies can be found in both the context of a self-declared "secular", "progressive", "diversity-oriented" and "inclusive" BoI as it exists in Singapore, as well in the decidedly anti-"secular" and anti-pluralistic BoI of Brunei, which has established a monolithic brand of state Islam that is unparalleled in the region (see below). But even in Brunei, we can, in some instances, observe remarkably hybrid and culturally heterodox pathways to orthodoxy (Müller 2018, forthcoming), whereas Singaporean state Islam is quite orthodox in its insistence on "inclusiveness". Both cases require us to go beyond dichotomies and rethink them in more dialectical ways. Similarly, Islam being a "discursive tradition" does not necessarily imply a tradition that, in an Asadian sense, is unified in relation to its sacred scriptures (despite heterogeneity in other aspects), nor would acknowledging the uniqueness of empirical manifestations of Islam require us to speak of "many Islams" (Marsden and Retsikas's 2013: 11; Coleman 2013: 248). To avoid misunderstandings: our project does not systematically aim to contribute to the anthropology of Islam – at least not in the genre's more narrow sense of anthropologically theorizing what characterizes Islam *as such* (i.e., what Islam *is*) and what this means for the everyday lives and Muslim subject formations (the latter would be more accurately termed an "anthropology of Muslimness"[14]). Instead, it is primarily concerned with the *social workings of bureaucratization and state power* operating in the name of Islam,[15] and the structuring (i.e., socially and culturally productive) capacities that arise from and give rise to the social, institutional, and technological transformations that are characteristically inherent to the BoI in contemporary Southeast Asia.[16]

Existing scholarship on state-Islam relations in Southeast Asia is dominated by political science, history, and legal studies. An unparalleled source that transcends country-specific work is Lindsey and Steiner's series on *Islam, Law and the State in Southeast Asia*, which meticulously maps existing jurisdictions, institutional assemblages, and their settings. Other recent work rethinks the

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[14] I owe this notion to Aboulaye Sounaye (personal conversation, Berlin, 30 November 2017).

[15] Speaking of "Islamically framed" practices is both normatively and empirically more open than calling them "Islamic" (and thus avoids the trap of implicitly and possibly unintentionally taking sides in debates over the question whether or not something actually *is* "Islamic" or not!). Whether or not a bureaucracy, practice, or truth claim represented by Muslims really *is* Islamic, and why, is a question best addressed by the scholarship of Islamic studies (such as Ahmed 2016) and the doctrinal discourses of believers. The same applies to the question whether what actors call "Islamization" ("-ization" in the sense of making things "more Islamic") actually results in "more Islam" or *less* of it. A review or deeper engagement with the history of the anthropology of Islam and the multiple positions and disagreements therein would go beyond the purposes of this paper. Marsden and Retsikas's (2013) edited volume provides an overview as well as being an important contribution of its own. Other key sources (in the Anglophone tradition) include, in chronological order: Geertz 1968; Gellner 1969; el-Zein 1977; Gellner 1981; Gilsenan 1982; Eickelman 1982; Tapper 1995; Mahmood 2005; Varisco 2005; Osella and Soares 2009; Schielke 2010. For those interested in anthropologically conceptualizing *Islam* (or asking what constitutes an "Islamic bureaucracy" *as Islamic*), the late Shahab Ahmed's 2016 book *What Is Islam?* represents a source that may open avenues towards for a new, "post-Asadian" (as opposed to anti-Asadian) stream in the anthropology of Islam.

[16] I am grateful to Ursula Rao for her notion of the "structuring capacities that arise from institutional and technological transformations" that are inherent to bureaucratization as a driving force in processes of cultural change, the study of which, as she pointed out, is a shared feature of some of her current work as well as my own (personal conversation, Halle/Leipzig, November 2017).

implications of colonial state-building for transformations of Islamic law – Iza Hussin's (2016) historical study of Muslim legal politics, interconnectivities, and translations in and between colonial Malaya, India, and Egypt stands out and resonates with literature on colonial reinventions of Islamic law elsewhere (see e.g. Lombardi 2006; Hallaq 2013). While these and the referenced non-anthropological works are based on research with legal texts, official documents, archives, and sometimes interviews, they focus primarily on elite practices and discourses. To be sure, they provide deep insights into state efforts to create a "monopoly on religious interpretation" (Moustafa 2014: 152) through legal and bureaucratic means. However, they are also methodologically and comparatively distinct from the anthropological approach that I propose. The BoI has multiple facets and is socially negotiated in ways that cannot be captured in purely institutional terms or by exclusively focusing on policies and law. Bureaucratic classificatory practices are realized socially and acquire their meanings in the spheres of everyday life and therefore need to be studied there. This is not to say that anthropologists should ignore official policies, black-letter law, and documents – quite the contrary: as my case study of Brunei will demonstrate, these provide important sources for contextualizing ethnographic accounts. But to develop an anthropological understanding of bureaucratic contestation and social change, it is necessary to conduct fieldwork and interact with involved actors, ideally over longer periods of time.

The Anthropology of Bureaucracy and the State

The AoB does not only describe what specific bureaucracies or bureaucrats *do*, but also asks what bureaucracy *is* – as a "social phenomenon" (Herzfeld 1992: 4) – and how this can help us make sense of what it *does* in the empirical contexts we study. Such anthropological questions will be at the heart of the Emmy Noether Project, and they are largely missing in the state of the art of the anthropology of Islam in Southeast Asia (but see Peletz 2015; Sloane-White 2017). The anthropologist Heyman distinguishes two streams: "broad brush" versus "particularistic" approaches. The "broad brush" operates with meta-narratives that, in his view, are often prematurely imposed on data, so that conclusions are drawn too quickly – he names Foucauldian-inspired authors in general, and, e.g., Scott's *Seeing like a state* (1998) in particular (Heyman 2004: 490ff.). This approach claims to reveal "seeming 'truth' about the way all bureaucracies (or states, or experts) think and act", but pays too little attention to "immediate bureaucratic politics" (ibid.: 491). "Particularistic" approaches would be "less monolithic" and more attentive "to complex play of ideas and struggles in actual organizations" without demonizing bureaucracy as "necessarily evil" through a "totalistic critique" (ibid.: 491). Our project aims to strike a balance between the two (cf, also Müller 2018, forthcoming).

   Heyman, who was one of the first to try to systematize the AoB as a sub-discipline, argues that anthropologists have "arrived late on the scene of the study of bureaucracies" (Heyman, 1995: 262; for overviews of early sociological literature on bureaucracy, see Eisenstadt 1958, 1959). Undoubtedly, since the 1990s, "calls for ethnographic exploration of the everyday workings of the state have grown louder" (Hoag 2011: 81). However, although it is true that the AoB, which intersects with the anthropology of the state, has been undergoing a "deepening" over the past two decades (Heyman 2012: 1269; see e.g. Bierschenk and de Sardan 2014; Gupta 2012; Graeber 2015; Heyman 2004; Hoag 2011; Hull 2012; Kirsch 2008; Mathur 2015; Rottenburg 1994, 1995; Street 2012), anthropological interest in bureaucracy began much earlier – as exemplified by monographs

like Fallers' (1965)[17] *Bantu bureaucracy*, Beidelman's (1982) *Colonial evangelism*, and Cohen's (reprinted 2010) work on the implications of the first census of India for "organizing" natives and their social categories (other examples include Britan and Cohen 1980; Conkling 1979; Ray 1958). From the late 1980s onwards, Handelman and Shamgar-Handelman pointed at "social taxonomies" applied to the "citizenry" (Handelman and Shamgar-Handelman 1991: 294)[18] that aim to eradicate grey areas and indeterminacy as characteristic (if not defining) features of bureaucratic ways of seeing and organizing the world, and Herzfeld, theorizing the "symbolic roots" of bureaucracy and bureaucratic indifference (among many other points), influenced an entire new generation (Herzfeld 1992; Handelman 1981). The new AoB then increasingly focused on power relations. It views "bureaucrats as participants in a complex social arena" (Bernstein and Mertz 2011: 6) and is sceptical of established studies approaching the "negotiation of power in state institutions" with a "focus on situations with clear one-way flows and monologic communication – speeches, announcements – where one can distinguish the voices and the persons representing the state to its people" (Bernstein and Mertz 2011: 6). The state, in this understanding, is inevitably a fragile and fragmented entity. It must be constantly reproduced by social and symbolic means, and, as Gupta (1995) and the "new anthropology of the state" (Thelen, Vetters, and Benda-Beckmann 2014: 4) have demonstrated, the boundaries separating it from "non-state" spheres become increasingly blurry the closer we examine them ethnographically.

Bureaucracies differ from more common sites of ethnographic fieldwork insofar as social action in such settings is characteristically "framed by a set of formalized rules and procedures" (Hoag 2014: 414), which – like taxonomical thinking and organizing – is among the universal aspects of bureaucracy, although the particular features vary in different contexts.

Anthropologists seek to avoid unreflectedly reproducing the state's claims about itself in its own terms, i.e., "reifying (…) idealized self-representations" (Hoag 2011: 84) of bureaucracies and bureaucrats (see also Herzfeld 1992: 108). Bourdieu, Wacquant and Farage describe the underlying challenge as follows:

> "To endeavor to think the state is to take the risk of taking over (or being taken over by) a thought of the state, i.e. of applying to the state categories of thought produced and guaranteed by the state (…). [O]ne of the major powers of the state is to produce and impose (especially through the school system) categories of thought that we spontaneously apply to all things on the social world – including the state itself." (Bourdieu, Wacquant and Farage 1994: 1)

In other words, "the state has imposed the very cognitive structures through which it is perceived" (Bourdieu, Wacquant and Farage 1994: 13). More specifically, and directly addressing the state's classificatory power, Bourdieu et al. argue:

> "Through the framing it imposes upon practices, the state establishes and inculcates common forms and categories of perception and appreciation, social frameworks of perceptions, of understanding or of memory, in short *state forms of classification* [italics in the original]. It

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[17] In addition, Fallers' (1974) pioneering anthropological volume on the nation state must be credited.
[18] On bureaucratic taxonomies, see also Douglas 1986; Brenneis 1996; Herzfeld 1992: 38. Bureaucratic definitions, taxonomic categorization, and the quest for codified precision seek to set "objective" standards and eradicate ambiguities, indeterminacy, and grey zones. Once they are appropriated and put into social practice, however, their categorical schemes may produce the exact opposite (a point compellingly stressed by Herzfeld 1992), namely their very own ambiguities and polysemic opportunities for interpretive contestations (partly comparable with the paradox, yet politically exploitable "polysemy of legal formulas" in the juridical field, see Bourdieu 1987: 827).

thereby creates the conditions for a kind of immediate orchestration of habituses which is itself the foundation of a consensus over this set of shared evidences constitutive of (national) common sense. (Bourdieu, Wacquant and Farage 1994: 13).[19]

Anthropologists use multiple strategies to seek to evade this trap of thinking the state in its own terms. Being sceptical of bureaucracies' self-representation as primarily carrying out policies decided elsewhere in an objective and mechanical manner (the "objectivity machine", see Hoag's 2011: 81 critique), anthropologists view bureaucracy not only as an "aspect of the modern state that makes the state functioning", but also as a productive site for "social life" (Bernstein and Mertz 2011: 7), personal discretion, and creative political action – although such political action is disguised within bureaucratic self-representation (which Hoag 2011: 88ff. calls the "erasure game", another "broad-brush" feature). As Herzfeld (1992: 19) notes, "(a) bureaucrat's ability to conjure up the image of rational devotion to public service may mask calculation of a more self-interested kind". This challenges classical assumptions, prominently coined by Weber, according to which bureaucracy *ideal-typically* represents de-personalized administrative perfection and "impersonal rationality" (Graeber 2012: 110), historically expressed by a "shift" toward "rule by disinterested bureaucrats" as opposed to "rule by notables" (Heyman 1995: 262). In contrast, anthropological studies have explored the human factor by elucidating bureaucratic micro-politics, their ambiguities and arbitrariness, and the constitutive role of bureaucrats' personal worldviews and charisma (Heyman 1995: 265 ff.; Hoag 2014: 415; see also Eisenstadt 1958: 112, who similarly questioned the notion of impersonality, albeit on different grounds, and Kirsch 2008). Such approaches are, of course, not exclusive to anthropology, as sociologists have long, sometimes for similar reasons, revised the Weberian bureaucratic ideal type as well. Despite its obsessive concentration on problematizing Weber (2002 [1921]: 290) – for whom bureaucracy was incompatible with sincere and passionate religiosity on part of the bureaucrats, let alone something that could empower public religiosity – the AoB has until now largely omitted the bureaucratization of religion and especially Islam from its reflections on the nature and workings of state bureaucracies.[20]

A recurrent theme in the AoB is the bureaucratic exercise of power in settings of unequal power relations – in institutions, in wider societal contexts, and particularly in "interface situations" (Heyman 2012: 1270) between the two.[21] Heyman (1995: 262) views bureaucracies as "the preeminent technology of power in the contemporary world" as they are capable of "orchestrat[ing] numerous local contexts at once". As Graeber argues, such exercise of bureaucratic power characteristically includes the "imposition of simple categorical schemes on the world" (Graeber 2012: 105), often coercively enforced by policing agencies. This echoes Scott's notion of "state simplification".[22] It also resembles what Bourdieu earlier described as "*state forms of classification*" (as cited above, italics in the original) and the social power they exert in the spheres

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[19] Cf. also Bourdieu (1990: 136–137, 1991: 180–181) and Swartz (2013: 123 ff). To be sure, similar arguments have been made by other authors, also prior to Bourdieu's work, for example in literature on ethnicity and nationalism, where the power of the state to impose its classifications has been well documented.

[20] For a theoretically very interesting exception in a Jewish context, see Seeman (2003); and Kirsch's (2003, 2008) pioneering writings on "bureaucratic charisma" in Christian Pentecostal churches in Zambia and their tactical mimicking of state-bureaucratic structures.

[21] In his early work, Eisenstadt (1958: 103) already underlined that any study of bureaucracy "cannot be confined to an analysis of the internal structure of various organizations," but must refer "to the relations between the organization and its wider social setting".

[22] Following Scott (1998: 11), who illustrates the phenomenon in a variety of historical and local contexts, "state simplification" represents a type "of knowledge and control" which requires "a narrowing of vision" to make the world "legible" and commercially, politically – and we may add potentially also religiously – exploitable. The understanding and representation of the world, in turn, must be transformed to make it fit vis-à-vis the state's categorical schemes.

of habitus, the education sector, and the formation of a "(national) common sense" (Bourdieu et al. 1994: 13). In his sociology of the state, he noted how, beyond law enforcement, the state bureaucratically engages in social categorization, resulting of normalized inequalities of various kinds (Bourdieu 1990: 136–137). Involved agencies organize and map the population according to classificatory distinctions (e.g., class, gender, race/ethnicity, citizenship, numbers, Bourdieu 1984 476–477; Bourdieu 1991: 180–181) that, as we may add, can – and, e.g., in Brunei and Malaysia do – include religious categorical schemes such as "good Muslims" adhering to state-sponsored doctrines and "deviant groups/teachings endangering the true faith" (see Müller 2015, 2016). Legally, such state classification often has compulsory force, although the actual exercise of social power is often indirect, without constant or direct coercion. As Bourdieu argues, many people internalize hegemonic ascriptions even if it disadvantages them, and thereby become complicit in (re-)producing the state's classificatory power, but these attributions can also be countered through a reflexive deconstruction of their "genesis" and historicity (Bourdieu 1998: 40), among other forms of non-compliance.

While one relevant theme is social production of power, knowledge and meaning, the other pertains to their effects. Non-bureaucrats may internalize hegemonic classification so that bureaucratic categorical schemes "acquire a commonsensical, taken-for-granted character" (Handelman and Shamgar-Handelman 1991: 294), but they also "often take the initiative by pursuing goals that bypass official control" (Heyman 1995: 261, 264), or react in ways that fall into neither of these categories. Bureaucracies are sites of *attempted* control, but to be effective, this control requires popular compliance. Even the most powerful bureaucracy, however, cannot determine how precisely its schemes are appropriated by social actors, the *relational process* of which is at the heart of producing state power and generating its social meanings. This societal appropriation is neither passive nor a one-directional process between a "sender" and "receiver". Depending on the actual modes of appropriation, bureaucratic classificatory schemes, including religiously framed ones, may (or may not!) become discursively naturalized and thus taken for granted. Such appropriation is, to varying extents, a creative process in which unexpected re-significations and new transformative ascriptions of meaning may occur. This unfolds not only among the target groups of bureaucratization (often society at large, and/or Muslim community specifically), but also within bureaucracies themselves. Therefore, analytically, the diversity of reactions to the *intended* exercise of classificatory power (in society and within institutions themselves) must be distinguished. Circumvention, secretive refusal of normative compliance, "everyday forms of resistance" (Scott 1985), the rise of "social nonmovements"[23] (Bayat 2010), the development of alternative (de-)justifying narratives in the quest for "justification hegemony" (Forst 2014: 106), direct confrontation, or even counter-hegemonic bureaucratization are just a few possible responses. However, as Herzfeld (1992: 3 ff.) points out, even passionate opposition to bureaucratic forces or complaining about its "evils" or shortcomings can unintentionally be a culturally routinized habit that, in its thought modes and effects, is complicit in reproducing the symbolic (classificatory) power of bureaucracy.

Another relevant theme of the AoB pertains to tensions between formalized normativity and practice. Norms do not always correspond with behaviour; they may also disguise it. "Rules can never be enforced enough", because bureaucratic actors "[mask] the exercise of power in the guise

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[23] Bayat's concept of nonmovements has been applied fruitfully to the context of Brunei Darussalam in Alana Tolman's recent outstanding honours thesis at the Australian National University.

of an always emergent – but never attained – perfect order" (Hoag 2011: 82, 2014: 264). This is related to what Hoag (2014: 88) calls "the god trick performed by universalizing authoritative bureaucracies" – a notion that acquires an unintended double meaning in the context of bureaucracies operating with their own transcendental universalisms in the name of religion. This self-absolutization, resulting in a (relative) closure of the possibility of discourse, can have even more powerful effects in combination with the nation state's own modes of elevating its truth claims to the spheres of the unquestionable, a process that itself mirrors religious patterns (see Herzfeld 1992: 6, 36 ff., 2012).

Beyond anthropology, Künkler and Sezgin (2014) distinguish the "judicialization" of religion in India (where divisive questions have been delegated to the courts) from "bureaucratization" in Indonesia (conceptualized, in accordance with the common understanding of the term among many political and social scientists, as an authoritarian management process of incorporating religion into the state to control it). In Indonesia, "bureaucratization" aimed to ensure the coherence of policies toward Islam with a nation-building project, but each attempt has led to unintended developments, further complicated by the fact that Indonesian political leaders such as the presidents Sukarno and Suharto fundamentally changed their government's stance on religion within short periods of time.

Crucially relevant for the present project, the anthropologist Antoun (2006) has argued based on his work in Jordan that the "growth of fundamentalism" is often intertwined with two other processes: the "bureaucratization of religion", which in his understanding "focuses on the hierarchicalization of religious specialists", and "the state co-optation of religion" which aims at the "neutralization" of these religious specialists as potential "political opponents" (Antoun 2004: 369). Notably, the anthropologist Shankland (1999) made a comparable argument in the context of the state-led bureaucratization of Islam in Turkey.[24] Antoun, for his part, demonstrates through a village-based ethnography how the BoI (in the above-defined sense), top-down state co-optation, and the bottom-up rise of fundamentalism in Jordan have symbiotically evolved "in mutually supportive and sometimes in antagonistic relations" (ibid.). I would argue that implicit to his call to analytically link these three processes (i.e., rise of fundamentalism; hierarachicalization of religious experts; political neutralization of religious experts) is the need to consider the inseparable relationship between functional – i.e., strategy-, power- and resource-related – aspects and transformations in how new official and social meanings in the religious field are produced.[25]

The Emmy Noether project also asks who benefits from the BoI, which social groups are left behind, and how the latter respond to their exclusion or disadvantagedness.[26] Even within the state apparatus, being a state-funded "religious bureaucrat" can have differing effects. It may increase or undermine one's reputation, legitimacy, credibility, and social status, depending on the specific circumstances. While a *perception* of distance from the state and its control can enhance legitimacy and credibility (Shahar 2017), and indeed even some state-formed and -funded actors like the

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[24] See also Öztürk 2016 for a more update account that insightfully distinguishes different phases and shifts in the Turkish state-Islamic institution *Diyanet* (Directorate of Religious Affairs).

[25] Official meanings are doctrinal and textually formalized meanings (which, of course, also unfold beyond textual language). These official meanings are interlinked with, but must be distinguished from, the *social meanings* that social actors ascribe to and derive from the official discourse (equally transcending text, although this cannot be substantially addressed here).

[26] The project is attentive to the unequal distribution of resources caused by the BoI, including material and symbolic resources. Bourdieu's notion of the state as a "central bank" for symbolic capital is of relevance (1989: 22; see also Bourdieu, Wacquant, and Farage 1994: 12). He relates this to "the bureaucratic field" (Bourdieu, Wacquant, and Farage 1994): state-generated symbolic capital comes in multiple shapes, and Bourdieu explicitly characterizes "bureaucratization" as a form of producing "objectified symbolic capital". Such bureaucratized symbolic capital is "codified, delegated and guaranteed by the state" (Bourdieu Wacquant and Farage 1994: 11).

Indonesian Ulama Council (Majlis Ulama Indonesia, MUI) claim to be "independent" "non-state"-actors"[27] in national discursive arenas where state bureaucracy traditionally has a very bad name,[28] we also find counter-examples: In Brunei, being non-state-funded or independent from the state is simply not an option for Islamic voices in the public sphere and would not enhance, but rather destroy one's status or credibility among wider segments of society. On a level that is more concerned with the role of individuals in the BoI (which will not be addressed empirically by the present paper), our project is also attentive of the multiple positionings of such individuals as creative agents in settings of "legal pluralism" (Benda-Beckmann 2002, or maybe rather "normative plurality") – where they may refer to Islamic law, (codified or non-codified) customary norms (*adat*), state law, "national ideologies" (e.g. Indonesia's *Pancasila*, Malaysia's *Rukun Negara*, Brunei's *Melayu Islam Beraja*), ethnicity, or numerous other normative frames of reference in tactical and at times highly flexible ways (cf. ibid. 69-70, Müller 2016: 418). Surely, such multidimensional socio-legal embeddedness affects the lifeworlds, decision-making processes, and repertoires for "justification narratives" (Forst 2014; Müller 2015a: 319–320) of bureaucrats and persons interacting with them, and it likely plays a role in the processes of bureaucratic learning, knowledge production, and symbolic framing that our project aims to explore particularly in those ethnographic sub-projects that take bureaucracies themselves (as opposed to actors interacting with and affected by them) as their main field sites.

State Islam in the Abode of Peace: the case of Brunei

In the following, I will present some preliminary data on bureaucratized Islam in Brunei, much of which I gathered before the start of the Emmy Noether project. This section will illustrate how the Brunei government has formalized a state brand of Islam that is integral to the state's exercise of classificatory power, and how this not only *functions* to serve political interests of the government and to accumulate symbolic capital, but has also, alongside parallel changes of everyday

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[27] See Sirry (2013: 101) regarding the formation of the MUI by the government in 1975. The MUI was once described by M.B. Hooker as "bureaucratization of Islam in its most extreme form" (cited by Sirry ibid.), resulting in "limited (…) legitimacy (…) in the eyes of the public" (ibid.: 103), although some of its decisions did not follow the government's political demands. Sirry (2013: 103) also describes the MUI's later tendency to "distance itself from the state" in the post-Suharto era, up to the point where MUI members present their state-empowered council as "non-state" institution. It does so despite its active role in legislation (e.g., in the Pornography Law of 2008), film censorship (through a representation in the censorship board Lembaga Sensor Film, LSF), and other involvements in policymaking and advice, all of which illustrate the value of operating with Gupta's notion (1995) of "blurring boundaries" between state and society.

[28] In Indonesia, the term *birokratisasi* (lit. "bureaucratization") is widely viewed as *by definition* implying corruption – up to an extent that a renowned anthropologist working on Indonesia recommended our project not to translate our title (BoI) literally into Indonesian when presenting our work to Indonesian government actors, as they would likely misinterpret our project as being interested in corruption in religious administration (personal communication with Martin Slama, October 2017). In the Philippines, where our group member Fauwaz Abdul Aziz conducts his project, there is also a deeply rooted popular distrust towards bureaucracy, whereas the situation is significantly different in Brunei and Singapore.

normativities within society, produced both official and social *meanings* of Islamic governance that are unique to the country's discursive context.[29]

It must be stressed from the outset that I do not view the *contents* of bureaucratized Islam in Brunei as representing any general regional trends. But in more abstract and comparative terms, the BoI in Brunei exhibits features that illustrate how Islamic bureaucracies can be integral to the state's exercise of classificatory power, how they empower "categorical schemes" and claim their characteristic "right to define the situation" (Graeber 2012: 120), and how this affects normative transformations in the wider social world. Similarly, like in almost any contemporary setting of bureaucratized state governance, phenomena such as what Scott (1998: 3) describes as "state simplifications" ("the basic givens of modern statecraft") and the quest for rationalization,[30] "scientization", and "technocratization" (see Greenhalgh 2008: 18, 109; cf. Latour 1987), as well as cultural forms of the market (neo-liberalism), have to varying extents made inroads into the BoI across national boundaries, often intersecting with growing Islamic legalism and its passion for taxonomical purity (Müller 2018, forthcoming). But these partly shared characteristics (family resemblances) of the BoI are manifested differently in each national context: in Brunei, much more than in any other country in the region, the state has become the primary interpreter of Islam, with specific dynamics at the level of meaning production.

The Sultanate of Brunei Darussalam (lit. "Brunei, the Abode of Peace") is arguably the most understudied Southeast Asian country. It is inhabited by 422,000 people, around 300,000 of whom are citizens, despite having ten times the size of the city state of Singapore (which has 5.5 millon. inhabitants).[31] Since its independence from British indirect rule in 1984. Brunei is the only Southeast-Asian country that has unambiguously been defined by its government as a "non-secular" "Islamic State" (Siddique 1992) without publicly expressed disagreement or organized secular or religious opposition. Brunei has no general elections or parliamentary system, and ruling power is centred in the person of the Sultan (presently Hassanal Bolkiah, born in 1946, in office since 1967) who is Prime Minister, Minister of Finance, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Minister of Defence, Supreme Commander of the Army, Inspector General of the Police, and Chancellor of the national university. He is also the constitutional "head of the official religion" (*ketua ugama rasmi*), and officially described as "leader of the (Muslim) believers" *(ulil amri)*, and Allah's vice-regent on earth (*khalifah*). In his royal address (*titah*) on Independence Day in 1984, Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah famously declared that Brunei should "forever be a Malay Islamic

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[29] This case study is based on a series of fieldwork stays in Brunei dating back to the author's MA research (2007/8) and followed up in a post-doc project since 2012, with one to shorter stays in Brunei per year until 2017. One of these trips was part of a two-months fellowship at the University of Brunei Darussalam. The fieldwork included formal semi-structured interviews and casual conversations with members of religious government agencies and educational institutions involved in the propagation of the state ideology, but also with various persons beyond the state apparatus. With a small number of key interlocutors, I have built relationships of trust leading to increasingly complex and open exchanges over the course of several years. I also conducted (to some extent "participant") observation and informal conversations in contexts of knowledge production and learning, namely in university classes in which the state ideology, and also an Islamic legal reform detailed below, were taught and explained. In addition, I gathered government-produced Islam- and state ideology-related literature, school books, *fatwa*s, legal documents, and non-published institutional statistics, as well as state-informed local media productions; some of these sources will be directly referred to, others indirectly influence my analysis. My approach used for this preliminary work thus combines a description of official policies and ideological discourse with ethnographic data, as conceptually introduced above.

[30] To avoid misunderstandings: Supernatural beliefs and practices can be perfectly rational, an insight dating back to Malinowski's (1954: 86, 34) reflections on how "magic is fundamentally akin to science," and I do not imply that bureaucratic rationalization and objectification necessarily cause disenchantment (cf. Kirsch 2003, 2008). Multifold cultural meanings can be bureaucratically empowered, including spirit beliefs, exorcism (Müller 2018, forthcoming), and the transcendental charisma of bureaucratic-religious leaders (Fogg 2018, forthcoming).

[31] Earlier versions of some of the empirical data presented in this section have been published previously in Müller 2015 and 2016.

Monarchy" (*Melayu Islam Beraja*). Resembling similar pillar models of modern nation-building elsewhere (e.g., France: *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité;* Indonesia: *Pancasila*), *Melayu Islam Beraja* (officially abbreviated 'MIB') serves as a government-defined "national ideology" (*ideologi negara*), "national philosophy" (*falsafah negara*), and "concept of the nation" (*konsep negara*). Since the late 1980s, MIB has been more systematically propagated and bureaucratically institutionalized, starting with the formation of the MIB Concept Committee in 1986, which was later transformed into the MIB Supreme Council (see below).

The "MIB-ization" of Brunei included numerous social, cultural, and legal policy initiatives. In the juridical field, the government began to place increasing emphasis on its "commitment to making the Islamic system the most effective system in the country" (Black 2002: 108; cf. Müller 2015b: 321). Similar to the bureaucratization of MIB, the growing empowerment and expansion of codified Islamic law represents a way of establishing *categorical schemes* of Islam, aiming to exercise *classificatory power* while claiming the *right to define the situation* and in the process *producing meanings* that are unique to the MIB state's context. Legal Islamization initiatives included fields such as family law, adoption, evidence, and arbitration mechanisms, as well as banking and finance (Black 2002). The Islamization of the law was not limited to codified "sharia law": In 1990, the Sultan declared that *all* laws, including British-derived "civil law", should "be brought in line with Islam",[32] and he formed an expert committee of state-Islamic scholars (*ulama*) to advise him on the practical implementation. Selling and publicly consuming alcohol was banned in 1991 (although non-Muslims can still import limited amounts and consume them privately), the production and sale of pork was prohibited in 1992, and public entertainment became subject to further restrictions (Müller 2015b: 321).

Since the colonial era Brunei maintains a legal system that is locally described as "dual", with "sharia" and "civil" courts and codes coexisting separately – "civil" law applies to all citizens, while sharia law initially applied only to Muslims (this clear-cut separation changed in 2014, see below). Brunei's Civil Law is derived from British Common Law and primarily regulates business matters and disputes between persons, but British-derived legislation also includes a penal code, so that the term "civil legal system" is basically used "to describe the non-Islamic legal system" (Steiner 2016: 28). Although these "civil" laws exist parallel to the "Islamic"-defined codes and courts, they are officially not viewed as "secular", and the process of comprehensively reviewing "civil" laws vis-à-vis Islamic stipulations to make them "sharia-compliant"[33] since 1990 underlines this point. The sharia courts, on the other hand, were long primarily concerned with family and personal status law, although certain criminal offences were already punishable in colonial times, e.g., the moral offense of *khalwat*, or "close proximity" between non-married couples, or (for men) the failure to attend Friday prayers without proper excuses (Iik 2008: 228–229, citing Brunei's "Mohamedan Law" of 1912, Sections 3 and 14). Following Brunei's independence, these and other offences became part of the Religious Council and Kadis Court Act 1984 (henceforth RCKCA).

Simultaneously with the banning of alcohol sales and other religiously justified new restrictions to public life, some established popular cultural practices were probed with regard to their potential

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[32] *Brunei Darussalam Newsletter*, "Laws to Be Brought in Line with Islam," 60 (September 1990), p. 1.

[33] "Sharia Compliant Penal Code", *The Brunei Times*, 14 October 2011; cf. also a lecture given by the Bruneian Islamic scholar Amin Abdul Aziz in Singapore in January 2016, in which he uses the same phrase of civil law being made "sharia-compliant" (available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lsarIhnrfJc, accessed 11 December 2016). Although the lecture is insightful in many aspects, his claim that Brunei's Syariah Penal Code Order applies "only to Muslims" is factually wrong, as detailed elsewhere in this article (and obvious from any quick look at the legal document, where each section specifies being applicable to "any person" or "any Muslim").

(in-)compatibility with Islam – or more precisely, with the bureaucracy's interpretation of it. Activities like gambling during His Majesty's public birthday festivities (the longest public celebration of the year) soon disappeared (Müller 2015b: 321). A leading MIB ideologue of the time sums up: "several (…) cultural manifestations which have pre-Islamic (...) elements have either been refined or gradually phased out to suit Islamic teachings" (Abdul Latif Ibrahim 2003: 173). Mosques and prayer rooms were frequented as never before (Müller 2015b: 322), as top-down policies dialectically resonated with popular tendencies of Islamic revival.

The techniques of disciplining the population along the lines of state-Islamic discourse and instilling the bureaucracy's officialized religious truth claims in its minds became increasingly sophisticated and institutionally diversified over the following years. Obligatory state-Islamic education was expanded and intensified at all levels of the education system. As former leader of the MIB Supreme Council puts it, the state apparatus underwent a systematic "Islamization of the agencies" (Abdul Latif Ibrahim 2003: 208; cf. de Vienne 2015: 142–43; Müller 2015b: 322). The massive intensification of "Islamization" discourse and policies since the early 1990s also coincided with changes among the Islamic bureaucracy's leadership, such as the Sultan's appointment of Abdul Aziz Juned as State Mufti in 1994 (a position established in 1962,[34] previously held by since its formation Ismail Omar Abdul Aziz), and the appointment of Mahmud Saedon Othman[35] as the government's special advisor in Islamic legal affairs in 1994. Two years later, the Sultan declared in a royal address (*titah*, some of which were most likely authored after close consultation with government officials who are experts in the relevant fields, i.e., members of the Islamic bureaucracy) that "no law or constitution" can be "superior to, or truer than al-Quran" (cited in Müller 2015b: 323). In the same speech, he spoke for the first time publicly about plans to establish a comprehensive Islamic criminal law code ("*akta undang-undang jenayah syariah*") (Mahmud Saedon Othman 1996, 2008; cf. Müller 2015b: 323).[36] The monarch then formed a

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[34] According to the scant historical sources available (and keeping in mind political interests behind making such historical claims today), there has been a long trajectory of religious offices in Brunei being closely affiliated with the Sultans (Iik 1996: 46–47), which during the British Residency culminated in an "institutionalization of Islamic concepts, teachings and administration within *novel bodies and forms*" (ibid., emphasis added). Prior to the office of the State Mufti (formed in 1962, alongside the establishment of the Ministry of Religion's predecessor office), the Sultans had "always appointed religious officials *(pehin manteri ugama)*" as members of the royal court and bestowed them with honorary titles (ibid.): "The control (…) of the palace on religious matters continued to be a crucial factor in making religious ideas uniform and less prone to external pressures", and "[f]rom quite an early period, a religious bureaucracy emerged [which] (…) was responsible directly to the ruler" (ibid.). Manurnoor argues that "remnants of such" pre-colonial Islamic "bureaucracy survived until the coming of the Residency Period" in 1905, despite the existential crises that Brunei had witnessed in the nineteenth century. However, Bruneian *ulama* in the pre-colonial and colonial period produced little remaining published scholarship, and as the Indonesian historian Iik Arifin Mansurnoor (writing while still employed by the Brunei government) politely phrased it, "the formality and popularity of Islam seem not to have resulted in intensive intellectual activities". *Ulama* had historically served as mediators for disputes and as teachers for Muslim children (notably, the inland population beyond the capital had long been largely non-Muslim). Below the *pehin manteri ugama*, lower-level local religious functionaries (*imam*) served in religious centres (*balai*). Reportedly, in pre-colonial Brunei, where customs and Islam deeply informed each other, Sufi orders like the Shadhiliyyah and Qadiriyyah wa Naqshbandiyyah had some influence (ibid.), and the doctrinal situation was thus apparently more fluid than today. We know little about the precise positions and ideological shifts in Brunei's theological discourses at different times. In the 1840s, there was a much-cited (but little researched) conflict surrounding a religious scholar who had returned from the Hajj from Saudi Arabia. As early as 1807, a "Brunei House" was established in Mecca (ibid.). I will address historical backgrounds of the BoI in Brunei more systematically in a book manuscript I am working on.

[35] He had previously been a dissident after a short-lived rebellion in 1962 and was said to have been the envisioned "foreign minister" in the Parti Rakyat Brunei (PRB) rebels' planned government. He obtained prestigious degrees from Al Azhar University (up to PhD level) in the 1970s and made a distinguished academic career in Islamic Studies abroad, most notably at the International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM). After the Sultan quite spectacularly invited him back to Brunei, he became a special advisor in Islamic legal matters as well as the University of Brunei's (UBD) Vice Chancellor.

[36] The Sultan first announced on his 50th birthday that Brunei needs an Islamic penal code – original wording: "*Qanun Jina'-I Islam yakni Islamic Criminal Act*"– and tasked a first working group to prepare the drafting of it.

working group of Islamic legal scholars to look into the matter, a process that has been ongoing in the almost two decades since.[37]

The Introduction of an Islamic Penal Code

In the same year, 1996, Saedon Othman, the special advisor in Islamic legal affairs mentioned above, published a strategy paper referring to the Sultan's speech and declaring that in order to realize His Majesty's vision, Brunei should unify its dual legal system (British-derived "civil law" and "Islamic law") by abandoning the non-sharia law part altogether, thus going beyond the revisions of the "civil" system that were already ongoing.[38] Following a generalized normative pattern in Brunei politics, Mahmud Saedon Othman framed his call as representing the monarch's will, saying that it required "immediate actions (...) [to]be taken without delay" (Mahmud Saedon Othman 1996, 2008). The abrogation of the civil law that he demanded never happened, but the Islamic bureaucracy continued working towards an Islamic penal code, initially in the face of opposition behind the scenes by some state elites, as WikiLeaks cables from the 1990s indicate.[39] Two decades after its first announcement, the government finally presented its Islamic criminal law code, including provisions for the internationally most controversial *hudud* (corporal, lit. limits) and *qisas* (retribution) punishments: the Syariah Penal Code Order 2013 (Perintah Kanun Hukuman Syariah 2013, henceforth SPCO).

Brunei's pre-SPCO legislation already carried provisions for religiously defined criminal offenses, namely under the Religious Council and Kadis Courts Act, Sections 129–131, henceforth RCKCA (Lindsey and Steiner 2012; Müller 2015b: 325; HRRC 2015), such as "close proximity" between non-married men and women (*khalwat*), or adult men not attending Friday prayers without appropriate excuses (e.g., heavy rain or long distance). But with the SPCO, the punishments for these and other "sharia crimes" (*jenayah syariah*) were increased, and many others were added. Most controversially (international media exclusively focused on this aspect), the new provisions include the amputation of limbs for repeated cases of theft and robbery, and even stoning to death as the maximum punishment for certain offenses, such as adultery (SPCO, Section 68 ff.), homosexual and anal intercourse (SPCO, Section 82), blasphemy (SPCO, Sections 110, 221), and apostasy (SPCO, Sections 107 ff.). Similarly, the questioning of *hadith* by Muslims (SPCO, Sections 107, 108, 109 111, 113–117) has become a serious offence. Officials emphasize the strict procedural conditions and a particularly high burden of proof, as well as several mechanisms for repentance and pardoning, which would make it very unlikely that these severe punishments would regularly (if ever) be carried out. Apostates, for example, can repent up to the moment of the punishment's execution and would have to be freed afterwards. The same applies to any person, including non-Muslims, who insult the prophet Muhammad – despite facing the death penalty or up to thirty years in prison (and forty strokes with the cane), they can be freed following a declaration

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[37] Black 2010; Abdul Latif Ibrahim 2003: 192. In October 2011, the Sultan gave a speech in which he announced in very concrete terms the plan to introduce an Islamic penal code that would co-exist with sharia-compliant "civil law", stressing that "waiting" or "saying no" would not be an option, as it was obligatory to implement God's laws "in a complete manner" (author's translations, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UGNuI6H_b-M, accessed 11 December 2016; see also "Sharia Compliant Penal Code," *The Brunei Times*, 14 October 2011). Yet only three years later international media took note of the legal reform, and began wondering why "the Sultan" (sic.) was "suddenly" (sic.) implementing "the Sharia" (sic.).

[38] Mahmud Saedon Othman 1996, 2008. Notably, the model of a systematic review of non-sharia law to bring it in line with Islamic norms is a model that had previously been practiced in Pakistan.

[39] See e.g. many interesting details in a US Embassy cable from 1994, published by *WikiLeaks*, entitled "Brunei Considers Constitutional Revisions," https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/94BANDARSERIBEGAWAN318_a.html, accessed 28 October 2016.

of repentance (SPCO, Sections 110, 221; on the option of repentance and lifting the punishment, see Section 117). However, unlike in other Islamic legal contexts, for example Iranian penal law, non-Muslims are not treated differently (i.e., less harshly) when insulting the prophet Muhammad (and other prophets): there are separate sections for each group on this matter (110 for Muslims, 221 for non-Muslims), but both include the same punishments. Government members, most notably the State Mufti, passionately stress the "merciful" character of the new code. For example, he argues that the regulations for caning are much more "humane" than those in neighbouring non-Islamic states like Singapore.[40] It remains to be seen whether Brunei's SPCO will follow the Islamic legal tradition of the "art of not punishing" (Rabb 2016)[41] or a more punitive-oriented trend. It may also be a paradoxical combination of the two: As Peletz (2015; and personal communication with him, Halle, September 2017) observes in Malaysia's contemporary sharia judiciary (as opposed to two decades ago), and Feener (2013) in the context of Aceh (Indonesia), an increasing codification of sharia-framed offenses and regulations can also go along with a numerically declining (or only occasional, selective) actual enforcement, where arrests and punishments are the exception rather than the norm and merely fulfil symbolic purposes. Particularly in Aceh, the focus is much more on "public pedagogy" than punishment, and any regular observer of Bruneian state media and state-religious discourse can attest to the enormous presence of similar "educational" measures in Brunei's everyday public sphere, where state actors are much more concerned with transforming the thinking and behaviour of citizens than with punishing them.

Although the SPCO does not abrogate the civil law, as Mahmud Saedon Othman had proposed, it does include sharia provisions and punishments that, for the first time in the history of colonial and post-colonial Brunei, now also apply to non-Muslims: each section specifies its applicability, e.g., for "any person," "any Muslim" (in its Malay version "*mana-mana orang*" vs. "*mana-mana orang Islam*"), sometimes with gender-related distinctions. Against this backdrop, the Ministry of Religious Affairs and state media speak of a "hybridization" of Brunei's sharia and civil law (HRRC 2015: 324). At the time of writing, the development of new enforcement structures is also reportedly underway, following which the police and religious enforcement agencies would cooperate in the SPCO's enforcement more systematically.

The SPCO 2013 is to be enacted in three stages; the first began in May 2014 (Müller 2015b: 322). The second is planned to begin 12 months after a procedural code, the Syariah Courts Criminal Procedure Code (CPC, Perintah Kanun Peraturan Jenayah Syari'ah), is (or would be) gazetted. Heavier punishments can only be applied in the second phase, and the most drastic ones, such as the death penalty, only in the third phase, which is scheduled to start two years after the second.[42]

The behind-the-scenes preparations of the SPCO during the past two decades and its enactment since 2014 is not only illustrative of the Islamic bureaucracy's growing powers vis-à-vis less legalistically Islamist-minded government members, or of the standardization of a Brunei-specific state Islam. Many of the SPCO's sections also serve the obvious purpose of further cementing the

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[40] Television interview with the State Mufti on Radio Television Brunei (RTB), 4 October 2017.

[41] Intisar Rabb personally handed over a copy of the book cited here to the Sultan during a visit to Brunei, organized by the US Embassy in 2015.

[42] "Penggubalan Akta Kanun Hukuman Jenayah Syar'iah: Kerana Allah, Bukan Untuk Glamor – Titah", *al-Hadaf* 20, no. 1 (2016): 1, 3.

Islamic bureaucracy's exclusive monopoly to publicly speak about Islam,[43] or, to use Graeber's (2012: 120) phrase, the bureaucratic "right to define the situation". Islamic teaching without permit and contempt of members of sharia courts or other institutions of the Islamic bureaucracy can now be punished with two years' imprisonment (SPCO, Sections 229, 230). Mocking or insulting Islamic laws – as defined by the bureaucracy – or the State Mufti's *fatwa*s (which enjoy the force of law, see further below[44]) can be punished with three years' imprisonment (SPCO, Section 220). Spreading beliefs that are "contrary to sharia law", as established through classificatory schemes by the bureaucracy, can result in up to five years' jail. Publishing about Islam-related matters without a permit can likewise lead to jail terms (SPCO, Sections 207, 209, 213, 215, 229). It is forbidden to set up mosques without a government license. Issuing "illegal *fatwa*s" (and any *fatwa* other than of the State Mufti or his personnel is illegal) can be punished with two years or monetary fines (cf. Müller 2015b: 325–336). Insulting religious enforcement officers or hindering their work is also punishable with a jail term (SPCO, Sections 229, 230).

To be sure, to my knowledge, nobody from Brunei's small population is presently imprisoned for any of these offenses. Most Muslims who have been identified as "deviant" by religious enforcement agencies in previous years received "warnings" and were "invited" to undergo "faith purification counselling", among other forms of soft pressure (cf. Müller 2015b: 327, 331). This was also emphasized by a high-ranking involved officer and by a voluntary "informant" of a religious enforcement unit whom I interviewed separately in 2014 and 2017. In the past, there have been rare cases of individuals facing more serious consequences, such as the members of the originally Malaysian al-Arqam community who were detained under the Internal Security Act (ISA) for attempting to set up a local branch in the 2000s. But the Islamic bureaucracy's powerful legal regime and the educational apparatus that it uses to expose the population to the "right" knowledge in accordance with the MIB state's classificatory power are nevertheless remarkably effective.

The rare instances in which individual citizens directly challenge the bureaucracy's discursive monopoly are not always solved by soft approaches. In 2013, a Brunei Malay citizen questioned a detail of the SPCO, which at the time had just been publicly presented, and argued in a reader's letter sent to a newspaper (and printed, which was surprising considering the state control of local media) that death by stoning in adultery cases is not required by divine legislation, since in his personal reading of the sharia, caning would be sufficient.[45] Brunei's Islamic bureaucracy, however, does not tolerate the expression of personal readings of the sharia that differ from its own. The Ministry of Religious Affairs published a response in the same newspaper, ending with an "invitation" to the author (Müller 2015b: 326; Müller 2016: 429). He was arrested shortly afterwards, following a multi-agency operation of the police, intelligence, and religious enforcement agencies, and accused of heresy, which was already illegal under pre-SPCO legislation. In the attendance of religious officers, he made a public "declaration of repentance", which freed him from prosecution (Müller 2015b: 326). The case served as a well-staged warning to members of the public not to think and speak beyond the taxonomic boundaries of state-defined

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[43] For a detailed analysis, including a pre- and post-SPCO comparison, see my report in HRRC 2015; see also Lindsey and Steiner "Islam, Law and the State", particularly the chapters on Brunei, on provisions with similar purposes in Brunei's pre-SPCO sharia legislation.

[44] *Fatwa*s (Arabic plural: *fatawa*, Malay plural: *fatwa* or *fatwa-fatwa*) are binding for Shafi'i Muslims in Brunei (which all Brunei Malays are expected to be) once the Sultan or MUIB order their publication in the Gazette RCKCA, Section 43.

[45] "Should We Resort to Stoning or Flogging (Opinion)," *The Brunei Times*, 13 March 2013.

"truth" and "deviance". Most recently, in 2017, an outspoken civil servant has been detained under the Internal Security Act after insulting the Ministry of Religious Affairs on the internet – in both cases, the bureaucracy aimed to demonstrate that questioning the state's exercise of classificatory power in the religious field is a red line not to be crossed.

The Syariah Courts Criminal Procedure Code (CPC)

In 2016, after receiving sharp criticism from the Sultan, the Ministry of Religious Affairs announced that the CPC is almost completed (something it had already proclaimed in late 2014). During and after a "surprise visit" to the Ministry, the Sultan questioned the Ministry about the CPC's slow progress, declaring that he "refused to listen to excuses", and he challenged the authorities "to explain the two-year delay".[46] In a meeting with the Islamic Religious Council (Majlis Ugama Islam Brunei, MUIB), he then asked "how many" of the SPCO's "provisions have been enforced" and even pretended to give possible excuses, speculating whether the Ministry might blame the Attorney General's Chambers (AGC), who are tasked with vetting the Ministry's draft, and vice-versa. He asked: "How thick is the draft? The AGC might tell us there are many other legal documents that need to be urgently dealt with too", which he called an "unacceptable excuse".[47] He proceeded: "Where is the Minister of Religious Affairs? And where is the Attorney General? Why have they not come forward to remedy this unsatisfactory situation?" He even asked whether certain bureaucrats might "intentionally refuse to vet" the CPC's draft. Their inaction might make the SPCO's implementation – enacted "solely for the sake of Allah, not in pursuit of glamour" – "look worthless" (cited in Müller 2017a: 203). He followed this with a more general criticism of the Ministry's work: "The minister and his deputy minister should not simply enjoy making visits upon visits, for instance to schools, mosques and elsewhere. In doing so, both of them pay a visit to the same place and enjoy media coverage", which was acceptable, but "if the events are becoming too many and frequent, what about office work and worse, if too many attend them – the minister, his deputy minister and a horde of other officers! Is it not more reasonable for one of them to make the visit while the other stays behind?" (ibid.). The entire event was fully mediatized through newspapers and state television. The Minister, Badaruddin Othman (who was just appointed in late 2015), quickly reacted and told the press that the CPC would be gazetted in June 2016, so that the second phase would start a year afterwards. (By the time of writing, October 2017, this still had not happened!) He explained that the CPC's draft was already "completed, but final changes are still being made" (HRRC 2015: 85; Müller 2015b: 327) to ensure that the SPCO's enforcement would be "as fair as possible and carried out according to Islamic law requirements". He also described the SPCO as "something totally new", and – as predicted by the monarch – added that "some chapters need to be reviewed many times by the AGC and the ministry", with "various (other) agencies" also being involved.[48] According to local reports, training programs are presently organized, partly in cooperation with religious officials from abroad as "consultants", and including "staff exchanges" with foreign religious institutions that have experience in the enactment of Islamic criminal law. The Ministry of Religious Affairs has a budget specifically allocated for coordinating the SPCO's final preparations.[49] As is common in Brunei, the bureaucracy's final draft of the CPC will be "proposed" to the Sultan, who would then "accept" the

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[46] Cited in "HM Questions Delay of Syariah Enforcement", *The Brunei Times*, 27 February 2016.
[47] Ibid.
[48] "Cooperation Essential for Success", *The Brunei Times*, 17 January 2016.
[49] "MoRA Proposes Budget of $249", *The Brunei Times*, 15 March 2016.

bureaucracy's "advice" – which frees him from responsibility for mistakes made by his advisors while still allowing him to take credit for the project as his own. In the fiscal year of 2015/6, 247 crimes were prosecuted under already existing sharia laws (Müller 2017a: 204).

The education sector is involved in practical and discursive preparations on various levels: In the course of engaging in participant observation, the author attended a lecture at the University of Brunei Darussalam, held by a Bruneian legal expert for students in 2014, which educated its audience about the unquestionable Islamicness of the new law and explained how *hudud*-punishments, the most "just" and divinely prescribed form of criminal law, had (it was assumed) already existed in pre-colonial Brunei (a claim also made in Mahmud Saedon Othman's above-mentioned paper and in local SPCO-related media productions on television and in newspapers). The new Islamic University of Brunei (Universiti Islam Sultan Sharif Ali, UNISSA), founded in 2007, has just produced the first graduates holding a double degree as Bachelor of Laws and Bachelor of Sharia Law, a programme that was started in 2012 with the apparent attention to produce more Islamic legal experts for the bureaucracy. There is rarely any "Islamic" job market outside the government-paid religious posts. 40% of UNISSA's bachelor's graduates from all disciplines who graduated between 2011 and 2014 were unemployed in 2016 (Müller 2017a: 204). The implementation of the SPCO and the multiple structural innovations that accompany it, including changes to agencies such as the regular police, are expected to create new job opportunities. The Sultan recently stated that UNISSA graduates should become a "driving force" in the SPCO's enforcement and "support government administration".[50]

Almost two years after the Sultan's public complaint about the slow progress of enforcement and six years after the Sultan's public rhetorical question asking "Who are we to say 'wait'?"[51] (which became *the* local media headline related to the SPCO locally and among admirers in neighbouring Malaysia), the situation remains unclear. Yet Bruneian television still regularly refers to the SPCO, and on the occasions of both the Sultan's 71st birthday (15 July 2017) and the 50-year "crown jubilee" (*Jubli Emas*) of his ascendance to the throne in October, the SPCO was presented as one of the monarch's most outstanding achievements in clips that played in an endless loop from morning to late at night, accompanied by patriotic songs about the ruler. During a fieldwork stay in early 2017, a senior bureaucrat spoke to me of an acquaintance, a legal official involved in the SPCO preparations who was now retiring and said to be relieved that "this wasn't his problem anymore" and that several parties were still "unprepared" ("nobody is trained to chop hands") while there was an "intentional delay" among parts of the bureaucracy. Another well-informed source said he was certain that the CPC still would not be completed anytime soon.[52] In the meantime, UNISSA continues preparing students for a more comprehensive implementation: In October 2017, a public "moot court" was held at Brunei's International Convention Centre by students from the Faculty of Syariah and Law enrolled in a Higher National Diploma programme for a newly established "Syariah Criminal Certificate" and students of the double degree in Law and Syariah Law. One of the cases was a person suspected of having drunk alcohol (illegal under the SPCO). Although it was clear that the person was *de facto* guilty, *de jure* the court was unable to prove his guilt under the SPCO's strict conditions for providing evidence. As a participant told the local press, the chosen case aimed to "show both the students and members of the public that it isn't easy to

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[50] Quoted in "Paint Accurate Picture of Islam", *The Brunei Times*, 15 March 2016.
[51] "Jangan kata 'Tidak' atau 'Tunggu Duku'", *Pelita Brunei*, 15 October 2011; 56, no. 124, 23; "Who are we to say 'Wait'", *The Brunei Times*, 13 October 2011.
[52] Informal conversations (anonymized), Brunei, February and July 2017.

convict anyone in the Syariah Court".[53] Clearly, while the status of institutional implementation of the "second phase" remains on hold, the discursive preparations and "educational" measures for instilling the "right knowledge" about the SPCO among its future practitioners and the wider public continue. In the MIB state's local discourse pertaining to the legal reform, there is a strong emphasis on Brunei wanting to implement Islamic criminal law in the "true spirit" of the sharia, i.e., just, merciful and procedurally correct under God's legislative will, unlike other places where "wrong" understandings of the sharia have led to cruel forms of practice and given the sharia a bad reputation among those who don't have proper "knowledge" about it. There is a strong sense of feeling misrepresented and misunderstood by international observers.

From Classification to Enforcement: "Doctrine Control" in Action
Brunei's Islamic bureaucracy is highly diversified and consists of numerous institutions, with several internal and district-specific sub-institutions. Among them are the Islamic Religious Council (MUIB, constitutionally the highest Islamic authority below the Sultan), the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the State Mufti Department, the Islamic Da'wah (propagation) Centre, and the Sharia Affairs Department, to name just a few. The State Mufti and his department play a crucial role in producing the contents of Brunei's state brand of Islam, most crucially through their numerous *fatwa*s, sermons and publications. Whereas *fatwa*s are normally non-binding legal opinions by Islamic scholars, the Bruneian State Mufti's *fatwa*s enjoy the force of law, and he (or persons authorized by him) are the only persons allowed to issue *fatwa*s. While "*fatwa* shopping" and the pluralization of religious authorities (see for example Eickelman and Anderson 2003; Mandaville 2007) are common elsewhere, and the digital age has seen numerous self-declared religious scholars spreading their own *fatwa*s in cyberspace, such developments are banned and non-existent in Brunei. Whoever issues *fatwa*s beyond the Islamic bureaucracy can be imprisoned, although to my knowledge, this has never happened. Even an officer of the State Mufti Department with whom I spoke about this in 2017 appeared unaware of their legally binding force (RCKCA, Section 43; SPCO, Section 228), and argued they served rather as religious advice (*nasihat*) – which points at a relative irrelevance of this (and other) legal norm(s) in practice.[54] Nevertheless, the de facto bureaucratic monopoly on issuing *fatwa*s illustrates how, beyond its functional capacities, the State Mufti Department has become the key institution in producing the *official meanings* of the formalized schemes of Islam in Brunei – which, I hasten to add, are related to, but must be distinguished from, the *social meanings* arising from the BoI produced in wider society (which can only superficially touched upon in this more programmatic Working Paper, but will be addressed in more depth in my forthcoming work as the project unfolds).

The previous State Mufti, Ismail Omar Abdul Aziz (originally from Johor, Malaysia, tenure 1962–1994) began to formalize a growing list of banned Muslim "deviant teachings" in the 1970s (Müller 2015b: 328). The list – as such a classic bureaucratic genre and instrument for exercising power – initially (1970/1971) included the country's small Baha'i community, especially targeting the quickly banned "Spiritual Assembly of the Bahais of Brunei", and was later enlarged with several other groups – including, e.g., Al-Arqam, the Ahmadiyyah, the Ahmadi Sufi order, some

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[53] "UNISSA Law Students Present 'Moot Court' Cases at ICC", *Borneo Bulletin*, 16 October 2017.

[54] However, in 2017, the Sultan stated in a royal address that "any efforts to dispute our religious beliefs and practices … should be prevented by the law and not merely through advice and preaching" (cited in Borneo Bulletin: "Oppression by those with power cannot be tolerated," 1 December 2017). Here, he was referring to Wahabi-inspired voices who criticize the celebration of the Prophet's birthday (*Maulidur Rasul*), which is commemorated annually in Brunei with a festive public event.

other Sufi groups and Shia Islam (Müller 2015b: 327; for an original source from the bureaucracy, see Norafan 2017).[55]

Brunei's Islamic bureaucracy not only formalizes "categorical schemes" of Islam, but it has also developed institutional structures, mechanisms, and bodies for enforcing these schemes and where necessary, imposing them forcefully. In this capacity, and in mutual dependency with the State Mufti Department and other institutions, these bodies practice what Bourdieu described as exercising the state's classificatory power, where, apart from law enforcement, the state bureaucratically engages in social categorization (Bourdieu 1990: 136–137). The Ministry of Religious Affairs' Faith/Doctrine Control Section (Bahagian Kawalan Aqidah, henceforth BKA) provides insight into the development and policing of Islam-related social categorization. Its aim, shared by other Islamic institutions, is to ensure that Muslim citizens do not transgress the boundaries of state Islam and to educate them about these boundaries. While the BKA's *function* is protect the Islamic bureaucracy's "right to define the situation" (Graeber 2012: 120), it has become part of the very *meaning* of what constitutes Islam in Bruneian state and society.

The first predecessor institution of the BKA was formed in 1986. According to a narrative of origin recounted by a high-ranking BKA officer, its founding initiative was related to the instance of a "possessed" (*dirasuk*) child in Kampung Junjungan (Tutong) that was "able to answer any question", and therefore attracted attention, with people queuing in front of the family's house in the hopes of receiving answers to their questions. Religious officials arrived at the scene to conduct an Islamic exorcism, a practice that is normalized to some extent across the Malay world, although traditionally it would have been carried out by a *bomoh* (supernatural healer/magician) or mosque representative, not by a state bureaucrat. After the case was resolved, the Ministry decided to establish an institution to deal specifically with "deviant" behaviour. The "deviant" aspect in this initial instance was seeking the services of spirits (*jin*)[56] or engaging in sorcery (*sihir*), which were assumed to be the cause of the possession. Both are strictly considered forbidden (*haram*) in orthodox Sunni discourse, although among Malays it is widely assumed that many people in one's social environment engage in such magic practices and spirit interactions. The newly formed institution was renamed repeatedly and its scope of power gradually broadened (Müller 2015b: 328ff.). In 2001 it merged with the Religious Investigation Unit (Bahagian Penyiasatan). It presently operates under the Ministry of Religious Affairs' Sharia Affairs Department (Jabatan Hal Ehwal Syariah). As part of the enactment of the SPCO, there are plans to integrate it into a new institutional structure of religious enforcement. However, although the institution's director told the author in a group interview in 2014 that this restructuring was imminent and part of the enforcement of SPCO (which he greatly welcomed as it would improve the legal foundations[57] of his institution's work), as of 2017, this has not materialized yet.

The BKA's corporatized structure includes departments for "operations", "administration", and "surveillance". Specific units are responsible for handling systematically defined sub-fields of potential deviance, including units investigating Sufi orders (*tareqat*), spiritualism (*ilmu kerohanian*), shamans/healers (*perbomohan*), "superstition" (*khurafat*), and "deviations from the faith and comparative religion" (*penyelewengan aqidah dan perbandingan ugama*) (Müller 2015b:

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[55] Norafan Zainal, currently rector of Sultan Sharif Ali Islamic University (UNISSA), published extensively on "deviant teachings."

[56] In the Malay language, as opposed to Arabic, the singular and plural form for *jin* is identical.

[57] Previously, the main legal justification in terms of religious offences has been the RCKA, Section 186 ("False Doctrine", Malay: *Ajaran Sesat*).

329). Like the government at large, the BKA considers itself responsible to "command the good and prevent the evil" (*amar ma'ruf nahi munkar / al`amru bil-ma'ruf wannahyu'anil-mun'kar*), a central principle of Islam – although the precise meaning of this, and whether this individual duty should also be fulfilled by states, is theologically contested – at least outside Brunei. The BKA's public relations materials, such as a professionally produced colourful folder given to the author during fieldwork in 2014, cites Quranic and Hadith sources to underline the divine nature of its controlling mission. The BKA also offers 24-hour telephone hotlines for citizens to report deviations ("confidentiality is guaranteed"), and regularly identifies suspects following tip-offs, as regular press coverage attests. This practice was confirmed to the author in vivid accounts by members of the BKA and is partially backed up by photographic evidence and confiscated materials, some of which have been made available to the public in the form of two permanent exhibitions meant for educational purposes.[58] Cases in recent years have included: black magic, insults to Islam, an inappropriate usage of Islamic symbols, Islamic teaching without license, one unlicensed "mosque" (organized by South Asian guest workers), a weblog promoting atheism, involvement in Christian and Buddhist practices, failure to attend Friday prayers, attendance at "deviant" activities abroad (e.g., with a Sufi community and with a *guru* engaging in magic practices), and un-Islamic worship at an anthill considered to contain powers (to name just a few). Identified individuals were, at least prior to the SPCO reform, normally not imprisoned, but they received a "warning" and were effectively urged to "voluntarily" undergo "counselling".

According to a lower-level source involved in investigations, a person would normally receive three "warnings" before more serious action would be taken, i.e., bringing the cases to the sharia court.[59] To the author's knowledge, none of the numerous temporarily arrested *bomoh*, for example, have ever been sentenced by a court. However, I recently came across the case of a person who had already received two warnings and was again under investigation (with my interlocutor being centrally involved in that process). Also, as I will illustrate further below, the SPCO contains new provisions, which, as the BKA's director pointed out in our interview, would place its work on a more solid legal ground. Consequently, it is possible that we might see such cases occasionally being brought to court in the future.

Pictures 1 and 2: "Exhibition of Objects Leading to Deviation from the Correct Doctrine",
Ministry of Religious Affairs, Brunei Darussalam, 2014. (Photo: Dominik M. Müller)

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[58] Fieldwork data gathered in September and October 2014. Most recently, in 2017, persons involved in a covert investigation against a *bomoh* shared dramatic details with the astonished author. The two exhibitions mentioned here are organized by sub-institutions of the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

[59] Interview (anonymized), Brunei, July 2017.

Regulating keramat *Shrine-Worshipping and* bomoh *Practices*

In line with its disciplining and educational motivations, the BKA engages in public relations work: It utilizes the local news media, but also organizes workshops and lectures, and maintains a permanent exhibition of confiscated materials used in "deviant activities", entitled "Exhibition of Objects Leading to the Deviation from the (True) Doctrine" (*Pameran bahan-bahan yang membawa kepada Penyelewengan Akidah*) (see Müller 2015b for further details and illustrations). Some of these materials have been confiscated from arrested *bomoh*. The *bomoh* have long been central figures of traditional villages across the Malay world (Skeat, 1900; Winstedt 1924), but have been declared "deviant" since the 1980s in the course of Brunei's Islamization policies, which coincided with similar discursive shifts in the wider Malay world in the course of Islamic revivalism and its desires for "purification". Under the bureaucracy's exercise of classificatory power, with its increasingly orthodox and anti-pluralistic orientation, the *bomoh* practice became viewed as a "big sin",[60] and the figure of the *bomoh* was transformed from a widely accepted (sometimes feared) social institution into a marginalized criminal (Müller 2015b: 333). The public is regularly asked to report *bomoh*, and arrests occur (Müller 2015b: 333), normally followed by "counselling" – "in individual cases even for the rest of their life".[61] During my latest fieldwork stay in 2017, I was brought in touch with two people who had voluntarily contacted the authorities to report a *bomoh* and were then recruited to infiltrate the group for the gathering of evidence. They considered this work to be both a civic and a religious duty and felt that the harm this investigation would do to the *bomoh* and his followers was ethically justified considering the harm that he does to them (a small community of "followers/helpers/students" surrounding him), to his patients, and to religious normativity more generally.[62] Notably, my interlocutors did not appear overly "religious" in dress, speech, or lifestyle and was well-educated, self-aware, and cosmopolitan in appearance. Nevertheless, over the five-hour interview it became evident that their[63] convictions included many of the official discourse's assumptions about "deviance" – some of these convictions predated the initial report, while others seem to have been "learned" through the personal exchange with the religious enforcement authorities for whom they now worked as a voluntary, part-time spy (without a salary, and without needing one). This micro-level case, just as the numerous other regular tip-offs given to the authorities since the early 2000s (for numbers of tip-offs in 2004/5, see Müller 2015b: 333), exemplifies how in Brunei, the state's classificatory power is *co-produced* (in a Bourdieuian sense) among wide parts of society, and how its hegemonic discourse is internalized and can "acquire a commonsensical, taken-for-granted character" for individuals (Handelman and Shamgar-Handelman 1991: 294). Clearly, the national education system, ranging from the actual educational institutions (primary/secondary school, university, etc.) to the wider educational machinery in the public sphere, plays a key role in providing the discursive substratum that enables such social processes to unfold (partly reflecting Bourdieu's description of the role of institutionalized education and schooling in the "bureaucratic field", see Boudieu et al. 1994, albeit in a very different regional setting, which makes some of his descriptions inapplicable).

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[60] "Mysteries of Paranormal, Superstition", *Brunei Direct*, 27 July 2009.
[61] Group interview with BKA members, Bandar Seri Begawan, 18 October 2014.
[62] Interview, anonymized, Brunei, July 2017.
[63] Anonymized.

Another example of the effects of the state's exercise of classificatory power – i.e., claiming a monopoly on the interpretation of Islam – through the BoI, and the processes of meaning-making and social change that accompany it, is their effects on the Malay, originally Sufi-inspired tradition of engaging in worship practices at "powerful places" (*tempat keramat*), including "graves containing powers" (*kubur keramat / kubur yang berkat*). Many Muslim Malays prayed at such places and/or provided offerings to the spirit of the deceased person, who is believed to serve as an intermediary to convey their wish (*niat*) to God. The practice was common across the Malay world in the nineteenth and much of the twentieth century (Skeat 1900), and it is still openly practiced today in Indonesia and Singapore – some accept it while an arguably growing number of Muslims consider it a "sin" (*syirik*), but the states' religious bureaucracies do not interfere with sanctions or surveillance. With popular Islamic revival and its increasingly orthodox orientation, these practices have come to be viewed as "superstitious" (*khurafat*), "pre-Islamic" and as contradicting the unity of God (*tahwid*) in mainstream Islamic discourse in Brunei and Malaysia in particular. In Indonesia, a similar stance is increasingly visible but has not yet acquired hegemony – members of one of the largest Muslim organizations, Nahdlatul Ulama, for example, practice and defend such traditions and other supernatural beliefs as being, from their point of view, essentially Islamic.

Brunei's Islamic bureaucracy has banned *keramat*-worshipping practices, and the BKA has been active in conducting surveillance at such places and identifying suspected worshippers.[64] By the time the issue became a bureaucratic concern, and the state *ulama* began to address the issue more regularly, some *keramat* places had already been abandoned, or were frequented much less than in earlier decades. One of the few still existing and widely known *keramat* places is called Tuan Syarif or Tuan Sae (referring to the person buried there, allegedly a travelling Arab missionary). It is located next to a road in the Tutong district (Kampung Pancur Papan), with a dome built over the grave that makes it immediately visible. A district-based state Islamic office has erected a signboard next to it warning worshippers of jail terms (up to four months under pre-SPCO legislation), fines, and divine punishments in the afterlife (Müller 2015b: 325). I visited the place repeatedly between 2013 and 2017 and always found minor traces of occasional usage (incense sticks, coins, a bottle of water, soy sauce, a "lucky number" for a lottery). I also spoke about the place with inhabitants of the district, who told of much more intense usage in earlier years (with actual ceremonies having been conducted there, as described in a local weblog[65] – something that apparently does not happen anymore), as well as the continued practice of throwing coins at it while driving past. BKA officers told me they had conducted surveillance there, and that it had "become quiet" in recent years (cf. Müller 2015b: 331). They also explained they could not simply remove the shrine, as it is religiously forbidden to destroy a Muslim grave.[66] This stands in contrast to practices in Saudi Arabia, where domes over graves are forbidden and may even be destroyed (Beránek and Tupek: 2009).

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[64] Group interview with BKA members, Bandar Seri Begawan, 18 October 2014.

[65] Fotorafi (Weblog), "Kubur Sharif", 26 June 2009, https://fotorafi.wordpress.com/2009/06/26/kubur-sharif/, accessed 11 December 2016.

[66] Banning domes over graves in Brunei would at present also be inconceivable in light of the fact that royal graves are commonly placed under large domes.

Pictures 3 and 4: A grave-shrine once widely known as kubur keramat *("sacred grave") with a signboard carrying a 'warning' (*amaran*) by state-Islamic authorities about punishments in this world and the hereafter for violations against sharia law (*Hukum Syara'*). Kampung Panchor Papan, Brunei Darussalam. (Photo: Dominik M. Müller)*

In neighbouring Malaysia, where each state handles the administration of Islam separately, some *keramat* graves in Malacca have been destroyed by a state-Islamic institution with the purpose of countering "superstitious deviance",[67] whereas others are still openly in use where the regional religious authorities' stance is more tolerant.

Surveillance at Brunei's Tuan Syarif shrine is supported by neighbours who filed reports about "deviant" activities there in the past and also expressed their worries about "sinful" activities being carried out there through social media (Müller 2015b: 328). They, too, however, indicate the decline of worship practices at that place. At another formerly used *keramat* grave, which is located in a private garden, I found that in 2014 the garden's owner (a relative of the buried person) had removed the dome (rusty pieces of which were still in the garden), signaling her wish to put an end to the practice. Only four years previously, the site and its continued usage had been documented and described in depth in an MA thesis of a Bruneian student (Hanifu 2010). At another such grave, the scenery was different: there were fresh traces of intense worshipping, and a neighbour tolerant of the practice spoke more openly about it – claiming, however, that those who came and sometimes stayed there overnight were nowadays mainly foreigners ("Indonesians"), which may or may not be true. The BKA officers similarly told me that the majority of *bomoh* in Brunei were nowadays foreigners, mainly from Indonesia, both of which would indicate a decline of such practices among the state-disciplined and, from the Islamic bureaucracy's point of view, "better educated" local population. At yet a fourth similar grave that I visited in 2017, a neighbour who was born in a house right next to the grave (which still had a dome, but was in a poor condition stated that worshipping practices started to decline in the 1980s and had now finally ceased entirely.

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[67] "Makam Keramat Pulau Besar Diruntuhkan", *Malaysiakini*, 13 May 2015.

Picture 5: Abandoned former keramat *grave shrine in a private garden, Tutong, Brunei Darussalam, 2014.*
(Photo: Dominik M. Müller)

Picture 6: Well-hidden keramat *grave shrine in Tutong with fresh traces of worshipping (incense sticks, candle wax), Brunei Darussalam, 2014.*
(Photo: Dominik M. Müller)

Picture 7: Keramat *grave shrine in Tutong, Brunei Darussalam, 2017. (Photo: Dominik M. Müller)*

He hastened to add that these practices had contradicted Islamic teachings (falling under the rubric of *khurafat*).[68] At the very margins of society, some of these practices persist, but those still engaging in them – and thus refusing to comply with the bureaucracy's interpretation of Islamic doctrine – deploy tactics of secrecy to avoid the authorities' attention. While the practices of Brunei's Islamic and MIB bureaucracy have obviously contributed to social and cultural changes in the spheres of Muslim Malay everyday life, such as the decline of *keramat* worshipping and consultation with *bomoh*, it has also created an elaborate habitus of not revealing one's thoughts when they contradict state doctrines and instead relegating them into the spheres of what Scott (1990) has called the "hidden transcript". The refusal of normative compliance expressed by a small group of persons who still secretly visit such places furthermore reflects some aspects of what Scott (1985) calls "everyday forms of resistance". Not be confused with open confrontation or rebellion, such everyday resistance is shaped by a pragmatic adaptation to the hegemonic powers without actually supporting or internalizing their truth claims; the resistance may also take the form of a more secretive and potentially subversive circumvention of these powers (Müller 2015b: 333). To the extent I can judge it, these "resistances" are marginal: locals say that the few Bruneians who still pay visits to *keramat* places mainly belong to the older generations, which is usually explained by pointing out their lack of "better education" about Islam. These practitioners and their justifying narratives and normative convictions have become socially invisible. Of course, the internalization of the hegemonic state-Islamic discourse and its truth claims pertaining to the deviance of *keramat* shrine-worshipping is a gradual process and its extent varies from individual to individual – and when there is a secretive refusal to comply with norms, it occurs in spheres that are difficult to access for a researcher coming from the outside, even more so if he is assumed be to affiliated with state authorities (although these authorities themselves, at times, have unofficially served as door-openers to spheres of supposed deviance and "every form of resistance" in surprising ways[69]). The high degree of surveillance to which every Bruneian is (potentially) subjected, and the social pressure and secrecy that accompanies this, creates limitations for fieldwork in this setting, just as my positionality in the field did and does. However, the appearance of *keramat* places in Brunei, which have few remaining visible traces of usage (let alone renovations), differs strikingly from the more actively used ones in neighbouring Singapore or Indonesia, and both my numerous conversations with Bruneians about the topics and my own observations at such places indicate a clear trend in this cultural practice that is largely disappearing. But there are counter-examples: At one still actively used place in Brunei, neighbours were more supportive (or at least tolerant) of the practice and clearly *had not internalized* the state's discourse in this field, but they also refused to speak about this matter in any further depth, and for more than understandable reasons. This example underlines that even where highly powerful (and "totalistic") bureaucracies create social

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[68] Another grave shrine that was attended some decades ago – it is ascribed to Syed Mufaqih, who is mentioned in Brunei's mythical tale of origin, Syair Awang Semaun, as having brought Islam to the country – is now located at the compound of the Sultan's palace, Istana Nurul Iman, and thus beyond potential worshippers' (and regrettably also the author's) reach. I was made aware of this place by a high-ranking MIB representative, who shared childhood memories about a time when neighbours regularly went to that grave to conduct prayers.

[69] It be sure, working with officials *can* negatively impact access to other groups and to the webs of meaning outside of officialdom. Nevertheless, in a small country like Brunei, communities and networks overlap in all directions, and I did achieve some insights into groups of the population that deplore the government's classification certain forms of religiosity as unacceptable – unofficial specialists, visitors to shrines, and people adhering to banned doctrines and ideas. First data on this have been published in Müller 2015, and I plan to present more in forthcoming writings. Nevertheless, my access has been limited, and it is hoped that anthropologists, ideally individuals stationed for long periods of time in Brunei, might carry out research specifically targeting these spheres while being involved as little as possible with the Islamic bureaucracy and other state institutions.

facts, these facts are inevitably contested and rejected by some segments of society. To the extent that data on these secretive spheres can be gathered, ethnography, more than any other discipline, is in a unique position to illustrate these nuances of popular reaction to bureaucracy and bureaucratization in a differentiated manner.

In the case of supernatural specialists, however, the bureaucratically stigmatized practice does not at all seem to be disappearing, although it may appear so on first sight. Just as *keramat* places are nowadays apparently mainly visited by foreigners who have not undergone the MIB state's educational machinery, *bomoh* are nowadays similarly said to be primarily foreigners, and, with few exceptions, the elderly local *bomoh* will not be succeeded by a new generation of locals. Parallel to this decline, however, there is a massive rise of a new phenomenon of "sharia-compliant" healing and exorcism, which I have described in more detail elsewhere (Müller 2015b: 337) and which enables ex-*bomoh* and other interested persons to "purify" their work and thus re-legitimize it within the symbolic and doctrinal parameters of the MIB state (for a more in-depth ethnographic and theoretical account of this process of reinventing *bomoh* practice in the language of state power, see Müller 2018, forthcoming).

Picture 8: State-approved sharia-compliant exorcism at the Darusysyifa Warrafahah, Brunei Darussalam, 2017. (Photo: Dominik M. Müller)

This is supported by examples of two cases of transgression (one man abusing his certificate to inadequately "treat" a female patient – he later claimed to have been possessed by a *jin* – and another *bomoh* falsely claiming to hold such a certificate). While the Darusysyifa Warrafahah is a non-state body, it and its curriculum has been approved by the Islamic bureaucracy, its "governing board" members are mainly civil servants (partly retired), and it is itself bureaucratic in organizational and symbolic matters (organizational structure, standardization, certificates). In some respects, it illustrates an instance in which the BoI transcends its institutional boundaries in ways not intended or expected by the local BoI, pointing to the contingent, socially

productive nature of such bureaucratization processes even in highly controlled settings. The Darusysyifa Warrafahah, for its part, has appropriated Bruneian state bureaucratic forms both as organizational structures and in more abstract ways of thinking and organizing beyond the actual core state apparatus.[70] Since royal family members serve as its patrons, it is able to symbolically stage its state compliance and legitimacy in "unquestionable" ways.

In the legal sphere, the SPCO further cements the notion that Islam forbids certain Sufi-inspired practices and other Malay traditions related to supernatural beliefs, and that the state may

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[70] See Müller 2018, forthcoming, for a more in-depth analysis of how such supposedly orthodox "(state-)sharia-compliant" exorcism becomes re-embedded into a (pre-) "existing cultural vocabulary" (Herzfeld 1992: 57) and at the same time is "modernized" in remarkably creative and symbolically hybrid ways.

legitimately punish "criminals" in this field. Section 216 stipulates that shrine worship – more specifically worshipping "any person, place, nature or any object, thing or animal in any manner" contrary to Islamic law, e.g., by believing that objects or animals possess certain powers, increase wealth, heal diseases, or bring good luck – can be punished with two years' imprisonment, a fine, and "counselling". Section 208 states that any person proven to have conducted or advertised black magic can be sentenced to five years in jail or fined BND 20,000 and sent to "counselling" (SPCO, Section 208). Attempted murder by black magic can be punished by ten years, BND 40,000, or both (SPCO, Section 153). Any Muslim who falsely "claims that he or any other person knows an event or a matter that is beyond human understanding or knowledge" and contradicts Islamic teachings can be imprisoned for 10 years, receive 40 strokes, "and the Court shall order him to repent" (SPCO, Section 206b). It remains to be seen how these legal stipulations will acquire social meanings in the spheres of everyday life and institutional practice.

As both examples – *keramat* shrine-worshipping and *bomoh* practices – illustrate, the state's exercise of classificatory power, alongside interrelated changes in popular religiosity, have triggered normative transformations in the everyday life of affected social actors and have substantially changed the parameters of publicly acceptable religious practice in Brunei. Top-down and bottom-up developments of discursive change and bureaucratized (or in Eickelman's terms "objectified") thinking inform each other in dialectical ways, and "non-state" actors creatively participate in that process. Accordingly, in the MIB state normalized notions of being a "good Muslim" have acquired new doctrinal and social meanings that in some respects differ from those that were normalized in the past. The following section will now briefly shift to a regional comparison in order to illustrate contrasting manifestations and embeddings of the BoI, for even in neighbouring, historically closely intertwined Malay-speaking settings, very different meanings are produced and the normativities of everyday life undergo very different transformations.

Beyond Brunei: reflections on the potential of intra-regional comparison

The contents of bureaucratized Islam and their underlying processes of meaning-making are locally specific and conditioned by each nation state's (or sub-region's) particular discursive substratum. Comparatively viewed, the Malay Islamic Sultanate of Brunei, with its declared "non-secular" and anti-pluralistic religious policies in a non-democratic context, stands in sharp contrast to other states in the region, such as Singapore. The latter is a decidedly "secular", albeit by no means non-religious,[71] semi-democratic and "semi-authoritarian" (Turner 2015) state with a significant Muslim Malay minority that has traditionally been perceived by parts of the government as a potential threat to "national harmony", security, and economic development. While in Singapore state-Islamic power is mainly centralized under a single institution, namely the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura, MUIS, with several sub-institutions), the Bruneian bureaucracy consists of a much wider assemblage of institutions. Singapore's MUIS – an institution led by highly cosmopolitan and passionately self-reflecting religious intellectuals – explicitly affirms its commitment to "pluralism"[72] and the "secular" state – notions categorically opposed by Brunei's Islamic bureaucracy.
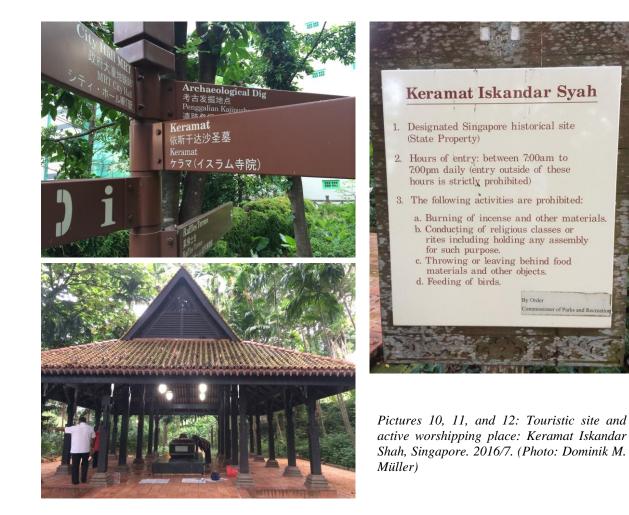
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[71] See Neo's (2018, forthcoming) excellent analysis of five different forms of understanding "secularism" in the context of Singapore.
[72] For a citation of the Sultan condemning "religious pluralism" and an analysis of it see Müller 2016: 423.

Picture 9: "Widenining the Discourse": Programmatic signboard at the lobby of the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore's (MUIS) headquarters, 2016. (Photo: Dominik M. Müller)

These and other, less widely known places are regulated as well – each Muslim grave outside of a graveyard must be registered with the state-Islamic bureaucracy – and the holding of "religious ceremonies" in groups is explicitly forbidden at Fort Canning, as is the practice of leaving behind food sacrifices (although these rules are regularly ignored by worshippers).

Pictures 10, 11, and 12: Touristic site and active worshipping place: Keramat Iskandar Shah, Singapore. 2016/7. (Photo: Dominik M. Müller)

However, these rules are not justified on religious doctrinal grounds, and individual worshipping there is both permitted and an observable everyday reality. Many of Singapore's once numerous Malay *keramat* shrines[73] have disappeared to make way for commercial development or infrastructural city-planning projects. Other, not touristically marketized shrines (e.g., at Bukit Kasita, and at the Old Malay Cemetery) are still taken care of and regularly attended by worshippers. Some state-registered mosques in Singapore (e.g., Masjid Malabar Muslim Jama-Ath) even serve as caretakers of "exceptional graves", where they conduct Sufi-style worshipping practices (especially on Thursday nights).[74] At the shrine of Bukit Faber called "Makam Puteri Radin Mas Ayu", where a Javanese princess is said to be buried, a caretaker (*penjaga*) belonging to the Naqshbandiyyah Sufi order stays on site and basically lives there (reflecting earlier traditions of caretakers of such places). Pak Daeng, the caretaker, accepts the idea of getting in contact with the deceased princess and asking her to covey one's wishes to Allah, but rejects some other traditional *keramat* practices as sinful (*syirik*) and insists on upholding orderly "manners of grave visiting" (*adab ziarah makam).*[75]

Picture 13: Bukit Kasita

The interlocutor from Brunei, described above, who spied on a *bomoh* for the authorities (but has a more "secular" working background), had learned in Brunei that any such practices are incompatible with Islam found my account of the Singaporean caretaker's stance this visibly bewildering and downright wrong[76] because it would clearly deviate from the *aqidah*. Singapore's most well-known and highly frequented *keramat* grave shrine (also with a caretaker staying on site), Habib Noh has even recently been substantially renovated with funding from the Islamic bureaucracy's central institution, MUIS in spite of some of its members' theological disagreement with the practice of saint worshipping and their intellectual reflections on their own understandings of the "true" *aqidah* in a Sunni Shafi'i, Muslim Malay-dominated framework.

The elites of both Singapore's and Brunei's Islamic bureaucracy often hold degrees from the same Islamic educational institution abroad, namely al-Azhar University in Egypt, albeit usually combined with additional degrees from other countries; in Singapore's case this often also includes degrees from prestigious Western universities. Furthermore, Singapore's MUIS maintains a "MUIS Academy" that regularly hosts international academics scholars from various backgrounds and religious leaders, both Muslim and from other religions, for lectures, workshops, and dialogues – not to endorse their views, but to broaden intellectual horizons and actively practice diversity and

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[73] Described in invaluable depth in, for example, *The Straits Times*, "Singapore's Keramats: Wonder-Working Shrines Sacred to Many Nationalities", 11 June 1939, page 16, and Rivers 2003.

[74] At the Old Malay Cemetery in Singapore, there is an elevated plateau with royal graves, marked with yellow cloth and signboards. On the stairs, an inscription asks the visitor to "give a greeting" (*beri salam*). In a more "wahabi"-style orthodox reading, communication with deceased persons is neither possible nor is it permissible to attempt this.

[75] Author's observations and conversation with Pak Daeng (the Radin Mas shrine's caretaker), Singapore, October 2014.

[76] Interview (anonymised), Brunei, July 2017.

inclusion beyond mere lip-service, as high-ranking MUIS representatives told me and their numerous publication materials and well-documented outreach activities testify.

Pictures 14 and 15: Touristic site and active worshipping place: Habib Noh, with a MUIS flag and signboard in front of it. Singapore 2017. (Photos: Dominik M. Müller)

In line with Malay *keramat* tradition, yellow and white cloth placed at gravestones or used to wrap other objects (e.g., Malay daggers kept at one's home) can easily be found at many places in Singapore, whereas in Brunei, one of the two exhibitions of confiscated objects at the Ministry of Religious Affairs mentioned earlier shows precisely such cloths as an illustration of "deviant" traditions. One of these showcased objects, for example, was a "royal throne" wrapped in yellow cloth; the throne had been used by a self-declared *bomoh* king (*raja bomoh*), as the officers explained to me. A Bruneian citizen similarly showed me a "powerful" Malay dagger at his home, wrapped in yellow cloth – if reported, the authorities might well have confiscated it from him.[77] I have not seen a single grave in Brunei where a yellow or white cloth would still be placed.
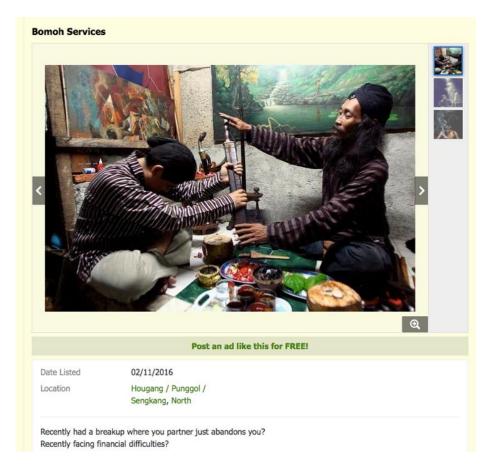

Picture 16: Yellow cloths at a grave, Malabar Muslim Jama-Ath Mosque, Singapore, 2017. (Photo: Dominik M. Müller)

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[77] Personal observation at a private home during fieldwork (anonymized), Brunei, October 2014.

In Singapore, Indonesia, and Malaysia, *bomoh* (in Indonesia better known *as dukun*), may sometimes be arrested, but for different reasons than in Brunei, namely usually in connection with fraud accusations or sexual offenses, not doctrinal crimes. Furthermore, in Singapore, *bomoh* practitioners openly advertise their services in newspapers and on the internet[78] – a practice for which they could now face jail terms in Brunei under the SPCO. However, a member of MUIS told the author how some non-state Islamic groups contact Singapore's Islamic bureaucracy because they consider practices such as those of *bomoh* and Sufi-inspired *keramat* shrine worshippers to be superstitious and would like to see their Islamic authorities (MUIS) taking a more orthodox and forceful and explicitly exclusionary (if not punitive) stance on these issues. This illustrates how in Singapore, quite differently from in Brunei, the bureaucracy does not just serve as a government-installed tool for propagating a state-friendly version of Islam or neutralizing Islamic opposition – although it surely does this! (and MUIS representatives I spoke with self-critically reflect upon it) – but is also simultaneously under pressure to navigate between top-down and bottom-up pressures. To be sure, there is much agreement on the more uncontroversial fundamentals of Islam among Southeast Asia's Islamic bureaucracies, all of whom primarily adhere to Sunni Islam of the Shafi'i legal school and even have close contacts and regular international exchanges. But when it comes to the boundaries of formalized truth claims, the treatment of intra-Muslim minorities, controversial traditional practices, and the question of (in-)tolerance towards the plurality of beliefs and practices, the nationally conditioned contents of categorical schemes of bureaucratized Islam and their implications for conceptions of (not) being a "good Muslim" differ widely. Another case in point are groups like the Ahmadiyyah and Shia Muslims, who in Singapore maintain community centres and mosques and hold public activities – something that would be unimaginable in Brunei.[79] As these brief examples show, the social meanings produced through the BoI in both countries are enormously different, although a functional (as opposed to hermeneutic) analysis asking for characteristic features of bureaucratic Islam would more likely identify partial similarities.

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[78] For a vivid journalistic account addressing a smartphone app (Carousell) that is locally widely used for booking supernatural services, including black magic, see "Mystcism and Modern Tech: The Life and Times of a Caroussel Bomoh", *Coconuts Singapore* (Ilyyas Sholhyn), 26 September 2017, URL: https://coconuts.co/custom-feature/mysticism-and-modern-tech-the-life-and-times-of-a-carousell-bomoh/, accessed 7 December 2017.

[79] MUIS' stance towards these two groups is complex, ambivalent and has evolved over time. While an earlier fatwa declares the Ahmadiyyah (or rather a certain branch of it) deviant, not everybody today is happy with this *fatwa* anymore. Notably, it is common for MUIS' fatwa committee to self-critically reassess its earlier positions vis-à-vis new information and thought processes. As for the Shia, MUIS has an ective engagement with the Shia community, despite the doctrinal differences. Similarly, Singapore's sharia judiciary seeks to include the jurisprudence of diverse Islamic legal schools into its daily work, based on case-specific requirements, rather than simply imposing a singular, monolithic state-brand of Islam.

Picture 17: Advertising for "bomoh service" in Singapore, 2016. Source: Internet.

A partial overlap exists in how Islam is translated into the "language" of bureaucracy on a more formal level, namely through the establishment of *categorical schemes* of a national brand of Islam. The powerful acronym here is not *Melayu Islam Beraja* (MIB), but SMI, the *Singapore Muslim Identity*, which programmatically consists of ten desired attributes[80] (see also Rizwana Abdul Aziz 2014; Tuty 2014). MUIS itself sums up the SMI's essence more briefly as "knowledge, principle-centeredness, progressiveness and inclusiveness, which describe the identity of Singaporean Muslims today" (ibid.) while presenting a normative statement in descriptive terms. SMI, however, is not a national ideology like MIB, but one exclusively targeted to the Muslim minority population. Another such categorical scheme, made mandatory in 2017, is the ARS, an acronym for the Asatizah Recognition Scheme (Tuty 2014: 571), according to which all religious teachers (Singaporean term: *asatizah*) are required to register with MUIS and fulfil certain "minimum standards of qualification". In line with the "inclusiveness"-oriented contents of the SMI, that the inclusion of "various schools of thought" is emphasized.[81] However, this doctrinal inclusiveness, which stands in contrast to Brunei's monolithic approach, now excludes those who refuse to submit to the coercively imposed categorical scheme. Here, again we see overlaps in the functional analysis, namely the attempt to increase state control over Islamic discourse through bureaucratic agencies and to outlaw those who reject the state's claim to set the rules for Islam-related public

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[80] MUIS, "Risalah for Building a Singapore Muslim Community of Excellence", 2nd edition (2006), viii, URL: https://www.muis.gov.sg/officeofthemufti/documents/Risalah-eng-lr.pdf, accessed 15 October 2017.
[81] "Asatizah Recognition Scheme to Become Compulsory from January 2017: Yaacob", *Channel NewsAsia*, URL: http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/asatizah-recognition-scheme-to-become-compulsory-from-january-20-7799112, accessed 15 October 2017.

communication and practice. According to Singapore's Minister-in-Charge of Muslim Affairs, the state will now assure that "Islamic education providers engage only teachers registered under the scheme".[82] Through this obligatory registration, which is presented as giving "benefits" to Islamic scholars, the field of Islamic teaching is being made further "legible"[83] to the state. Nevertheless, it must be stressed that influential MUIS representatives themselves critically interrogate some of their own categorical schemes, such as the MUIS slogan of building a "Muslim Community of Excellence", and engage in intense reasoning about what the initially vague signifier "Excellence" could or should mean very specifically in their context. Also, while "taxonomical thinking" (e.g. Handelman, see above) has often been attributed as a defining characteristic to bureaucracy, leading MUIS members challenge their community to overcome simply dichotomies and narrow forms of Islamic legalism, and develop a sensitivity for intellectual reflections upon ambivalence, dialectics and contextual hermeneutics in their personal reasoning about the meanings of the sharia (as I have myself witnessed at a large event organized by the Fatwa Commmittee for mosque community members in 2017). They also criticize simplifying scholarly and popular views and attitudes towards the question of *halal* certification, for example, for which MUIS is responsible, and exhibit a remarkable openness to modern technologies (as e.g. its *fatwa*-making on the latest bio-technologies, and intense exchanges with academic experts from these fields demonstrate). It could be argued, however, that paradoxically, in the attempt to overcome "taxonomic thinking" and "simple categorical schemes", new taxonomies are established, such as the SMI, which seeks to bureaucratize an openness to diversity and inclusiveness on Islamic grounds. After all, even ideologically anti-taxonomical bureaucracies remain bureaucracies.

This brief glimpse at social and doctrinal differences in bureaucratized Islam in Brunei and Singapore illustrates that the regional scope of Malay-speaking Southeast Asia covers national environments in which Islamic bureaucracies have standardized state-brands of "Islamic truth" and "heresy" by formalizing classificatory lists of banned "deviant" teachings and practices (especially in Brunei and Malaysia), but also countries with much more diversified and inclusive classificatory notions of Islam, such as Singapore and Indonesia. Although in Brunei and Singapore the state has taken a strong interest in influencing the direction Islamic discourse is taking in its territory, and both countries' bureaucracies engage in translating Islam into the "language" of modern bureaucracy, the contents, social meanings, and knowledge production of bureaucratized Islam differ massively.

Finally, it could be argued that Islam lends itself from the very beginning to bureaucratization in a way that the other world religions do not, although, clearly, each religious tradition has its own modes of bureaucratization. The traditional authoritative group of *ulama* – i.e., theologically qualified religious scholars who are in the exclusive position to interpret Islam in certain spheres – and their hierarchical institutionalization in multiple settings across time and space are a striking example in this regard. Yet, it is important to study the specific unique local and temporal manifestations of such processes: As we have seen, the modern nation state of Brunei has elevated the concept of *ulama* and its social and political status to an entirely new level by defining it as exclusively referring to people who are civil servants and making them the only persons authorized to engage in public Islamic discourse (by the threat of legal sanctions for transgression). The government of Singapore, with its ARS initiative, is pursuing its own bureaucratized and "nation-

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[82] "Asatizah Recognition Scheme to Become Compulsory from January 2017: Yaacob."
[83] Cf. Scott 1998 on the role of "legibility".

stateized" path in that regard. The social status of such state *ulama* and the meanings ascribed to them within local Muslim communities differ in many aspects between these two countries, yet they both reflect the outcome of a process of "translating" a long-standing institution of bureaucratized Islam, the *ulama*, into the structures, codes, symbols and procedures of the modern nation state.

Concluding Remarks

Brunei may be the most "successful" case of a state securing a monopoly on defining the contents and boundaries of Islamic normativity, controlling Islam-related public communication and practice, and informing politically desired national Muslim subjectivities. However, the wider phenomenon of the BoI, which has been outlined in this article with an analytic focus on the state's classificatory power (something that is necessarily co-produced and contested in society), has much broader implications. As illustrated, in both Brunei and Singapore the BoI is not simply a process of building and further empowering state-Islamic institutions and legal frameworks. It is also a multifaceted social phenomenon, and as such far transcends its organizational boundaries. Notably, it is also neither *per se* a one-directional nor irreversible process, although in the case of Brunei, counterforces aspiring for a potential "de-bureaucratization" (Eisenstadt 1959) of Islam appear to be marginal.

By investigating the BoI anthropologically as a larger phenomenon to be theorized beyond country-specific single case studies, we can develop a more complex understanding of the micro-level dynamics of Islamic discourse in the context of state power in Southeast Asia, with potential analytic implications beyond the region. National histories, discursive contexts and power relations differ, but in all the countries in the region that have politically significant Muslim populations (including minority situations), states aim to exert control over the direction Islam is taking in their territories through bureaucratization practices; this control is not only concerned with expanding state power, but also shapes specific social and doctrinal meanings of Islam. This development has often not been just a passive reaction to "popular" Islamic revival but also an active quest to utilize religious sentiment and produce conformity for political ends. In Brunei and Malaysia, religious bureaucracies have become driving forces in the dynamics of Islamic revival, which is still often narrowly conceived of as a popular and oppositional project to capture the state from the outside, rather than something that is actively pushed forward by state actors themselves together with members of state-sponsored institutions in a wider sense (including, among others: religious educational institutions, corporate bodies like "outsourced" state-*zakat* service providers or *halal* institutions in Malaysia, see Müller 2017b: 86, and state-approved organizations like Brunei's Darusysyifa, which would not fall under the category of bureaucracy in a purely legal sense). The formation, legal expansion, and empowerment of state brands of Islam are in many cases inseparably intertwined with the politics of bureaucratizing Islam, be it in the Islamic monarchy Brunei, or the "secular" state of Singapore. Yet in other countries, such as Indonesia and the Philippines, which will be part of the research group's investigations but this article hasn't addressed, the extent of contestation of BoI and movements aspiring for a de-bureaucratization of Islam are much more salient, as suspicion toward bureaucracy has powerful popular histories in both countries. Nevertheless, in these contexts as well, state elites and certain religious actors invest enormous energies in attempts to bureaucratize Islam, while the processes of

bureaucratization and de-bureaucratization operate in a dialectical relationship.[84] Across the region, the attempted BoI has had profound consequences for citizens, and in some settings for the very notion of citizenship, and it deserves a more systematic and comparative study. This article presents the starting point for a larger, collaborative anthropological project in this direction over the next several years. As I have outlined conceptually and illustrated with ethnographic examples from my Bruneian case study, this project needs to be based on long-term fieldwork concerned with actors and local knowledge, and it must combine both functional (power-, resource- and interest-oriented) and hermeneutic (knowledge- and meaning-related) modes of analysis.

The BoI in Brunei, which has been addressed in most depth here, is a process that has many of its institutional roots in the colonial period and has acquired unprecedented social and political significance since the late 1980s. Multiple factors contributed to this development, including changing contexts of knowledge production among religious elites, an unprecedented emphasis on public piety, and a popular Islamic revival. The conventional functional explanation, according to which states bureaucratize Islam to control or neutralize religious opposition, has very limited explanatory force in the Bruneian context, as the country never witnessed any organized religious opposition. At best, it could be argued that the state's Islamization policies were meant to foreclose such opposition or, more relevantly, to fulfil the ideological demands of the religious establishment *within* the fragmented state apparatus which have been the driving forces in the lobbying for and drafting of these policies. Undeniably, the state's standardization of Islamic orthodoxy, which has the effect of socially marginalizing and legally outlawing the (mostly non-existent) public expression of any alternative interpretations of Islam, serves to reproduce and enhance the absolute monarchy's power and legitimacy and further cements the monopoly of state *ulama* on defining and speaking about Islam. But it would be inadequate to claim that these functional aspects or material benefits can provide a comprehensive explanation of the primary motivation of the involved actors, many of whom have deeply internalized their own discourse's truth claims, passionately believe that they are supporting a divine mission, and hope to actively shape their bureaucratic and societal environment. They also react to and appropriate popular trends of religiosity and shape these trends in turn, while social meanings of bureaucratized Islam are produced that are unique to the country's discursive settings and can only be sufficiently understood vis-à-vis their deep local embeddedness in the context of the Bruneian post-colonial nation state, i.e., the MIB state. The same is true for Singapore, in spite of, or even precisely because of the fact that the specific local contents, meanings and power structures are very different.

The Bruneian state's exercise of classificatory power through Islamic bureaucratic agencies is not simply a forcefully imposed process: it also depends on popular normative compliance. To achieve this, the MIB state's educational measures since the 1980s to manage religious knowledge and meaning production have been crucial. But no matter how powerful Islamic bureaucracies are, the BoI does not simply determine social changes in a unidirectional manner, and the bureaucratic attempt to "to define the situation" should not be confused with its contingent outcomes and popular reactions through which state-power becomes actively appropriated and potentially contested in multifold ways. By taking the micro-level social negotiations and hermeneutic

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[84] An unpublished paper on the dialectics of the bureaucratization and de-bureaucratization of Islam in contemporary Indonesia presented by Martin Slama at a panel organized by the author at the AAS-in-Asia conference in Korea in March 2017 and presented again in a deepened version at the Emmy Noether Guest Lecture Series 2017 at the MPI for Social Anthropology in October 2018, should be credited here.

dimensions of the MIB state's BoI seriously, rather than just pursuing a conventional functional analysis, we can develop a much more multifaceted and anthropologically meaningful picture of the BoI and its socio-legal dimensions in Southeast Asia.

The Emmy Noether project's conceptual framework presented in this paper is an initial point of departure for the group work. After a one-month field orientation trip in July 2017, each PhD student is scheduled to conduct 11 months of fieldwork from December 2017 until 2018. Grounded in these ethnographic case studies, the group will further develop, productively question, and deepen the project's conceptual approach. Our work has been, and will continue to be enriched by the extensive exchanges with cooperation partners and experts working on related matters that started with an international workshop at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle in September 2017[85] and will continue through various formats throughout all phases of the project.

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[85] I am deeply grateful for the intense discussions and personal advice given to the PhD students by our workshop guests Marie-Claire Foblets, Patricia-Sloane White, Mirjam Künkler, Michael Feener, Michael Peletz, Kerstin Steiner, Alicia Izharuddin, Intan Paramaditha, Saskia Schäfer, Scott MacLochlainn, and Dian A. Shah at the Workshop. We also received very helpful suggestions in our "closed-door follow-up sessions" after presentations in our Emmy Noether Guest Lecture Series 2017 where we discussed our project and sub-projects with our guests to seek their views and advice; the guests on these occasions were Mark Graham, Alexander Blechschmidt, Frauke Kandale, Catherine Larouche, Kristina Grossmann, Rosa Cordillera Castillo, Ario Seto Hardjana, Iza Hussin, Martin Slama, Johannes Quack, Holger Warnk, and Kostas Retsikas.

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Appendix

Some Methodological Notes on Fieldwork and Comparison

Fieldwork

After completion of fieldwork, the project group will reflect and self-critically reassess its methodological approach and experiences in written form with the aim of going beyond established anthropological conventions of presenting one's work. At the time of writing this paper, we are discussing a range of methodological literature and instruments. Heyman (2012: 1269–1270), for example, suggests three distinctly anthropological contributions to the study of bureaucracy: First, one can examine bureaucracies within "the deep history of unequal and centralized societies", thereby focusing on their discursive environment. Second, anthropologists can compare and theorize similarities and differences between bureaucracies in diverse settings. Third, anthropologists can produce ethnographic studies of particular bureaucracies and their inner life. Here, anthropologists would focus on complexities they observe within the daily practices of bureaucracies that are often blended out in the more formal and methodologically less intimate analyses of other disciplines. The Emmy Noether project aims to synthesize these options: Individual projects may produce in-depth case studies of Islamic institutions and their inner lives (option three) and contextualize them in their historically evolved specific environment (option one). Within a collaborative framework, it will compare its case studies vis-à-vis their diverse contexts to identify any partially shared aspects inherent to the BoI (option two). To understand the workings of Islamic bureaucratization beyond its organizational boundaries, it is essential to conduct empirical research not only among bureaucratic institutions and their members or among actors who are affected by or interact with these bureaucracies, but also to focus analytically on the interface between "social power inside" and "outside and above bureaucratic activity" (Heyman 2012: 1270).

Fieldwork should be actor-oriented, as bureaucracies are living organisms. Actors within and outside them seek to make them work for themselves. Even if bureaucratic forms prescribe rigid rules, actors create spaces for agency and utilize them in diverse ways. To understand such processes, researchers must speak with "bureaucrats", *listen* to them carefully, observe what they do, and spend time with them, ideally over longer periods. In awareness of the hermeneutical principle formulated by Geertz's (1977: 481) rhetorical question "what happens to *verstehen* [understanding, D.M.] when *einfühlen* [empathy, D.M.] disappears?", the immediate interaction with interlocutors is crucial for developing thick descriptions. This should include qualitative semi-structured interviews (if only to serve as door-openers for a first meeting), informal conversations (where, as a follow-up, more ethnographic data should arise), and, to the extent that it is possible, (participant) observation in meetings and activities, during and beyond the interlocutors' working time. Individual sub-projects, however, may also be more concerned with the effects of bureaucratization beyond the bureaucracies' organizational boundaries and may not choose the bureaucracies themselves as their main field sites.

One promising anthropological approach that we shall aim to take inspiration from is the "para-site" method developed by Marcus and Deeb (Marcus 2000; Marcus and Deeb 2011). It specifically deals with powerful institutional settings[86] and interlocutors who may be (but do not

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[86] For further inspirations for the ethnographic exploration of power institutional settings, see Garsten and Nyqvist 2013.

necessarily have to be) experts and elites. Following this method, researchers create situations that go beyond the classical researcher-subject relationship. Interlocutors reflect upon their working environment together with the anthropologists in an "epistemic partnership" (Marcus and Deeb 2011: 51). Anthropologists create "para-site" situations in which both the researcher's and interlocutor's habitual analytic modes are disrupted, enabling an interaction between reflexive subjects who exchange interpretive views. As bureaucrats themselves critically interpret their institutional settings, they develop reflexive but "partial" perspectives, just as the anthropologist does: The creation of para-sites enables these "perspectives to intermingle and rework each other paratactically" in a manner "that goes far beyond the mere admixing of contextualized bureaucratic knowledge with authorial self-reflexivity" (Hoag 2011: 88). The research partners may then ideally produce "ethnographic" insights of their own, while the anthropologist is forced to rethink some of her/his disciplinary assumptions vis-à-vis modes of thinking beyond this habitualised disciplinary horizon. Such exchanges can be relatively formal and carefully pre-arranged (such as described in Deeb and Marcus's 2011 account of their para-site experiment with a WTO functionary in the "green room"), but one may also simply extract the underlying principles behind this method and apply them to more average settings of field research (which Marcus and Deeb appear to encourage when speaking of the approach's "general utility (…) in many contemporary fieldwork projects", see Marcus and Deeb 2011: 53). The latter will more likely be applicable for our projects. Established long-term, personal relationships are crucial for making para-sites fruitful, as the exchange between anthropologist and bureaucrat grows deeper over time. However, our project critically views Deeb and Marcus's apparent assumption of interlocutors belonging to educated "elites and experts" necessarily being more suitable candidates for self-reflective "epistemic partnerships" than other interlocutors, and the underlying social classification, which, in some ironic way, reflects their own citing of Bourdieu's notion of *homo academicus* being the "supreme classifier among classifiers" (Marcus and Deeb 2011: 64). In some of our sub-projects (e.g., fieldwork among recipients of state-provided *zakat* aid for Muslims in Malaysia), non-elites will play an important role as well, and there is a strong sense among our project members that one should not *categorically* underestimate non-elites' reflective and analytic capacities, including the ability to change one's habitual modes of seeing the world.

Comparison

Although the conceptual framework proposed outlined on this working paper could generally be applied to other contexts as well, e.g., Europe or the Middle East and North Africa, in comparative terms a regional limitation to Malay-speaking Southeast Asia has methodological advantages: Such regional foci increase the probability of encountering settings of "limited variation", as opposed to larger comparisons where "all", or most, "variables change at once" (Schlee 2009: 4). In the British tradition, a number of anthropologists have long argued on similar grounds for the benefit of "relatively controlled" regional comparisons in settings where cultural similarities exist alongside marked differences (see e.g. Nadel 1952, Kuper 1979; for an edited volume outlining different traditions of anthropological comparison, see Gingrich and Fox 2002).

  Shared aspects of the national settings studied in this project include the political significance of Malay-speaking Muslim populations (with the exception of the Philippines), partly intertwined histories, social and religious-intellectual trends that partly transcend national borders, transnational interconnectivities of Muslim actors and discourses, and most crucially, decades of intense efforts

in each of the five countries (Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Phillpipnes and Singapore) to influence Islamic discourse through bureaucratization strategies. As the contents and socio-legal impacts of the bureaucratization strategies vary significantly, a controlled comparison can reveal factors contributing to this variation while simultaneously identifying shared characteristics of the BoI as a socio-legal phenomenon.

Through its comparative component, the project aims to identity both interconnectivities and "family resemblances" of the BoI in Southeast Asia. As opposed to comparative "country studies", our main aim is not to make comprehensive statements *about countries*, but to deepen our understanding of the BoI as a transnationally observable phenomenon in and of itself – a process with shared characteristics despite diverse settings and contents. These shared characteristics can be explained as family resemblances. Pirie 2013 has made this Wittgensteinian notion anthropologically fruitful in her anthropological conceptualization of law, which may serve as a reference for the Emmy Noether Research Group's comparative work at a later stage of the project alongside other approaches to anthropological comparison (see, e.g., van de Veer 2016). As Pirie notes, family resemblances are partly recurring features of a "class of phenomena that bear a resemblance to one another" (ibid.: 9). They can be found in many, but not necessarily in all, empirical manifestations of the studied phenomenon (or "family" of phenomena bearing resemblances to each other). Such an approach can accommodate the multiple meanings, forms, and contexts of bureaucratized Islam while refusing an overly "philosophically tidy" (Pirie 2013: 24) reduction of variables based on analytically clear-cut but empirically problematic categories. Speaking of "family resemblances" would enable generalizable statements but leaves room for the exceptions and counter-examples that inevitably arise when the complexities of social reality are closely examined. Such a comparison thus seeks to accommodate "as many variables as possible" (Pirie 2013: 9, 24) rather than reducing them, as other disciplines might do. The development of these categories depends on the naturally unpredictable results of long-term, in-depth fieldwork, which is initially more "explorative" and only becomes "question"- or "problem"-centred in a second stage. Such a bottom-up approach needs to be open to (if not aiming at) constantly reconsidering, revising, and empirically adjusting its categories vis-à-vis a growing corpus of data that our research group will gather. When the fieldwork of each sub-project is completed, we will collaboratively develop the specific mode of comparison, grounded in relevant literature on anthropological comparisons, that we consider most appropriate vis-à-vis the gathered data.

Following the group's fieldwork period and going beyond the individual and collaborative analysis of empirical data, we will engage in a self-critical reflection on fieldwork experiences of gathering data among bureaucratic actors and the persons/groups interacting with them. We plan to include these methodological reflections not only in the individual sub-projects' ethnographies (PhD theses), but also in the group's comparative writing.

List of Abbreviations

AGC:	Attorney General's Chambers (Brunei Darussalam)
ARS:	Asatizah Recognition Scheme (Singapore)
BKA:	Bahagian Kawalan Akidah (also Bahagian Kawalan Aqidah), Doctrine Control Section (Brunei Darussalam)
CPC:	Syariah Courts Criminal Procedure Code, Malay: Perintah Kanun Peraturan Jenayah Syari'ah
ISA:	Internal Security Act (Brunei Darussalam)
MIB:	Melayu Islam Beraja (lit. Malay Islamic Monarchy, national ideology of Brunei Darussalam)
MPI:	Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology
RCKCA:	Religious Council and Kadis Courts Act 1984, Malay: Akta Majlis Ugama Islam Dan Mahkamah-Mahkamah Kadi
MUIB:	Majlis Ugama Islam Brunei, Islamic Religious Council of Brunei
MUIS:	Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura, Islamic Religious Council (Singapore)
SMI:	Singapore Muslim Identity
SPCO:	Syariah Penal Code Order 2013, Malay: Perintah Kanun Hukuman Syariah 2013 (Brunei Darussalam)