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Contents

Special Issue:
The Bureaucratisation of Islam in Southeast Asia:
Transdisciplinary Perspectives

Research Articles

The Bureaucratisation of Islam in Southeast Asia: Transdisciplinary Perspectives

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Introduction

"Islam is not a 'church institution'", it "lacks the centralised leadership and institutions associated with Christianity!" This common wisdom is first semester knowledge for students of Islamic Studies, and a frequently invoked formula among experts responding to what they consider inadequate representations of Islam and misplaced expectations towards Muslims. Its invocation counters ways of looking at Islam through the lens of Christianity and the epistemic modes of European secularity, resulting in Eurocentric equations that overlook fundamental differences between two discursive traditions that are, in many ways, *distinct* (Asad 1986: 5).[1] Taking the critique of false comparison and inappropriate terminology one step further, the very category of religion has been problematised vis-à-vis its (non-)applicability to non-Western settings (Asad 1993[2]), albeit with little if any impact in wider public debates. But what happens when state actors operating in the name of Islam, or Muslim communities themselves, seek to adapt Islamic discourse to bureaucratic settings of the modern nation state that many observers have described as fundamentally alien to "authentic" Islam?

Since the attacks of 11 September 2001, European governments have been desperately searching for Islam's "Archbishop of Canterbury",[3] or at least Islamic 'representative' bodies that are bureaucratically legible and thus controllable. They have been mostly unsuccessful, of

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1   The question of whether the "discursive tradition(s)" of Islam should be viewed in singular or plural terms ("internal variation" vs. "many Islams") has been discussed extensively (cf. Marsden and Retsikas 2013: 11).

2   See also Riesebrodt (2003 and 2010) for a strong counter-argument, and Hann's (2007) plea to study meta-themes that bridge across diverse settings and traditions, rather than establishing separate schools of the Anthropology of Islam, the Anthropology of Christianity and so on (cf. also Marsden and Retsikas 2013: 5).

3   James Piscatori coined this phrase at the Workshop "Bureaucratization of Islam in Muslim States and Societies" (organised by Aaron Glasserman), 23–24 October 2014.

course, but many tried to foster the empowerment of such institutions in the process. Across the globe, many Muslim communities have also shown increasing interest in bureaucratically organised and nationally framed forms of representation, for a variety of reasons, and do not view these future-oriented modes of organisation as "inauthentic" but as Islamically justified and real-politically necessary vis-à-vis shifting times and circumstances. As Asad himself noted, the Islamic tradition "has a past, a present, and a *future*"[4] (Asad 1986: 20, emphasis added). In many cases, it seems, contemporary Muslim political projections of desirable futures are interwoven in a largely globalised condition which some observers have, somewhat exaggeratedly, termed an "age of total bureaucratization" (Graeber 2015: 17), or a "bureaucratization of the world in the neo-liberal era" (Hibou 2015). This trend can certainly be seen in in Southeast Asia.

In their specific local contexts, state- and non-state projects of bureaucratising Islam are driven by very different socio-political motivations and conditioned by equally different (albeit often interconnected and overlapping) historical trajectories and their discursive substrates. In this special issue, we examine this transnationally and transregionally observable phenomenon in the context of Southeast Asia, where the quest for "order" – no matter how messy or even entirely failed in its outcomes – is particularly strong. In this regional setting, the institutional trajectories of the "nation-state-ization" of Islam date back to colonial times, which have continued to cast a long shadow that informs the particular manifestations of bureaucratised Islam in each country.

Another routinised formula it is that "Islam does not have a pope!" This is obviously true, and Islam should not be "Christianised" through unreflected terminologies and expectations. Yet, hierarchical bodies that make authoritative decisions regarding Islam and its "proper" interpretation and praxis exist in various contemporary settings, particularly in the institutional frameworks of modern nation states. Governments and wider state assemblages are often key players in the politics of creating and imposing particular forms of Islamic "orthodoxy",[5] or provide influ-

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4   This is true in a more trivial historiographical sense as well as in terms of projections in Islamic discourse conceptualizing itself as a "tradition". The latter aims to "instruct practitioners regarding the correct form and purpose of a given practice that, precisely because it has been established, has a history" (Asad 1986: 20).

5   The term orthodoxy here does not connote a binary opposition vis-à-vis heterodoxy or "folk Islam" (resembling distinctions between big and small traditions); rather, we have in mind the Asadian sense of orthodoxy as "not a mere

ential referential frames for non- and anti-state actors engaging in religion-related public discourse. The establishment of formalised authority structures by hierarchical bodies also exists beyond the state, in either non-state and semi-state bureaucratic settings. Examples include powerful Islamic educational institutions, on a global scale most prominently Egypt's Al-Azhar University (with its formalised hierarchies and authorising functions), or institutional bodies and corporations in the realm of Islamic finance, Islamic banks, *halal* certification, or Islamic alms (*zakat*) management, among many others. While Islam does not have a pope, a bishop conference, or anything similar, a growing number of Muslim communities have "central committees", "governing boards", and chief executive officer (CEO)-like authoritative functionaries – in some cases, they are indeed explicitly called CEOs, with little if any objections from within the wider communities in which their bureaucracies operate, despite the obvious fact that these labels and forms are new to the Islamic discursive tradition – no matter how "alien" to "authentic Islam" some academic observers may view this. Such new forms and categories may once have been foreign to Islamic tradition, but in Southeast Asian settings like Malaysia, with its most-"corporatized" forms of Islam (Steiner 2011a; Sloane-White 2017), they have been intimately integrated into the spheres of Muslim organisation, politics and identities. Furthermore, the categories and language through which these bureaucratised and corporatised forms of Islam are being framed are increasingly interiorised as natural and, therefore, as authentic among Muslim communities.

In some settings of bureaucratised Islam, there is even *one person* who, empowered through an authorising formalisation, is *the* chief interpreter of Islam, and who stands (to varying extents) at the top of a hierarchically structured and functionally diversified organisational pyramid operating in the name of Islam.[6] An example of this in Southeast Asia is the State Mufti of Brunei, although the Sultan still stands above him, and

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body of opinion but a distinctive relationship – a relationship of power", which exists "in all Islamic traditions" (Asad 1986: 22). As Asad (1986: 16) instructively defined it, "wherever Muslims have power to regulate, uphold, require or adjust correct practices, and to condemn, exclude, undermine, or replace incorrect ones, there is the domain of orthodoxy".

6   Whether or not a bureaucracy operating in the name of Islam should be normatively considered an "Islamic bureaucracy", and what that would be, is a question best addressed by Islamic Studies scholars and believers who seek to engage in such a discourse over the actual "authentic" soul and meanings of Islam. For an important new publication engaging in reasoning about the nature of Islam, see Ahmad (2016).

above the law more generally[7] – yet, within the Islamic bureaucracy itself, as far as exegesis is concerned, the Mufti and his *fatwas* are *de jure* unquestionable and enjoy the force of law, without any alternative space for alternative Islamic legal reasoning.[8] Elsewhere in the Muslim world, like in Iran, the Supreme Leader (*Rahbar-e Mo'azzam-e Iran*) enjoys a similarly formalised authority in wider Twelver Shia religious structures as well as in the political and legal structures of the state – notwithstanding all differences in the details, which are important to be stressed. In Muslim Brotherhood-inspired non-state Sunni organisations, such as the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS), there is typically *one* supreme authority – the *Mursyidul 'Am* (Spiritual Leader) – who presides over the organisation's equally authoritative and bureaucratised *Syura'* Council, a consultative committee that, following the constitutional document of the organisation, has the final word on all major decisions (Müller 2014: 49, 54–55). In some aspects, his position bears remarkable resemblances to the Iranian Supreme Leader (cf. Abdul Hamid Ahmad Fauzi 2009: 151;

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7   According to the Constitution (Article 84(B1)), the Sultan "can do no wrong in either his personal or any official capacity." See Müller's article in this Special Issue. For a broader discussion about the rule of law in Brunei, see Steiner (2016).

8   To be sure, his leadership position is embedded in a complex, neither de jure nor de facto entirely hierarchical bureaucratic assemblage, as Müller's article in this special issue describes in detail. Most notably, the Brunei Islamic Religious Council (Majlis Ugama Islam Brunei, MUIB), of which the Mufti is an *ex officio* member, is, in legal terms, the "chief authority" in "all matters relating to religion", below the Sultan. However, when it comes to the realities of doctrinally defining the particulars of Bruneian state-Islam (including its codified Islamic Law), and publicly explaining it, there can be doubt as to the Mufti's authoritative role.

This role was also evident in the intense public advertising of Brunei's latest Islamic legal reform, the Syar'iah Penal Code Order 2013 (SPCO, *Perintah Kanun Hukuman Jenayah Syariah*), to which the Sultan, according to the official wording, gave his "consent." For example, the State Mufti's book *Qanun Jenayah Syari'ah: Satu Pengenalan*, published in both Malay and English (*The Shari'ah Penal Code: An Introduction*), and containing the original legal text alongside the Mufti's explanations, is the authoritative local source on the new code (supplemented only by his additional explanations, public statements, and television sermons on the theme, and of course the Sultan's more general statements). Other local publications and statements on the legal reform, all of which are necessarily government-produced, follow the State Mufti's lead, except those of the Sultan, which normally would not disagree, but are structurally superior (cf. Müller 2015: 79, 80–82, 2018a: 17, 18). The strong position of the religious bureaucracy is also evident in the SPCO itself and the codified offences against religious authorities; for a detailed discussion, see Lindsey and Steiner (2016).

Müller 2014: 56; Noor 2004: 418), which arguably points to overlaps in structures of bureaucratic thinking and organising, rather than doctrinal proximities, which both sides, increasingly separated by the sectarian Sunni-Shia divide, would likely categorically deny.[9]

Just as the Catholic Church as a bureaucratic body only represents one *organisational unit* within a much wider religious community (consisting of multiple sub-communities), and the pope is not the chief interpreter of Christianity *per se*, religious state bureaucracies and leader figures like Brunei's State Mufti, the Malaysian PAS's *Mursyidul 'Am*, the Iranian *Rahbar*, or the "CEO" of a Malaysian Islamic Bank, do not represent Islam at large. They only hold authority over one *organisational unit* and over the followers that adhere to them, either voluntarily as supporters, officers, or employees, or otherwise as citizens who, by law, must submit to state-sanctioned religious doctrine. In the study of contemporary Islam, the often socially and/or politically powerful role of these organisational units, and their bureaucratic character, have not yet received the full scholarly attention they deserve, and their ubiquity points to a need for a comparative perspective that goes beyond – while being empirically rooted in – single-organisation or country-specific case studies. This is far from the same as saying that Muslim and Christian modes of bureaucratising religious matters or those organisational units are in any way equal, or that two different types of bureaucratising Islam, operating in differently conditioned particular settings, would be similar. It does, however, point to the fact that the bureaucratisation of Islam, and of religion more generally, in and across (Eickelman 2015: 604–605) contemporary nation states, is a sheer omnipresent process that, to a certain extent, transcends particular religious or regional boundaries. It has become part of the contemporary global condition in many parts of the world, notwithstanding its equally omnipresent limitations, counterforces, and its transformative circulation, appropriation and translation between and into locally unique settings.

This special issue examines a range of manifestations of bureaucratised Islam in five Southeast Asian countries, namely Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore. Again, these are far from equal. In their bureaucratic forms, socio-legal embeddedness, and partly overlapping historical trajectories, they share no more and no less than "family resemblances" (*Familienähnlichkeit*, Wittgenstein); that is, a "class of phenomena that", to a certain extent, "bear a resemblance to one anoth-

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9   One could also argue, however, that in the real world of religious-political praxis, doctrine and organizational form are often intimately interlinked.

er": Such partly recurring features cannot be adequately captured by a "philosophically tidy" reduction of variables based on clear-cut taxonomies, and instead seeks to accommodate "as many variables as possible,"[10] as they unfold in the messiness of social life generally, and in the multiplicity of meanings, implications and contexts of bureaucratised Islam across different Southeast Asian nation states in particular.[11] Such resemblances can be found in some, but not necessarily all, settings where the phenomenon exists.

In our view, these transnationally observable family resemblances of the bureaucratisation and "nation-state-ization" of Islam deserve closer examination, and this special issue can only represent a starting point for that project. In the search for such family resemblances, we argue that *bureaucratic form* should be taken seriously – albeit, as the anthropological contributors to this special issue would insist, in a *non-formalistic* way, whereas the primary concerns for contributors from legal studies and the political sciences are the formal and institutional aspects themselves. We believe that both approaches complement each other well and enable us to develop a more multifaceted picture of the bureaucratisation of Islam that none of the individual disciplines would be able to provide on its own.

The State as a Force of Islamic Revivalism, and Bureaucratic Islam beyond the State

While much research on Muslim politics in post-colonial Southeast Asia has long focused primarily on social movements, opposition groups, or piety and subject formation, and is therefore mainly located in what in

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10   See Pirie (2013: 9, 24) utilising the Wittgensteinian notion for a cautious, context-sensitive project of legal anthropological comparison; cf. Müller (2018a: 52). Discussing family resemblances enables generalizable statements but also allows for exceptions and counter-examples that inevitably arise in the complexities of social reality.

11   A comparison that searches for family resemblances of bureaucratized Islam could also be conducted on a transregional or global scale. However, a regional focus has some advantages: It increases the likelihood of encountering a scenario 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 wider areas 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).

more conventional terms would be deemed *non-state* spheres, a parallel and more recent stream of research shifts attention to the state as a driving force of Islamic revivalism. In such contexts, the state not only forms a contextual variable, a target that is hoped to be captured and "Islamised" in the future, or a faceless, monolithic external force of co-optation and control. The state as an internally heterogeneous site of agency in projects of "Islamisation"[12] and/or of the governing of Muslim communities and related knowledge-production is also moving increasingly towards the centre of attention (e.g., Liow 2009: 43ff., Maznah Mohamad 2010; Lindsey and Steiner 2012a and 2012b; Mohd Azizuddin Mohd Sani 2015; Müller 2015; Norshahril Saat 2012, 2015, Mohamed Nawab Mohamed Osman 2012; Turner 2015; Tuty Mostarom 2014; Walid Jumblatt Abdullah 2013). While the references listed here pertain to what are commonly viewed as strong and (semi-)authoritarian states (Brunei, Malaysia, Singapore), even in post-Suharto Indonesia, where state-Islamic institutions are comparably much less influential in society, and the state's bureaucratisation of Islam has even been characterised by some observers as a complete failure (Fika Fawzia 2016; cf. Müller 2018a: 37–38), the role of the state attracts growing scholarly attention (Künkler and Sezgin 2014). The state, as it is meant here, also includes state-formed and state-funded bodies even if they present themselves as "non-state", such as the Indonesian Ulama Council (Majlis Ulama Indonesia), MUI (see Mun'im Sirry 2013; Hasyim 2016; Long 2017), a claim complicated even further in MUI's case by its occasional involvement in law-making processes, film censorship, and issues related to halal-certification (see Jeremy Menchik's forthcoming work). However, an argument about a failed (but nonetheless tirelessly pursued) bureaucratisation of Islam would be even stronger in the case of the Philippines (see Steiner's article in this Special Issue; and Fauwaz bin Abdul Aziz's forthcoming anthropological work in the bureaucratisation of Islam in the Philippines). Even such failure has a *productive* site to it,[13] although what it produces tends to have little to do with what was originally intended. In

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12   Islamisation can insightfully be understood as "the heightened salience of Islamic symbols, norms, discursive traditions, and attendant practices across one or more domains of lived experience" (Peletz 2015: 145). The term can also be problematized because, among other reasons, it risks implying an unintended normative statement by assuming a process towards "more Islam", whereas other Muslims may view developments labelled as such as the precise opposite; that is, "less (real) Islam" (cf. Müller 2018b).

13   Compare Beeker and Kloos' (2018: 1ff.) elaborations on "the productive potential of moral failure", which refers to the individual level, and other contributions to their edited volume.

all of these cases of bureaucratised Islam, the boundaries between state- and non-spheres are blurred in many ways (cf. Gupta 1995), and both spheres mutually constitute each other in the ways they are realised, that is constantly being made and unmade in often paradoxical ways, by social actors.

Of course, the state is not a monolithic entity, even though it is often portrayed as such, and indeed often portrays *itself* as such. Although "calls for ethnographic exploration of the everyday workings of the state have grown louder" (Hoag 2011: 81) elsewhere, such calls have not yet been taken up more widely in the study of Southeast Asian state-Islam relations – which may contribute to essentialising narratives about *the* state too often remaining unquestioned, even in academic accounts. Any "state" provides "a complex social arena" in which bureaucrats are key participants (Bernstein and Mertz 2011: 6), who are actively engaging in complex social relations among themselves and with their "non-bureaucratic" environment. Even the assumedly "strongest" state is, in such an understanding, a fragile and fragmented entity that must be constantly reproduced, irrespective of whether we see its existence as a fixed given in legal terms, or anthropologically merely as a fiction or "intellectual fetish" that has "never existed at all"[14] (see Graeber and Sahlins 2017: 21; but see Thelen, Vetters, and von Benda-Beckmann 2014 for an anthropologically more nuanced approach reconciling the study of *representations* of the state with actual *state practices* and interactions).

Our special issue is less interested in the state (or the illusion, fiction, projection, or everyday-making thereof) as a locus for religious bureaucratisation as such, and more in the productive "interface situations" (Heyman 2012: 1270) between (state- or non-state) bureaucracy and society. Above all, the special issue aims to elucidate the workings of bureaucratisation, approached as a socio-legal phenomenon to be theorised beyond established views, in specific Islam-related Southeast Asia settings. These questions also pertain to non-state bureaucracies, in the awareness that, from a purely legal perspective, this is arguably a contradiction in terms. However, even non-state bureaucratisation is often affected by its embeddedness in the discursive arenas and legal regulations of states, and in their nationally specific knowledge- and meaning-

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14   On a more conciliatory note, and much more adequately, Graeber and Sahlins (2017: 22) added to their polemic claim that the state "never" "existed at all" and that "at best" it would be made sense of as "a fortuitous confluence of elements of entirely heterogeneous origins (sovereignty, administration, a competitive political field, etc.) that came together in certain times and places, but that, nowadays, are very much in the process of once again drifting apart".

production, and any emphasis of the *limits* of the state paradoxically depends on its *presence*. Thus, the notion of a state-led bureaucratisation of Islam is not meant to imply that this process is the "only game in town", or that it would necessarily be successful or powerful, let alone one-directional or uncontested. Yet, the making of non-state alternatives, and modes of distancing oneself and preserving one's autonomy from a particular state and its bureaucratisation of Islam, typically happen *in a specific relation* to what they reject. This is also true for many, albeit not all non-state projects of bureaucratising Islam, and for projects that aim to unmake religious bureaucratisation (cf. Slama 2017; cf. Eisenstadt 1959 on "de-bureaucratisation"), or to unmake state involvement in Islamic affairs. Therefore, these projects be seen as forms of *state-making* (not to be confused with state-building or state-formation), as particular meanings are attributed to (or derived from) the state, although such state-making constantly interacts with a parallel unmaking of the state in dialectical ways.

Family Resemblances of Bureaucratised Islam in Southeast Asia: Taking Bureaucratic Form Seriously (in a Non-Formalistic Way)

In Southeast Asian countries where Muslim populations play a significant political role, state actors and institutions use multiple ways to attempt to *guide*, *control* and *influence* Islamic discourse, often intersecting with transformations of the *meanings* of Islam in state and society (cf. Lindsey and Steiner 2012a and 2012b; Müller 2018a, 2018c forthcoming; Steiner 2015). This is the case in countries like Brunei, Indonesia and Malaysia, where Muslim segments of the population form majorities, but also in minority situations like in Singapore and the Philippines (or Thailand and Myanmar, which are not covered in this special issue). Outcomes of, reactions to and practical involvements in such attempts must be analytically disaggregated from the level of intentions, even though, in their empirical manifestation, these spheres dialectically inform each other. The national settings are unique in important ways, and any transnationally comparative perspective should take this uniqueness hermeneutically seriously. Simultaneously, however, state-sponsored attempts to transform Islamic discourse into the "language" of bureaucracy represent a more generalised phenomenon. Instead of looking at each national situation just on its own terms, we believe that exploring the bureaucratisation of Islam as a larger and more abstract phenomenon in multiple

settings across Southeast Asia can generate deeper insights into the very nature of this more generalised phenomenon. This leads us to the following question: What is characteristic about bureaucracy and bureaucratisation in the religious field, beyond (increasingly digitalised) paperwork, the establishment of hierarchical institutions, institutional diversification into specialised offices, organisational expansion, and the doubtful claim to mechanical, de-personalised objectivity in the face of the obvious opposite? Below, we shall sketch a few cornerstones of novel conceptual perspective on – and possible family resemblances of – the bureaucratisation of Islam in (and potentially beyond) Southeast Asia.

To begin with, we view the bureaucratisation of Islam not simply in the conventional sense as a formalisation, expansion, and functional diversification of Islamic institutions, and not simply as a top-down strategy for co-opting religious-political opposition by integrating its ideas and actors into the state apparatus and thus neutralising it. These aspects are often at play and are centrally important, and for that reason represent the main focus of analyses in *Legal Studies and Political Science*. However, we also consider the bureaucratisation of Islam as a *social phenomenon* that *transcends its organisational boundaries* in manifold ways (Müller 2018a), as each of the contributions to this volume exemplifies in its own way. The forces of bureaucratisation in the religious field, and the effects of imposing bureaucratic form, often have profound consequences for social and cultural transformations, alongside changes of the very social, political and doctrinal meaning(s) of Islam. This can be the case in more small-scale micro-settings, but also in the case of broader, nation-wide and state-led projects of bureaucratising Islam in society at large.

Where Islam is being bureaucratised, it is being *translated* into the codes, symbols or procedures, that is, the "language" of bureaucracy, a reconfiguration of interrelated forms and meanings (Müller 2018a: 3) with structuring effects on a range of transformative processes. Among other aspects, the language of bureaucracy implies the establishment of classificatory taxonomies, and of taxonomical thinking, a characteristic key feature of any bureaucracy and bureaucratisation (Handelman 1981; Handelman and Shamgar-Handelman 1991: 294; Douglas 1986; Brenneis 1996; Herzfeld 1992: 38). On an epistemic level, this can be linked to a historical process that the anthropologist of Islam, Dale Eickelman (1992, 2015: 605), has famously called an "objectification of Muslim consciousness," resulting in "a significant reimagining of religious and political

identities".[15] Such objectification also entails a bureaucratisation of religious knowledge, and of related subject-formations (Müller 2018a: 3). However, the extent to which this "translation" and "objectification" resonates (or does not resonate) with its wider societal surroundings in concrete empirical cases is a different question.

A further resemblance has to do with exercising power, more specifically *classificatory power*, and with creating or upholding the discursive hegemony that this requires. Bureaucracies, whether they are state-based, non-state, or in the ambivalent area between the two,[16] characteristically claim an exclusive right to "define the situation" (Graeber 2012: 120) – this is true for bureaucratisation in any domain, and not specific to bureaucracies in the name of religion. The underlying principle relates to what Hoag (2014: 88) called the "the God trick performed by universalising authoritative bureaucracies" who elevate their position to a level that is not contestable anymore, or only to very limited extents. However, such closure of the possibility of discourse can turn even more uncompromising when the equally self-universalising modes of religion and nationalism (cf. Herzfeld 1992: 6, 36ff.) join forces with the more general bureaucratic "God trick". As noted, family resemblances exist in many, but not necessarily in all settings, or at least not to the same extent. Singapore's Islamic bureaucracy is a case in point: it explicitly aims to bureaucratise Islamic notions of plurality, complexity and discursive openness, which, paradoxical as it may sound in the context of a semi-authoritarian state, is a remarkably successful and intellectually prolific project. To be sure, it operates with its own exclusions, notably against certain political, particularly sectarian and intolerant positions in Islamic discourses that would undermine the Singaporean state-dogma of inter-religious "harmony" and equality (Steiner 2011b). And despite its bureaucratisation of an Islamic pluralism and discursive openness that problematises the universal validity of the "God-trick" notion, the Islam-

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15   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" (Eickelman 2015: 605).

16   In a broadened and situationally oriented sense of the notions of "state-actors" and state assemblages, as Müller argues for in his paper in this volume, a wide range of both institutionally and not institutionally bound actors can be considered as such, also including social actors from the private sector and publicly engaged citizens.

ic Religious Council of Singapore (Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura, MUIS) is embedded in a political and legal framework that aims to control Islam and Muslims (as Steiner argues in this special issue; see also Lindsey and Steiner 2012a and Steiner 2015), in line with the political interest of more superior state actors and a hegemonic idea of the Singaporean nation. Also, while attempting to overcome bureaucratic simplification and tax-onomical black-and-white thinking, MUIS creates new taxonomies of desirable Singaporean Muslim identity (cf. Müller 2018a: 35–36). This then presents an intriguing case of a bureaucracy aiming to defeat the structuring powers of bureaucratic form with its own weapons, that is, by establishing anti-taxonomical taxonomies.

Bureaucratising Muslim social and theological pluralism is clearly not the norm in contemporary Southeast Asia. It is also not a pattern that the nature of bureaucratic form, typically operating through modes of *standardisation* – a classical instrument of socio-political control – would foster. Standardisation, formalisation and the related phenomenon that Scott (1998) called "state-simplification", have effects that run counter to the less hierarchical and more discursively open character of "au-thentic" Islamic tradition, as it assumedly existed before colonial forces and the modern nation state violently undermined it, as a particular stream of current Islamic Studies scholarship engaging in its own politics of Islamic orthodoxy (in the above-defined sense) would insist (cf. Hallaq 2013). This leads us to our next family resemblance.

This next resemblance, related to classificatory power, taxonomies and standardisation, is the production of fixed categories, which Graeber (2012: 105), speaking about bureaucracy in general, called a "bureaucratic imposition of simple categorical schemes on the world". Viewed through this lens, the bureaucratisation of Islam represents a technique of power operating through categorical standardisation, which consequently aims to erase ambiguities, grey zones, and unregulated spheres. Standardised categorical schemes diffuse into society and become appropriated by social actors and institutions (Müller 2018a), which is one of the charac-teristic ways in which the bureaucratisation of Islam *transcends its organisa-tional boundaries*.

Of course, the appropriation of these categorical schemes is not simply a passive internalisation or reproduction. It is a complex, *productive* phenomenon. Even where bureaucratic power appears, on the surface, to have been simply co-produced by those (willingly or forcedly) ex-posed to it, there are always, at least potentially, dynamics of *mutual ap-propriation and manipulation* at play, and meanings of bureaucratic power

may become re-negotiated in that that process (for an example, see Müller's article in this special issue).

Similarly, wherever Islam is bureaucratised, some people will also resist or circumvent its attempted imposition of categorical schemes. However, even where actors deliberately refuse compliance, they are affected by the powers of bureaucracy. The very act of rejection of resistance is itself a product of what it opposes and thus, in contrast to its intentions, lends a certain type of victory to the bureaucratic powers that it seeks to evade (as also noted in our earlier point on the dialectics of bureaucratisation and de-bureaucratisation). In one way or the other, especially in state-led projects on larger scales, the bureaucratisation of Islam transcends its organisational boundaries, penetrates into public discourse, and affects everyday lifeworlds among the population of the societies in which it operates. It does not simply determine these lifeworlds or related processes of social change, however, as it simultaneously opens up new spaces of agency among those whom it seeks to subject to its classificatory power.

As noted earlier, classificatory power unfolds through a "language" of bureaucracy; that is, organisational codes, symbols and procedures that are characteristic of bureaucracy. The contemporary language of bureaucracy draws heavily on the vocabularies of corporatisation and the business world, most strikingly manifested in Malaysia (Sloane-White 2017), but also in each other Southeast Asian country where bureaucracies operating in the name of Islam exist. Simultaneously, however, the bureaucratisation of Islam in Southeast Asia also intersects with a wide range of other cultural registers and domains. One is marketisation (or "neo-liberalism", but see growing critique of the concept; see Eriksen et al. 2015); others may include nationalism, ethnicity, modern legalism, scientisation, mass-media formats, as well as specific cultural grammars that are locally conceived of as traditions. Which factors are at play, and how precisely they are composed and hybridised, depends on the particular settings in which they unfold, their histories, and on the actors, institutions, and legal and socio-economic forces that engage them. Beyond any details in specific cases, on a more subtle level of analysis, the bureaucratisation of Islam is a hybrid phenomenon interacting with other cultural influences, some of which, on the surface levels of ideology and speech acts, it may even proclaim to oppose.

Another resemblance refers to the fact that the bureaucratisation of Islam typically seeks to *eradicate spaces of informality* and impose formalised (that is, bureaucratically controlled) regimes of governance in and beyond the religious field – notwithstanding the rather limited success that

this often has, and the new ambiguities and *informalities of the formal* that it generates. On the surface, bureaucratised Islam may be enacted and controlled by those on top of its pyramids, by directors, CEOs, state muftis, central committees, "governing boards", or other elites and political decision-makers behind them. It is also, *de facto*, shaped by forces that it cannot control by itself – at least on a cultural level of analysis, which would be of little interest for a purely legal analysis. Like other (state) institutions that *claim* authority, bureaucratic Islam often seeks to stage an impression *as if* it was in charge of things, in order to establish or reproduce its legitimacy, among other intentions. In some contexts, it may be in charge of things, but in others, it is not. It is this complex, at times paradoxical bureaucratic character of arenas of religious discourse, with its multiple layers and possible analytic dimensions – ranging from top-down to bottom-up perspectives and the dialectics between the two, as well as from the social and cultural to the legal, and from the political to the historical – that this special issue is concerned with.

Five Contributions to the Study of Bureaucratic Islam in Southeast Asia

The contributions to this special issue come from a range of disciplines: anthropology, history, law, and political science. Each of these disciplines has its own distinct interests (*Erkenntnisinteressen*), methodological approaches and orthodoxies. As anyone with experience in interdisciplinary projects can attest, scholars from different disciplines aiming to discuss assumedly shared themes often feel that, the more they try to get to the core of their endeavour, they are speaking "different languages". This special issue aims to transcend the disciplinary nationalisms that make such situations often appear unbridgeable, if only for a transitory utopia enabled by this project, and develop partly shared, transdisciplinary perspectives on the bureaucratisation of Islam in Southeast Asia.

The overarching question connecting our case studies is what happens when Muslim faith and practice are adapted to the languages of bureaucracy and/or the modern nation-state, and which transformations, contestations and newly generated socio-cultural, political and legal meanings subsequently unfold. Following an overview of different legal landscapes and their historical and political underpinnings across the region (Steiner's article), each contribution presents an in-depth, locally researched, empirically grounded and actors-oriented case study within a particular national setting. They include examples of state-driven bureaucratisation, to varying extents, but also examples where the bureaucrati-

sation of Islam takes place in wider society, while being only indirectly influenced by the state, or in certain limited aspects and situations, but not in others.

Each contribution has been generated through fieldwork and exchanges with actors involved in the described themes. Here, bureaucracy is not an 'other' upon which preconceived notions of what bureaucracy *should be* or has been culturally learned to be (for example, by complaining about it, cf. Herzfeld 1992: 3) are imposed. In this respect, we refrain from ideal-typical temptations and prioritise a bottom-up – that is, empirical-oriented – view. In its own way, however, each article demonstrates how the bureaucratisation of Islam transcends its organisational boundaries, how its bureaucratic and legal schemes diffuse into other spheres (or, vice-versa, are adapted from there), and how blurring boundaries and interface situations between bureaucracies and their environment play a key role in generating distinct types of relations, cultural forms and meaning-production processes.

As a starting point, Kerstin Steiner provides an overview of the state-sponsored attempts to transform the Islamic discourse. All newly independent states in Southeast Asia – and her study covers Singapore, Malaysia, Brunei and the Philippines – have started to develop their own '*brand of Islam*'. The ruling governments have been concerned with influencing the trajectory, content, hermeneutic and style of the legal traditions of their Muslim citizens and reconciling them with the states' wider policy objectives. The different legal frameworks established by the governments create the impression that their state bureaucratic institutions are in charge of the Islamic discourse. This form of *social engineering* of Islam has produced legal codes that, at the outset, look very similar in terms of following an analogous formula. One striking resemblance is that these codes (with the notable exception of the Philippines) are less concerned with providing a statement of substantive Islamic law and how it should be interpreted and applied in the respective countries. Instead, they focus on establishing a complex web of bureaucratic institutions required to administer Islam. Upon closer inspection, these bureaucracies enable the state to employ different methods of influencing the trajectory of Islam. The governments' approaches oscillate among appropriation, accommodation, control and subjugation in the different political and legal frameworks.

Afif Pasuni's contribution picks up on this theme of different oscillating methods of shaping the Islamic discourse. That article traces the historical development of *fatwa* in Singapore before providing two case studies on *fatwa*. Using *policy feedback* as the theoretical lens, those exam-

ples of *fatwa* on family planning and organ donation survey the interaction within the state and state sponsored bureaucracy, as well as society at large in the context. Pasuni illustrates the persistent negotiation and contestation between the actors and the varying results they produce or a form of *Statist Islam*. As the prefix suggests, the state is the most powerful autonomous social institution that plays the key role in shaping religious praxis through various resources, coercive measures, legal boundaries, and bureaucratic restrictions. At the same time, the agency of religious bureaucrats should not be discounted as they attempt to contest state decisions to accommodate religious demands. All these culminate in Statist Islam, an inadvertent yet normative 'brand' of Islamic praxis that stems from these persistent negotiations and contestations.

The anthropologist Patricia Sloane-White explores how premises concerning *sharia* have been worked into a discursive Malaysian space that exists beyond the courts and the state bureaucracy, but are nevertheless deeply shaped by the state's discursive arena of growing political, legal and social Islamisation. Grounded in more than two decades of fieldwork among Malay Muslim-led companies and business elites, Sloane-White demonstrates how some Muslim company directors and owners have 'Islamised' the workplace by enforcing among Muslim corporate employees the rules of what she calls "personnel *sharia*". In that process, CEOs have been re-conceptualised as Caliphs (*khalifah*) governing "small Islamic states"; that is, their corporations. As employees of these companies are governed by new normative regimes, authority and control over corporate workaday identities and behaviours are undergoing transformations as well. Sloane-White illustrates this through an ethnographic account of two cases of sexual harassment at companies where she conducted fieldwork, separated by a timespan of nearly two decades. The different manners in which these two micro-level cases are handled in the companies provide insights into wider reconfigurations in Malaysia's "changing *sharia* environment". The study concludes that this is not simply a case of a non-state bureaucratisation of Islam, although at first look it is empirically located beyond the state's organisational boundaries. Sloane-White argues that *sharia* in the corporation *extends the state's bureaucratic authority over Muslim compliance into corporate space* and relies on a premise that corporations, like religious officials and institutions, can enforce pious practice and even adjudicate *sharia* outcomes.

The historian Kevin Fogg examines a case of a non-state bureaucratisation of Islam in Indonesia, namely Alkhairaat, an understudied Muslim mass organisation compared with the more prominent Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama. Contrasting assumptions that are com-

monly ascribed to the sociology of Max Weber on how bureaucratisation rationalises charisma and charismatic leadership, Fogg demonstrates how the charismatic leadership of Alkhairaat's founder, Sayyid Idrus bin Salim al-Jufri, is alive and well, half a century after his death. Instead of disappearing or declining, the power of his charisma has acquired new qualities following its translation into the "language" of bureaucracy, as it has been enacted by committed followers who are organising sophisticated forms of venerating their leader among the community. As a consequence, bureaucratisation and the celebration of transcendental charisma have entered a symbiotic relationship, challenging assumptions about the disenchanting and depersonalising effects that bureaucracy would ideal-typically exert over religious discourse in rationalised settings of modernity, such as that of a thoroughly formalised, state-registered organisation. However, despite being largely independent of the state, Alkhairaat is still impacted by it, albeit in indirect, nonessential and ambivalent ways. Fogg also reminds us, and illustrates empirically, that any bureaucracy, including Islamic organisations, is led by human beings (rather than "bureaucrats" as an alien species); that is, by persons who engage in politics and have agency. Some of Alkhairaat's members are even charismatic leaders themselves, while simultaneously engaging in the bureaucratised veneration of their late founder's miraculous deeds. Also, beyond Alkhairaat, a high level of belief in supernatural occurrences continues to prevail in Indonesian Islamic organisations, a contradiction in terms for certain established views on modern bureaucracy and bureaucratisation. Going beyond the Indonesian setting, Fogg concludes that as bureaucratisation increases around the Muslim world, this will not necessarily lead to uniform textualism, objectivity and depersonalisation. Rather, bureaucratisation from the ground up could be harnessed to perpetuate and reinforce the charisma of great spiritual leaders, notwithstanding assumedly countervailing winds of rationalisation, which can de facto operate in a more dialectical relationship with transcendental charisma.

Dominik Müller's article explores how symbols of state power and categorical schemes of bureaucratised Islam in Brunei diffuse into society and become co-produced and creatively appropriated, if not manipulated, in a hermeneutically productive sense by various actors. He elucidates this phenomenon anthropologically in the context of a state-approved Islamic healing centre that specialises in exorcism. Müller explains its rise and growing popularity vis-à-vis Brunei's "nation-state-ization" of Islam, religious purification policies, and cultural changes in Brunei Malay society.

As Brunei witnessed the outlawing and social marginalisation of su-
pernatural practices, in parallel to growing claims for state control over
everyday lifeworlds, "deviant"-declared practices such as exorcism per-
formed in the *informal* sphere by traditional specialists became reinvented
in bureaucratically *formalised* spaces and within the symbolic parameters
of state power as "Sharia-compliant" healing serving God, the Sultan,
and the nation state. While pre-existing supernatural social imaginaries
remain influential, new modes of state orthodoxy have become re-
embedded, rather than presenting the radical shift that they are presented
as. This re-embedding creates new informalities of the formal and draws
on both the language of bureaucracy as well as a range of other transna-
tional registers. These include cultural forms of the market, the powerful
appeal of standards and certificates, Japanese water-crystal photography,
and the quest for scientific evidence-making that the latter aims to serve.
These cultural registers, among others, have entered a symbiotic relation-
ship with the bureaucratisation of Islam.

Although Brunei's Islamic bureaucracy forms an uncontested and
legally incontestable ruling class imposing its ideology and aiming to
(trans-)form national-Muslim subjects through educational and discipli-
nary means, the ways in which its orthodox Islamisation is put into prac-
tice are deeply informed by cultural globalisation, including the global-
ised magnetism of bureaucratic form, alongside long-standing local imag-
inaries of the supernatural that it cannot entirely control (and does not
consider unorthodox). Müller concludes that the pathways to state-
enforced Islamic orthodoxy, and the rule of Brunei's national ideology
Melayu Islam Beraja, are remarkably flexible. Thus, Brunei's hybrid path-
ways to orthodoxy, as exemplified by state-certified Sharia-compliant
exorcism, complicate the narratives through which they are commonly
framed.

Each contribution to this special issue elucidates different facets and
locally specific manifestations of the complex "class of phenomena" that
constitute the bureaucratisation of Islam in Southeast Asia, of its entan-
glements with classificatory power, and of the transformative processes
intersecting with the translation of Islam into the languages of bureau-
cracy and the modern nation state. This publication is meant to be a
starting point for further investigations into bureaucratic Islam in (and
potentially beyond) the Southeast Asian region – a project the authors
are working on in collaboration with a group of colleagues and PhD
students – and for offering the contours of a possible analytic framework
and conceptual terminology to study the bureaucratisation across disci-
plinary boundaries.

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