CfP *südostasien* 3/2014: Politicization and Exploitation of Religion

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Religion and Politics

The revitalization of religion attracts worldwide attention as a recent phenomenon which contradicts the secularization theory originating in Max Webers "disenchantment of the world". It is precisely the waves of secularization appearing in the course of modernization that caused discomfort with social, economic and political effects of modern society and secular belief systems and triggered problems of identity everywhere. The fall-back to religious or cultural traditions (or even the return to a spiritual dimension in life) can be seen as a comprehensible reaction in order to reinterpret individual and national identity or/and to solve recent conflicts of values.

On the other hand, with the increased visibility of religion in the media – especially the news coverage after 9/11 and its consequences - the perception of religion is focused on the way in which it is increasingly used to articulate and settle conflicts as well as to mobilize for political purposes.

At the same time, religious diversity is not perceived as a blessing anymore, but as a challenge for each community having to set boundaries and compete with the threatening "other". Every rigid reference to the own "imagined community" however, involves the danger of violent conflicts as we can see in many parts of the world.

Besides religiously motivated violent conflicts, there is an - at first sight - more subtle influence of religion on discourses within societies, i.e. concerning gender issues (generally at the expense of women), minority rights (i.e. homosexuals or punks), interreligious communication respectively contact (i.e. marriage, habitation, trade), etc.

Theories based on ideology or exploitation usually serve as explanatory models for the role of religion in politics, which means
• a religion is either challenged with regard to its content as well as its structures, the way it functions and operates, its social context and actors or

• the assumption prevails that religion/ religious feelings/ theological dogmas are exploited or used according to the needs of political actors.

südostasien 3/2014

The third issue of *südostasien* in 2014 will focus on religion, explicitly on its politicization and exploitation.

• In Southeast Asia, especially Indonesia, Myanmar, Thailand and the Philippines are by far most severely affected by violent conflicts, whereas i.e. Malaysia (due to its constitutional compromise "the bargain"??) and Singapore stand for a relatively (!) peaceful management of political conflicts. However, it is doubtful, whether the often blamed religious factors constitute the root causes of the above mentioned conflicts which could also be triggered by historical/ ethnical/

economic/ power-political issues. What seems to be clear is that historical conflicts are increasingly transformed into cultural/religious conflicts, in many cases due to Islamism (i.e. in Myanmar where Muslim Rohingya stand against the Buddhist Burmese majority).

The articles in this issue should therefore focus on conflicts that are displayed as religious ones in the media, analyzing and identifying

- the actual causes of the conflicts and

- the actors that could have an interest in displaying conflicts as religiously motivated.

- It is not only religiously motivated violent (intra- or interstate) conflicts that are of interest for this issue, but also the extent to which religion is used in a power-political way in order to shape discourses and enforce norms and values, as for example

  - restrictions of women's rights

  - religiously motivated denials of human rights

  - gender-specific role conceptions (women are in charge of religious ceremonies in Bali) which keep women off social life, on the other hand, they prevent them from exercising their rights (Vietnam, rituals of subordination or obedience in Confucianism, i.e. women are not allowed to take care of ancestor shrines)

  - restrictions of minority rights (i.e. homosexuals in Malaysia, punks in Aceh)

- Forms of intrastate terrorism should also be brought up, in case they are religiously motivated

  - i.e. Buddhist terrorism in Myanmar (969 Movement)

  - …

- The increasing tendency of defining identity through religion should be analyzed against the political background of the respective country, i.e.

  - in places where the political left was almost destroyed (i.e. 1965 in Indonesia) and its leftovers criminalized for decades, the fact that young people base their criticism of globalization and westernization on religion seems to be among others a result of the lack in political alternatives.

  - the historical context of the Indonesian anti-blasphemy law, its current political significance as well as the role that the ministry of religion plays in its interpretation.

- Which role do development aid projects play for Christian proselytizing/ Muslim da'wa?

Articles on subjects outside the main focus of this issue are welcome as well.

Format specification

Maximum number of characters (including spaces):

1 page = 3.800
2 pages = 6.900
3 pages = 11.000

Articles should not exceed three pages. The maximum number of characters includes titles, a prolog and one picture per page. Do not exceed the maximum of three photos for three-page articles. Please look for suitable photos and check the copyright, number them and add captions as well as the name of the photographer.

Formatting is not requested, except for paragraphs; include footnotes and explanatory notes in the text, do not format them as footnotes. Please insert subheadings, on average two every 2,000 characters.