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# Politics of Taxonomy in Postcolonial Indonesia: Ethnic Traditions between Religionisation and Secularisation

*Martin Ramstedt\**

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**Abstract:** »Politik der Taxonomie im postkolonialen Indonesien: Ethnische Traditionen zwischen Religionisierung und Säkularisierung«. The article discusses the politics of taxonomy that drive the entangled dynamics of religionisation and secularisation of ethnic traditions in postcolonial Indonesia, and the associated sociopolitical context. Defined in accordance with both emic notions of agamasasi (religionisation) and the concept of religion-making originally advanced by Arvind-Pal S. Mandair and Markus Dressler in 2011, "religionisation" relates to three interrelated processes that have had distinct ramifications in the different periods of postcolonial Indonesian history: (1) the way in which the Indonesian state has reified and institutionalised 'religion' as a monotheistic, revealed, and scriptural world religion; (2) the state-sanctioned positioning of 'religion' as distinct from local forms of spiritual belief, resulting in the desacralisation and secularisation of the latter; and (3) the way in which adherents of ethnic spiritualities have reframed and transformed their respective traditions in order to reflect the state-defined notion of 'religion,' and, in doing so, also accepted and strengthened the state discourse of development and modernity. The article also supports Nils Bubandt's observation that the boundaries between the secular and the spiritual have always remained porous in Indonesian society as even so-called secular Indonesian politicians have tended to fall back on locally flavoured mystical or magical beliefs and practices in order to secure their political power.

**Keywords:** Religionisation, secularisation, ethnic religions, Indonesia, Islamisation.

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## 1. Introduction

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In the 2010 Indonesian census, 207,176,162 Indonesians of the country's total population of 237,641,326 identified themselves as Muslim (87.18%); 16,528,513 people identified themselves as Protestant (6.95%); 6,907,873 as Catholic (2.91%); 4,012,116 as Hindu (1.69%); 1,703,254 as Buddhist

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(0.72%), and 117,091 as Confucian (0.05%). Apart from the adherents of those religions specifically named by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA) as religions adhered to by the Indonesian people, namely Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, 299,617 Indonesians (0.17%) identified themselves as members of other religious traditions. The census also counted 139,582 people (0.06%) who did not state their religion and a further 757,118 (0.32%) who had not been asked (Sensus Penduduk 2010).

Over 99% of the Indonesian population thus formally adhere to a world religion. This high percentage of formal believers tallies with the fact that the first of the five foundational principles of the Indonesian state, contained in the preamble to the Indonesian constitution, is “belief in the One and Only God” (HPPURI 1992, 1). This principle is reaffirmed in Article 29 of the constitution, which was the only article explicitly dedicated to the issue of ‘religion’ before the adoption of a catalogue of human rights during the constitutional reform between 1999 and 2002 (Butt and Lindsey 2012, 20-23, 224-34). Article 29 (1) stipulates that “the state is based on belief in the One and Only God.” Article 29 (2) further states that “the state grants every citizen the freedom to embrace their respective religion, and to worship God in accordance with their religion and their belief.” As such, the state does not grant freedom from religion. The human rights catalogue, added in 2000, does mention “religious freedom” under Article 28 (E), Article 28 (I), and Article 28 (J), but only as defined in Article 29 (UUDRI Amendmen 2002, 12-5).

The authors of the original Indonesian constitution from 1945 actually allowed for a definition of “belief in the One and Only God” that would encompass all the ethnic spiritual traditions and world religions extant in the archipelago that profess belief in a supreme deity (see also Boland 1971, 17-39). In the course of the following decades, however, the right to worship God in accordance with one’s religion and belief was increasingly circumscribed by legislation which de facto reduced the meaning of “belief in the One and Only God” to the notion of *dīn*. The Arabic term *dīn* connotes justice or law, conduct based on local custom, belief in and worship of God (Gardet 2012). MoRA did not establish *dīn* as a generic term for all religions it recognised, though. It took recourse, instead, in the term *agama*, which had been used as a term for religion since the 19th century. *Agama* derives from Sanskrit *āgama*, i.e., “religious or traditional doctrine,” and entered modern Indonesian via Old Javanese, *āgama* (Zoetmulder 1982, 23), and modern Javanese, *agami/agama* (Prawiroatmodjo 1996, 3). In Javanese, *agama/agami* acquired a new connotation, namely that of “book of law.” Accordingly, all religions officially recognised by MoRA as *agama* are marked by a universal, monotheistic theology, based on divine revelation to a holy prophet, and are contained in a holy book (Atkinson 1983, 174-8; Ramstedt 2004a, 9; Picard and Madinier 2011, xi, 3-4).

MoRA has thus been instrumental in the reification and institutionalisation of ‘religion’ as monotheistic, revealed, and scriptural world religion.

Until the end of the 1950s, Islam, Protestantism, and Catholicism were the only recognised religions (Boland 1971; 37, 106). Hinduism (Ramstedt 2018, 268), Buddhism (Brown 1987, 108-15), and Confucianism (Lasiyo 1992, 54-55) attained the status of *agama* only during the 1960s after their adherents redesigned their ‘theologies’ and religious practices accordingly (Ramstedt 2004b, 211-6; Schiller 1996, 414-5). Indonesia’s many ethnic spiritual traditions were excluded from the concept of *agama*, even when displaying traces of Islamic, Christian, or ancient Hindu-Buddhist influence. This is because they were invariably characterised by what both Muslim and Christian authorities since the colonial period have regarded as “animism” and “ancestor worship”. While Dutch colonial scholarship categorised all ethnic traditions under the generic term *adat*, Arabic for “custom” (Paulus 1917, 6), MoRA referred to their spiritual dimensions – in contradistinction to *agama* – as “currents of belief” (*aliran kepercayaan*). Positioning ‘religion’ as distinct from local forms of spiritual belief, MoRA was hence also instrumental in the desecralisation and concomitant secularisation of the latter.

On the basis of the principle of “belief in the One and Only God,” the Indonesian state declared in 1952 adherents of *aliran kepercayaan* targets of religious proselytising. Until the 1960s, this meant that adherents of ethnic religions were urged to convert to either Christianity or Islam. In order to prevent unwelcome missionary activity in their regions, the spiritual leaders of ethnic traditions such as Karo *Pemena* in North Sumatra (Kipp Smith 1993, 232-6), Ngaju and Luangan *Kaharingan* in Central Kalimantan (Schiller 1996, 413), Bugis *To Wani To Lotang* in South Sulawesi (Ramstedt 2004b, 201-05), Tengger *Buda* in East Java (Hefner 1985, 6-8, 246), Sasak *Wetu Telu* in Lombok (Cederroth 1996, 30), and so forth, sought to ‘religionise’ their ethnic traditions by reformulating their tenets and modes of worship according to the blueprint of state-defined *agama*. Despite such religionisation efforts, MoRA invariably refused to recognise ethnic traditions as *agama* – with the exception of the Balinese tradition.

The Indonesian state recognised Balinese beliefs and practices as local variants of Hinduism, above all because colonial orientalist scholarship had cast Balinese culture as part of “Greater India,” a world civilisation.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, Balinese leaders had successfully reframed the highly syncretistic beliefs and practices of their local tradition along the lines of modern Indian monotheistic

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<sup>1</sup> For more detail on how orientalist scholarship cast Balinese culture as part of Greater India, see Boon 1977, 1-6, 10-30; Ramstedt 2011, 525-9; Bloembergen and Eickhoff 2011, 405-7, 410-5, 429-31.

neo-Hinduism. Thus transformed, MoRA was able to recognise Balinese ‘Hinduism’ as *agama*.<sup>2</sup>

Leaders of *Pemena* (Kipp Smith 1993, 243-52; Ginting 2004, 236-41), *Kaharingan* (Schiller 1996, 413-4; Weinstock 1984, 12, 190-4), *To Wani To Lotang*, Sa’dan-Toraja *Aluk To Dolo*, and Mamasa-Toraja *Ada’ Mappurondo* in South Sulawesi (Ramstedt 2004b, 206-17) as well as *Buda* (Hefner 1985, 72, 142-62, 182-97, 207-59) tried to emulate the Balinese Hindu movement by declaring their ethnic traditions to be local Hindu variants, thereby trying a different strategy of religionisation. While their efforts eventually proved successful, a substantial number of the communities still converted to Islam and Christianity. They did so because of the extensive pressure exerted by Muslim and Christian missionaries, because of the promise of modernity both Islam and Christianity were offering, and because of the fact that the Balinese Hindu priests, who were sent into the respective areas to teach modern Hinduism to the locals, tended to propagate Balinese concepts and rituals as standard Hinduism rather than help translate the respective local traditions into a Hindu framework as the Balinese had done with their own tradition (Hefner 1985, 63, 249; Kipp Smith 1993, 221-54; Schiller 1997, 23 and 109; Ramstedt 2004b, 187-99 and 208-17). Many of the new Hindu converts later reconverted to Islam and Christianity for the same reasons (Hefner 1985, 246-7; Kipp Smith 1993, 252; Vignato 2000, 266-356; Ginting 2004, 226-41). The majority of the Sasak Boda in Lombok, for their part, did not opt for Hinduism but registered as Buddhists after Buddhism had undergone a reframing similar to that of ‘Hinduism,’ in order to mesh with the state concept of *agama* (Cederroth, 1996, 20-1; Ramstedt 2018, 271).

Indonesians have referred to all the aforementioned ramifications of the state policy of *agama* as “*agamasasi*,” literally meaning “religionisation.” Sven Cederroth was the first to mention this term, albeit only in the sense of aligning oneself with one of the world religions recognised by the Indonesian government as had been the case with both the Sasak Boda and the Sasak Wetu Telu in Lombok, where Cederroth conducted fieldwork (Cederroth 1996, 20-4). Indonesian ideas regarding *agamasasi* in fact mesh with the concept of “religion-making” advanced by Arvind-Pal S. Mandair and Markus Dressler in 2011. They define “religion-making” as a non-essentialist heuristic concept referring to the

reification and institutionalization of certain ideas, social formations, and practices as ‘religious’ in the conventional Western meaning of the term, thereby subordinating them to a particular knowledge regime of religion and

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<sup>2</sup> For more detail on the reframing of Balinese traditional beliefs and practices within the new framework of Indian neo-Hinduism, see Geertz 1972, 62-84; Geertz 1993, 170-89; Ramstedt 2002, 151-6; Picard 2004, 56-8 and 68; Picard 2011, 118 and 124-7.

its political, cultural, philosophical, and historical interventions. (Mandair and Dressler 2011, 3, 21)

In the following, I use the term *agamasasi*, or religionisation, as equivalent to Mandair and Dressler's concept of religion-making.

In 1993, Rita Kipp Smith pointed to the consequence of such religionisation, namely the classificatory secularisation and concomitant desacralisation of those (parts of) ethnic traditions that defy *agamasasi*. After conversion, many converts continued to participate in traditional rituals, even if the latter involved spiritual contact with ancestors through trance mediums, or the preparation of daily offerings for the ancestors, and the like. Those who had converted due to inner conviction no longer considered such activities as something spiritual or religious, but as customary (*adat*) or cultural (*budaya*) practices (Kipp Smith 1993, 254-61; Picard 2011, 3). The state allowed such converts to engage in their customary or cultural practices for the benefit of cultural tourism, but only if they did so without a traditionalist attitude, that is, without an earnest belief in the spiritual cosmologies undergirding the respective rituals (Ramstedt 2005, 212; Ramstedt, Slama, and Warta 2012, 7-11).

Robert W. Hefner similarly uses "secularisation" when referring to the desacralisation of key tenets and practices of syncretistic Javanese Muslims by Muslim reformers, which was triggered by the latter's narrow concept of religion. Hefner's understanding of secularisation thus refers to an internal process of secularisation within Indonesian Islam, which can also be seen as a taxonomic and factual eradication of those elements not in line with Muslim orthodoxy (Hefner 1998, 156-9).

With respect to the secularisation of ethnic traditions in Indonesia, Nils Bubandt rightly argues that the boundary between secularity and the spiritual (often referred to as *kebatinan*, or *ilmu gaib*) has remained rather porous. Having a recognised classificatory place neither in the secular discourse, nor in the field of 'religion,' the spiritual tends to remain hidden, unless it erupts suddenly, for example in individual quests for power. Indonesian politicians even today frequently make use of local notions and practices of magic in order to gain a larger following (Bubandt 2012, pos. 4954-5448). Unpacking the politics of taxonomy that drive the entangled processes of religionisation and secularisation of ethnic traditions in postcolonial Indonesia therefore necessitates a simultaneous elucidation of the sociopolitical contexts in which these politics have been embedded.

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## 2. Politics of Taxonomy under Sukarno

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The cornerstone of *agamasasi* and its attendant secularisation was the Decree by the Minister of Religious Affairs No. 9/1952/Article VI, which classified all ethnic traditions in Indonesia as mere "currents of belief" (*aliran kepercayaan*).

This was a reference to ancestral ways of life (*adat*), backwardness, and superstition, whereas true ‘religion’ (*agama*) was associated with modernity and seen as compatible with science and technology (Kartapradja 1990, 1-2, 205).

The decree was intended to redress the omission of the so-called “Jakarta Charter” from the 1945 constitution and the wording of Articles 29, 9 and 18 of that constitution. The Investigative Body for Preparatory Efforts for Independence was established by the Japanese military government of occupied Indonesia shortly before Japan’s capitulation (Benda 1983, 194). The majority of the delegates endorsed the vision of a pluralist secular code of law despite heated debates on the issue of an Islamic state as envisioned by the proponents of political Islam. However, due to the principle of unanimity governing the delegates’ decision-making, some recognition of the special status of Islam eventually had to be made. In a speech before the plenary, Sukarno proposed five foundational principles for independent Indonesia: nationalism, humanity, democracy, social justice, and belief in God. The last was meant to affirm the beliefs of Muslims, Christians, and adherents of those ethnic religions venerating an absolute Godhead. The majority of representatives accepted Sukarno’s proposal enthusiastically. The proponents of an Islamic state, realising that their full aspirations could not be fulfilled, continued to call for Islam to play a large role in the Indonesian constitution. In the end, a sub-committee of nine representatives, tasked with the actual drafting of the constitution, reached a gentlemen’s agreement that came to be known as the Jakarta Charter. It consisted of the following addition to “belief in God”: “with the obligation for Muslims to observe the *shari’a*.” When the constitution was finally read out on 18 August 1945, “belief in God” had been reformulated as “belief in the One and Only God.” It had, moreover, become the first – and thus most foundational – principle of the Indonesian state. The Jakarta Charter, however, had been mysteriously omitted (Azis 1955, 247-58; Boland 1971, 25-38, 243-4).

For proponents of political Islam, Article 29 of the 1945 constitution lacked the necessary criteria to render “belief in the One and Only God” fully congruent with Islamic notions of religion. Article 9 was also a matter of concern because it left open the issue of the religious affiliation of Indonesia’s president and vice-president, allowing for the appointment of either a religious or a secular candidate (HPPURI 1992, 2). Article 18, which called for the integration of still-functioning *adat* law systems into Indonesia’s national legislation, jarred not only with Islamic sensitivities, but also with the anti-traditionalist stance of the modernists within the Indonesian independence movement (HPPURI 1992, 2). Although Article 32 called upon the government to provide for the development of a national Indonesian culture (*budaya Indonesia*), the elucidation of the article cautiously described this future national culture as an amalgamation of the best parts of Indonesia’s local traditions and “those new ingredients of foreign cultures that can develop and enrich the culture of one’s own nation”

(HPPURI 1992, 4; PTUUD 1945, Bab XIII: Pendidikan). Thus, Article 32 also strengthened the ethnic traditions to a certain extent.

The contradictory notions apparent in these articles reflect the different political ideologies of the 60 delegates to the Investigative Body for Preparatory Efforts for Independence. While some delegates advocated Islamic theocracy, others supported secular nationalism. Where some envisaged a federalist state, others called for a unitary nation state. The Japanese appointed the conservative intellectual Dr. Radjiman as chair of the larger Investigative Body. The Dutch-educated jurist Dr. Raden Soepomo became chair of the actual drafting sub-committee. During the late Dutch colonial period, both men had been major proponents of the Javanist organisation *Boedi Oetomo* (Boland 1971, 16).

“Javanism” (*kejawen*) is an emic umbrella term which was first noted as such by the Dutch missionary S.E. Harthoorn (1831-1883). He distinguished between two categories of Javanists: The first category was self-identifying Muslims who actually adhered to a syncretistic blend of “animist,” Hindu-Buddhist, and *Sufi* beliefs and practices. This blend was locally known as “the Javanese Religion” (*Agami Jawi*). The Australian Indonesianist Merle Calvin Ricklefs referred to it as “the mystic synthesis.” The second category was groups who embraced similarly syncretistic blends, but who firmly rejected Islam. Instead, they oriented themselves towards Java’s glorious Hindu-Buddhist past, particularly the period of the East Javanese Hindu-Buddhist Empire of Majapahit (Schuurman 1933, 4; Ricklefs 2007, 1-11, 31-46; Hefner 2000, 15), which had existed from the 13th to the beginning of the 16th century CE.

*Boedi Oetomo* was founded in 1908 as a scholarship fund for Javanese boys and girls. From the outset, the organisation was dominated by culturally and politically conservative members of Java’s royal houses (Sewaja 1909; Nagazumi 1967; Hadisutjipto 2009, 24-67). Eventually, *Boedi Oetomo* turned to politics, promoting cooperation with the Dutch and the continued importance of the traditional elite. While some members would have liked Islam to be inscribed in *Boedi Oetomo*’s statutes, its leaders were strongly opposed to this idea. In 1917, Radjiman defended this anti-Islamic stance, openly chiding Islam for having caused the downfall of Majapahit and thus the dilution of Java’s cultural refinement. He then argued that freedom of religion, rather than an exclusive commitment to Islam, was a fitting principle for *Boedi Oetomo* (Ricklefs 2007, 217-8; Wedyadiningrat 1952).

In 1945, supporters of political Islam felt threatened by the influence of Radjiman and Soepomo, who were both known for their reservations about Islam. The foundation of MoRA on the basis of Government Decree No. 5/1946 was a step towards reconciliation. MoRA was the successor institution to the Office for Religious Affairs (*Shumubu*), which was established by the Japanese military administration in 1942 (Benda 1983, 111-9, 132-5). Dr. Haji Mohamad Rasjidi, an as-yet-rather-unknown alumnus of the Al-Azhar Univer-



sity in Cairo who was inspired by the Middle Eastern Muslim reformers al-Afghani, Muhammad ‘Abduh, and Rashid Rida, was appointed head of MoRA. During his term, the Islamic law courts, which had hitherto been part of the secular Ministry of Justice, were put under the auspices of MoRA (Rasjidi 1967, 92; Azra 1998, 5-14). This can arguably be viewed as a successful re-religionisation of the Islamic law courts.

The Ministry of Public Education (later called Ministry of Education and Culture), on the other hand, was put in the hands of secular nationalists, most of them members of the Indonesian Nationalist Party (PNI), which had been founded by Sukarno in 1927. The PNI promoted a national identity devoid of ethnic and religious ties, which spoke particularly to members of minority groups, such as Christians, Balinese, or Javanists (SKPDK 2015). Soon after the international recognition of the fully independent unitary Indonesian nation state in 1950, Emergency Law No. 1/1951 on Preliminary Steps toward the Unification of the Organisation, Authority and Portfolio of the Civil Courts dismantled local *adat* law institutions. The Basic Agrarian Law (BAL) of 1960, pushed for by the Indonesian Communist Party (*Partai Komunis Indonesia, PKI*) and the Indonesian Peasants’ Front (*Barisan Tani Indonesia, BTI*), followed this with large-scale reallocation of land from large private owners to “the tillers,” i.e., the small peasants and landless agricultural labourers who had hitherto cultivated the fields of the large landowners. The law’s protracted and uneven implementation frequently involved unilateral disappropriation and further erosion of local *adat* law institutions as traditional village commons were placed under the direct authority of the state (Lev 1973, 12 and 20-31; Fitzpatrick 1997, 172-212; Lucas and Warren 2013, 2-8). Legal unification thus reinforced the secularisation of ethnic traditions and the desacralisation of the sacred cosmologies they were embedded in.

By 1960, President Sukarno had come to greatly rely on the PKI in maintaining the balance of power between the Indonesian armed forces and political Islam. Originally founded as the Indies Social Democratic Association by Dutchman H.J.F.M Sneevliet in 1914, the party changed its name to Communist Association in the Indies in 1920 and renamed itself once again to Indonesian Communist Party in 1924. PKI members consisted mainly of Javanese peasants who firmly rejected the hegemonic aspirations of reform Islam as well as the cultural conservatism of the traditional landowning elite. Their vision of Marx’s classless society largely tallied with that of the leftist branch of Sukarno’s PNI in that they envisioned Indonesia as a kind of socialist reincarnation of Majapahit (Mortimer 2006; Ricklefs 2007, 216-21).

In the first decade after independence, leftist Javanist movements proliferated. Many of them eventually joined with ethnic traditions in other parts of the country under the emic umbrella term of “mysticism” (*kebatinan*) in order to seek recognition in accordance with the first foundational principle of the Indonesian state. In 1955, the first All-Indonesian Congress of Mystical Move-

ments took place in Semarang, attended by some 2,000 delegates representing some 100 organisations. In 1956 and 1959, a second and then a third congress were organised in Surakarta followed by two seminars in 1961 and 1962 (Artawijaya 2010, 237; Shadiqin, 2011, 8).

MoRA counteracted this religionisation attempt on the part of Indonesian mysticism by instigating the creation of an interdepartmental Coordinative Body for the Surveillance of Currents of Belief (*PAKEM*). According to the Decision by the Prime Minister No. 167/PM/ 1954, PAKEM was to advise the government on its legislative policy concerning the protection of social peace. In 1959, anti-communist generals of the Indonesian armed forces established branches of PAKEM in several provinces where they had seized control. By 1964, PAKEM had registered some 360 syncretistic mystical groups in Java alone (Yulianta 2010, 45-9; Kartapradja 1990, 75-181).

In 1959, MoRA fortified the boundaries between *agama* and *aliran kepercayaan* even further by issuing a decree that qualified “belief in the One and Only God” as “revealed religion” (*agama wahyu*), a term that in the vernacular has been used in opposition to *agama ardhi/bumi/budaya* (earth-derived, man-made, or cultural religion). Unsurprisingly, the vernacular and derogatory term *agama ardhi*, etc., refers to all *aliran kepercayaan*, that is, to all ethnic traditions and mystical movements (Hyung-Jun 1998, 363). In 1959, Kyai Haji Muhammad Wahib Wahab was at the helm of MoRA. His father had been one of the founders of *Nahdlatul Ulama (NU)*, a platform for traditionalist *ulama* established in 1926 in opposition to Ahmad Dachlan’s reform Muslim organisation *Muhammadiyah*, which was founded in 1912. Together with *Masyumi*, NU was part of political Islam. Today, NU is still the largest Muslim organisation in Indonesia, along with its rival, *Muhammadiyah* (Bruinessen 1994, 17-23, 26-28, 61-70, 82-6). Prior to his appointment as Minister of Religious Affairs, Wahib Wahab had been active in two paramilitary organisations: the NU youth organisation *Ansor*, and the *Masyumi*-controlled *Hizbullah*. Both organisations strongly opposed the increasing influence of the PKI (Aziz 1998, 181-99; Ricklefs 2012, 70-108).

In the general election of 1955, *Masyumi*, the PNI, NU, and the PKI had proved the most successful political parties. After the installation of the new parliament in 1956, a Constituent Assembly (*Konstituante*) was appointed to draw up a new and final constitution of the unitary Indonesian nation state. The Jakarta Charter again proved a dividing issue, fanning the flames of already extant separatist leanings. The *Darul Islam (DI)* movement in West Java, Aceh, and South Sulawesi was only defeated in 1965, shortly before Suharto seized power from Sukarno. In 1959, Sukarno finally dissolved the *Konstituante* and announced the government’s return to the Indonesian Constitution of 1945. Replacing the parliament with the National Planning Council, he inaugurated the autocratic governance system of Guided Democracy, which granted him

considerably enhanced presidential powers (Boland 1971, 54-75; Anshari 1997, 49, 65-115).

From 1960 onwards, landless Javanist PKI followers began to seize land from traditional landowners who often adhered to reform Islam. This exacerbated relations between Javanists and orthodox Muslims. In 1964, intelligence officers under the general direction of General Suharto, forged relations with Islamic leaders (Ricklefs 2001, 332-8; Suwandi 2000, 30-1). In the following year, against the backdrop of growing conservative resistance against his regime, Sukarno issued what one might interpret, at least to a certain extent, as a conciliatory Presidential Decision. Presidential Decision No. 1/PNPS/1965 on the Prevention of the Abuse and/or Blasphemy of Religion effectively sealed the process of *agamasasi* Sukarno's government had achieved so far. The Blasphemy Law, as the decision came to be called, interdicts the public propagation or recommendation of heterodox interpretations pertaining to the teachings and practices of any of the six recognised religions. Recurrent individual infringements incur a prison sentence of five years. Should a mystical organisation or current of belief repeatedly breach the interdiction, it is to be shut down by MoRA in conjunction with the Attorney General and the Minister of Home Affairs, or the President (PPRI No. 1/PNPS 1965, Paragraph 1-5; PAPPRI No. 1/PNPS 1965, I.1-5; II.1).

The Blasphemy Law was particularly directed against millenarian Javanist groups advocating the appearance of a "Just King" (*Ratu Adil*). Many had initially regarded Sukarno as the *Ratu Adil* of their time because he had freed Indonesia from the yoke of the Dutch (Kartodirdjo 1973, 1-11, 66-105; Dahm 1966, 1-15, 259). By early 1965, however, Sukarno's charisma had faded. When he approached the Javanese mystical healer (*dukun*) Abdurachim for counsel, the latter advised him to step down as president (Giebels 2001, 359-60). Sukarno did not heed this advice. His Blasphemy Law, however, curbed all millenarian efforts to re-enchant politics while simultaneously reasserting religionisation as a political imperative.

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### 3. Religionisation and Secularisation under Suharto

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General Suharto's anti-communist purge following the so-called communist coup of 30 September 1965 was strongly supported by the NU paramilitary organisations *Ansor* and *Banser* as well as Hindu-Balinese militias (see also Human Rights Watch 2017). Most scholars today accept that, within two years, several hundred thousand, possibly up to one million, actual and alleged communists were killed (Roosa 2006, 4-5 and 24-5; Cribb 2009, 296). By 1969, PAKEM had shut down over a hundred Javanist groups suspected of having sympathised with the PKI. That year, President Suharto made Sukarno's presidential decision (the 'Blasphemy Law') into a law: Law No. 5/1969 (UU

No.5/PNPS/1969 2009). From now on, citizens were required to register their religious affiliation with the local authorities. Their religious affiliation also had to be displayed on their identity cards (Yang 2005, 3). This resulted in waves of mass conversion by adherents of ethnic traditions, from which all recognised religions profited (Bruinessen 1995, 6; Ramstedt 2004a, 15). In 1984, PAKEM was transferred from MoRA to the (secular) Attorney General, which symbolically confirmed the government's view of *aliran kepercayaan* as secular and potentially criminal organisations (Amnesty International 2014, 16). Given that Suharto was widely appreciated as an avid practitioner of Javanese mystical lore at the time (Anderson 1990, 23-7; Bouchier 2010, pos. 1599-1616; Artha 2007; Bangunwijo 2007), the criminalisation of ethnic spirituality seems somewhat paradoxical.

Until 1978, Suharto had actually protected those *aliran kepercayaan*, for which no connection to the PKI could be traced (Ricklefs 2001, 373). He did clamp down, though, on leftist millenarian movements as well as those opposing his regime. In 1968, a unit of the Army Strategic Reserve Command (*KOSTRAD*) killed East Javanese mystic Embah Suro, the leader of a several million-strong Javanist movement close to the PKI, along with 80 of his followers (Mitchell 1968, 28-29; Kahin 2015, 247). In 1976, the Javanese mystic Sawito Kartowibowo composed a number of inflammatory documents which criticised the government on various counts and demanded that President Suharto resign. A court verdict of 1978 finally sentenced Sawito to eight years in prison (Narto 1978, 5-76 and 156-206; Bouchier 2010, *passim*). Thereafter, Suharto guarded against Javanese mysticism in general.

Suharto also re-engineered Indonesia's ethnic traditions as cultural resources of an essentially modern secular national culture. This entailed a rapid folklorisation and commodification of once sacred local arts and crafts for the growing tourist industry. *Taman Mini Indonesia Indah* on the outskirts of Jakarta became the epitome of this process. In the park, the sacred architecture and arts of ethnic groups that had become emblematic of the different regions of the country were put on display as objects of recreation (Foulcher 1990, 304-11; Ramstedt 2005, 212-5). As a footnote, Presidential Instruction No. 14/1967 and Minister of Home Affairs Directive No. 477/74054/BA.01.2/4683/95 from 1978 prohibited the public display of Chinese culture, including Confucianism, which lost its status as a recognised religion. This led most Sino-Indonesians to officially convert to Islam, Christianity, or Buddhism (Yang 2005, 2-3).

By the mid-1970s, each of the five recognised religious communities had been forced to establish a representative council responsible to the regime. These bodies were the Indonesian Council of Muslim Scholars (*MUI*), the Alliance of (Protestant) Churches in Indonesia (*PGI*), the Indonesian Bishops' Conference (*KWI*), the Indonesian Hindu Council (*PHDI*), and the Guardian Body of the Indonesian Buddhist Community (*WALUBI*). All of the councils

were closely supervised by MoRA and became members of the government party *Golkar*.<sup>3</sup>

The first Minister of Religious Affairs under Suharto was Kyai Haji Mohammad Dachlan. Dachlan and other NU leaders had signed a declaration in 1966, expressing their full support for General Suharto's efforts to disband the PKI, re-establish order, and guard against communist guerrilla politics (Muchtart 1998, 258). In 1971, Dachlan was succeeded by Prof. Dr. A. Mukti Ali, a modernist Islamic intellectual affiliated with *Muhammadiyah* who had studied in Mecca, at the University of Karachi and McGill University in Montreal. Mukti Ali's appointment ended the dominance of NU politicians within MoRA and transformed the ministry into an institution that would help Suharto discipline political Islam. In 1973, Suharto forced all the different Islamic political parties to merge into one party, the United Development Party (*PPP*). He united all other extant political parties, such as the Catholic Party, the Protestant Party, the PNI, and the ultra-leftist Proletarian Deliberation Party (*Murba*) as the Indonesian Democratic Party (*PDI*). Neither the PPP nor the PDI were allowed to organise any activities below the district level, whereas Suharto's own party, *Golkar*, was permitted to work at village level. In order to further prevent any rural opposition, it was decided during the Parliamentary Session of March 1978 that *aliran kepercayaan* would no longer receive any government protection (Munhanif 1998, 272-301; Ricklefs 2001, 361-92).

MoRA's branch offices as well as those of the five religious councils extended to the village level. MUI's primary tasks comprised translating government goals into fatwas and recommendations (*tausiyah*), monitoring religious life for the government, and serving as a go-between for the government and Islamic scholars (Ichwan 2005, 48). The councils of the other religious communities had similar assignments (Ramstedt 2018, 269-72; Subanar 2005, 175-88). Government interests and religion were thus effectively fused and the influence of transnational religious movements curbed. In 1983, the government forced all religious organisations to recognise the five foundational principles of the Indonesian state as their sole ideological foundation (*azas tunggal*). Under Alamsyah Ratu Perwiranegara, the first Minister of Religious Affairs with a military background, MoRA sought to balance the *azas tunggal* policy with enhanced internal mission activity within each of the five religious communities (Adnan 1990, 461-7; Abdillah 1998, 324-34). This put even more pressure on those who sought to maintain their ethnic beliefs and practices under the guise of one of the state religions. Moreover, new religious movements, like ISKCON, Nichiren, or Jehovah's Witnesses, were now classified as

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<sup>3</sup> For more detail on the affiliation of the different religious councils with Suharto's *Golkar* party, see Ichwan 2005, 46-8; Hooker 1997, 16; Aritonang and Steenbrink 2008; Bagus 2004, 86-7; Somvir 2004, 257; Ramstedt 2018, 271-4.

*aliran kepercayaan* and consequentially lost their religious status (Sihombing 2008, 31; Ramstedt 2018, 272).

In 1989, Suharto suddenly went on a well-publicised pilgrimage to Mecca, tantamount to a public abandonment of Javanism. Many Muslims regarded the pilgrimage as a purely strategic move (Suharto 1991, 209-21; Syeikh Imam Ashaari Muhammad 1993). Widespread modernisation and urbanisation had meanwhile resulted in the emergence of a well-educated Muslim middle class whose members started to fill the ranks of the civil service and business and gain political influence. Moreover, Suharto's fall-out with the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces – the Catholic General Benny Murdani – over the business activities of Suharto's children, necessitated a major shift in the regime's power base. Suharto's ostentatious "turn to Mecca" laid the foundation for a profound legal accommodation of Islam, which completely offset his previous policies of separating religion from politics and granting all recognised religions equal treatment (Hefner 2000, 123-7; Ricklefs 2001, 376-91).

Law No. 2/1989 on the National Education System, for instance, obliged the government to provide appropriate funding for private Islamic schools, while the schools of the other religions saw severe cuts in funding. Law No. 7/1989 on Religious Judicature raised the judicial authority of the Islamic courts to the level of the secular civil and military courts (Ramstedt 2016, 72-4), while *adat* law institutions were seriously obstructed by government interference (Moniaga 2007, 278-83; Arizona and Cahyadi 2013, 44). In 1990, Suharto created the Association of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals (*ICMI*) and placed at its helm his Minister of Research and Technology, the German-educated modernist Muslim B.J. Habibie. Thanks to Habibie, many ICMI members rapidly gained access to the ranks of the Indonesian civil service, which helped accelerate what NU leader Abdurrahman Wahid called the "reconfessionalisation of politics" (Hefner 2000, 128-66; Ramage 1995, 61-121).

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#### 4. Political and Taxonomic Shifts in Post-New Order Indonesia

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After the breakdown of Suharto's New Order regime in the wake of the 1997 Asian financial crisis, interim President Habibie initiated a far-reaching governance reform which was implemented and revised during the legislatures of Abdurrahman Wahid and Megawati Sukarnoputri (2001-2004). By 2004, the intense spells of violent inter-ethnic and inter-religious conflicts, which had occurred during the regime transition, had subsided (Colombijn and Lindblad 2002, 1-7; Klinken 2002). The intensity of these conflicts had nevertheless driven home the fact that the reform process would have to tackle long-standing issues, such as *adat* revivalism, the question of religious freedom, and the status of the Jakarta Charter (Henley and Davidson 2007, 1-29; Klinken

2008, 35-42). In 2000, President Abdurrahman Wahid annulled Suharto's Presidential Instruction No. 14/1967, paving the way for the revival of Chinese culture, including Confucianism, among the Sino-Indonesian population (Lembong 2008, 52-3; Winarta 2008, 62-5). A profound law reform as part of the governance reform ensured the decentralisation of important governance functions. Decentralisation gave boost to old local patron-client relations and facilitated the emergence of new ones. Traditional ethnic and religious elites, like former sultans and kings, priests and religious scholars, and affluent businesspeople and local bureaucrats, etc., now started to rally people around them by calling for the revitalization of indigenous customary law, or the strengthening of religious norms and institutions. This in turn facilitated the issuance of a wave of regional regulations juridifying both *adat* as well as Islamic norms in the different regions, despite the concurrent adoption of a whole range of new human rights in the Indonesian Constitution. The law reform also entailed the establishment of a Constitutional Court, which was to become instrumental in settling motions for judicial reviews with respect to indigenous rights and the issue of religious freedom (Lindsey 2007, 3-4 and 11-26; Lev 2007).

In 1999, leaders of various ethnic traditions organised themselves into the Indigenous Peoples' Alliance of the Archipelago (*AMAN*), which helped bring about the second constitutional amendment reconfirming and strengthening the authority of the judiciary institutions of those *adat* communities still functioning as such (Moniaga 2007, 275-85; Arizona and Cahyadi 2013, 44-62). Several ethnic communities were content with such factual strengthening of local *adat* law and did not further seek to challenge the taxonomic boundaries between *adat* and *agama*. The Minangkabau in West Sumatra, for example, successfully lobbied for the juridification of their traditional village *adat* (*nagari*). It became local village law in 2008 (Perda Prov Sumatera Barat No. 2/2008, Art. 7/1:2.a.4.; Perda Prop Sumatera Barat No. 7/2018). Juridified Minangkabau customary village law naturally retained its decidedly secular status, however, as Minangkabau identity has been strongly influenced by Wahhabi Islam since the 19th century (Benda-Beckmann and Benda-Beckmann 2013, 432-8; Hadler 2008, 5-9, 19-32). In predominantly Christian Tanah Toraja, the regional parliament similarly juridified the customary village governance model of the *lembang* without compromising the Christian dimension of mainstream Sa'dan-Toraja identity (Jong 2009, 256-7, 276-81; Perda Kab Tator No. 3/2015). The Balinese also fought successfully for the juridification of the *desa pakraman*, a customary form of village administration. While *adat* has never been treated as secular in Bali, it has either been directly subsumed under 'Hindu law' or at least seen as synergetic with the Hindu religion (Warren 2007, 172-6; Ramstedt 2009, 332-64). In the cases of the Minangkabau, the Sa'dan-Toraja, and the Balinese, the taxonomic boundaries between *agama* and *aliran kepercayaan* – now again called *adat* – were thus not at all compromised.

Indigenous advocacy elsewhere, however, continued to demand recognition of local ethnic traditions, including the sacred cosmologies they are embedded in. A first major victory was Constitutional Court Decision No. 35/PUU-X/2012 on the Judicial Review of Law No. 41/1999 on Forestry, submitted by AMAN and two *adat* communities. According to the decision, forests traditionally regarded as *adat* land should be owned by local *adat* communities and not by the state (Decision Number 35/PUU-X/2012). In 2017, the Constitutional Court also decided in favour of petitioners in the Judicial Review of Law No. 23/2006 on Population Administration, which was filed by the leaders of four *aliran kepercayaan*, the *Marapu* (Sumba), *Parmalim* (North Sumatra), *Ugamo Bangso Batak* (Medan, North Sumatra), and *Sapto Darmo* (Java). The court found that the stipulation in Law No. 23/2006 that an as-yet-unrecognised faith cannot be written in the religion column of citizens' identity cards contradicts the Indonesian Constitution. The Constitutional Court recommended that, alongside the recognised religions, the government create a separate category for "adherents of a belief" (*penghayat kepercayaan*), which would allow for a respective entry on identity cards (Putusan No. 97/PUU-XIV/2016; Sheany 2017). In the eyes of many Indonesians, this amounted to a re-religionisation of ethnic traditions.

The decision was well received by *Aluk To Dolo* and *Kaharingan* leaders. The priest Minaa Kembong Lisulembang, for instance, stated in the local media that the decision would finally allow the adherents of *Aluk To Dolo* to leave the Hindu community and establish their own faith community (Arthur 2017). In 2012, AMAN had supported a demonstration of several hundreds of adherents of *Hindu Kaharingan* in South Kalimantan, demanding the recognition of their ethnic religion as a separate *agama* (Pitakasari 2012; Dom 2017). The Catholic Mangarai in West Flores, on the other hand, revived their traditional religious practices without leaving the Catholic faith (Henley and Davidson 2007, 15; Erb 2007, 247-8 and 257-62).

In contrast to the PHDI and the KWI, MUI continued to advocate external *agamasasi* and reinforce internal *agamasasi*, rigorously suppressing any accommodation of syncretism within the boundaries of Islam. By 2000, MUI had succeeded in dissociating itself from its negative image as a mere appendix of Suharto's regime, reinventing itself as the force that would realise Muslim aspirations in post-New Order Indonesia (Ichwan 2005, 50-3). Council members were eventually no longer exclusively recruited from among the two established Muslim organisations *Muhammadiyah* and NU, but also from more radical organisations, such as the *Forum Pembela Islam (FPI)*, or the *Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia* (Bruinessen 2013, 3). MUI even started to engage in the political arena, thereby seeking to religionise that secular field (Wilson 2008, 3; Ichwan 2013, 61-4 and 70-90). In the "Advice by the MUI Executive Leading Up to the 1999 Election," it exhorted Indonesian Muslims, inter alia, to "prioritize Islamic brotherhood and to abstain from involvement in conflict and fric-



tion.” Moreover, “the entire nation, especially the Umma, should be cautious of the latent danger of communism and the PKI” (Ichwan 2005, 56). In its “Instruction to the Umma Leading Up to the Election of 7 June 1999” MUI repeated its exhortation to strengthen Muslim unity (Ichwan 2005, 56-7), which was clearly directed against the popular candidate for the presidency Megawati Sukarnoputri and her essentially secular Indonesian Democratic Party-Struggle (*PDI-P*). In addition to taking issue with the secular nature of the *PDI-P*, MUI also opposed Megawati’s candidature because she was a woman, which disqualified her in the eyes of conservative Muslims, and because she was known to have consulted the famous Javanese mystic Permadi.

Eventually, it was Abdurrahman Wahid, head of the NU, who was elected President with the support of a coalition of Islamic parties under the leadership of M. Amien Rais (Thompson 1999, 4; Ricklefs 2001, 418-21). Megawati, for her part, was appointed vice-president. Due to Wahid’s affirmation of pluralism and the essentially secular drive of his policies, the Islamic parties soon became disillusioned with his presidency. MUI even developed into one of Wahid’s major opponents (Ichwan 2005, 61-2 and 70-2). In 2001, the parliament impeached and removed Wahid from presidency over accusations of corruption and abuse of power. His successor was Megawati, who remained in office for the remainder of the original term of his legislature, i.e., until 2004.

Efforts by Muslim activists to get the Jakarta Charter reinserted into the Indonesian Constitution were thwarted in the 2001 and 2002 sessions of the People’s Consultative Assembly. Although the Jakarta Charter was not included in the fourth and final amendment of the Indonesian Constitution, the decentralisation process facilitated the issuance of a number of regional regulations accommodating *shari’ah* norms in those districts in which conservative Muslims were strong (Bush 2008, 176-86; Bruinessen 2013, 2). The latter gained further victories when during the legislature of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, Law No. 3/2006 on Religious Justice was issued and the Constitutional Court confirmed Sukarno’s Blasphemy Law in 2010. Law No. 3/2006 broadened and strengthened the jurisdiction of the Islamic courts by granting them jurisdiction over disputes involving Islamic economic transactions, and by obliging litigants officially registered as Muslims to thereafter bring disputes in matters under Islamic jurisdiction to Islamic courts only. This amounted to an oblique institutionalisation of the Jakarta Charter, and thus to an additional strengthening of MUI’s enhanced religionisation efforts with respect to Islam (Lindsey 2008, 41; Ramstedt 2016, 95-6). The confirmation of the Blasphemy Law equally ensured that Indonesian Muslims remain under the sway of orthodoxy.

MUI also issued a number of fatwas intended to keep Islam unadulterated by heretic (*sesat*) concepts and practices stemming from Javanism, Ahmadiyya, and *Shi’a*, or new religious movements that had emerged throughout Indonesia (Makin 2016; 4-11), such as the fatwa against traditional healers (*dukun*) and prophecy (2005); the fatwa against interreligious worship (2005); the fatwa

against both Ahmadiyya Qadiyan and Ahmadiya Lohore (2005); the fatwa on the strengthening of the *Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah* (2006); the fatwa specifying the characteristics of a divergent belief, called *aliran sesat* (2007); the fatwa against yoga (2009); and the fatwa declaring the *Shi'a* as an *aliran sesat* (2012) (HFMUI 2011).

Whereas MUI's fatwas are not legally binding, more than 120 people belonging to various religious minority groups were convicted of insulting Islam, or blasphemy, between 1998 and 2009 alone. This provoked growing concern about the potential misuse of the blasphemy law, particularly in view of the absence of a clear distinction between heresy and blasphemy in its wording. In 2009, a coalition of NGOs, coordinated by the Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation, applied in vain to the Constitutional Court for a judicial review (Crouch 2012a; Crouch 2012b).

In 2017, however, the Constitutional Court rehabilitated all registered *aliran kepercayaan* because they, like the recognised religions, should be entitled to constitutional protection. MoRA promptly issued a statement that it would support the decision by the Constitutional Court and regard it as final and binding. It nevertheless stressed that *agama* and *aliran kepercayaan* should not be equated (Cahyadi 2017). MUI reacted in a similar vein, proposing to the government that the identity cards of adherents of *aliran kepercayaan* should merely state "belief," with the religion column left blank (Chairunnisa 2017; Wulandari 2018).

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## 5. Conclusion

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My description of the politics of taxonomy in postcolonial Indonesia, and the sociopolitical dynamics that informed them, has shown how the entangled processes of religionisation and secularisation resulting from these politics played out differently in the various phases of the history of postcolonial Indonesia. I defined "religionisation" in accordance with both emic notions of *agamasasi* and the concept of religion-making, originally advanced by Mandair and Dressler. The concept of religionisation thus first of all highlighted the way in which the Indonesian state reified and institutionalised 'religion' as a monotheistic, revealed, and scriptural world religion, between 1945 and 1965. Secondly, religionisation emphasised the state-sanctioned positioning of *agama* as distinct from local forms of spiritual belief that were categorised under the umbrella term of *aliran kepercayaan* (ethnic spirituality, and later also new religious movements). *Aliran kepercayaan* were – as Kipp Smith and Hefner pointed out – desacralised and secularised in the process, which lasted until the end of the Suharto period. Thirdly, religionisation brought into focus how adherents of ethnic spiritualities reframed and transformed their respective traditions in accordance with state-defined *agama*, irrespective of whether they

did so with the intention of getting the traditions acknowledged as religions in their own right, or in order to safeguard them within the guise of a certain state-recognised religion. Such reframing was particularly characteristic of the years between 1965 and 1980, during which increasingly pervasive sensibilities vis-à-vis the importance of ‘development’ and ‘progress’ resulted in the convergence of the discourse of religionisation with the discourse of modernity. In post-New Order Indonesia, the revitalisation of *adat* has again on occasion, like in the case of *Kaharingan*, facilitated the casting of ethnic traditions in accordance with the state-defined guidelines for *agama*.

The era after the fall of Suharto saw a profound law and governance reform that brought about far-reaching democratisation and civic participation, and with it the re-emergence of ideological contradictions inherent in the sociopolitical make-up of postcolonial Indonesia right from the start. While human rights and indigenous rights activists have been calling for the legal protection of convictions and beliefs as yet not recognised as religion, conservative Muslims have successfully defended – often with recourse to the Blasphemy Law – classical religionisation in the face of such challenges, if not within Indonesian society as a whole, then at least within the Muslim community. Interestingly, neither the continuous desecralisation of heterodox spiritualities by conservative Islam nor the new emancipation of ethnic traditions by the Constitutional Court has strengthened the discourse of secularity in Indonesia. Religious and often respiritualised ethnic identities continue to function as moral compasses for the majority of Indonesians. This has also become apparent, as Bubandt rightfully remarked, in the frequent recourse to magic and mysticism (*klenik*, *ilmu gaib*) by actors in the so-called secular field of power politics in Indonesia up to today.

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