

Muslim Reformism in the Face of Contemporary Challenges by Political Plurality - *extremo oriente lux?*

Research Proposal

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1) Introduction

Societal and political plurality is a fact of life in most of today's Muslim societies. Like anywhere else in the non-Western world, there barely exist wholly 'traditional' societies any more. However, the mode of coping with plurality is not one of accommodation ('pluralism') but mostly one of oppression. Muslim intellectuals complain that none of the existing political systems in the Muslim performs reasonably well in the face of the pluralist challenge. It is therefore justified to inquire into the reformist discourses emerging from within those societies. But instead of measuring those reformist projects with the 'yardstick' of democratic theory (Western style), the proposed project endeavours to evaluate their plausibility on the specific background of the respective societies' problems. The specific question is therefore: Do the reformist projects address the actually existing plurality more adequately than the models of political order which are currently being applied or have been applied to those societies in the past? And in turn, how do those projects allow for plurality ?

Plurality in the context of this project describes the condition of most contemporary societies, Western and Non-Western. It shall not imply a normative inclination toward the political theory of "pluralism" or an predisposition toward (neo-)liberalist ideology. Rather, plurality is used as an analytical term for the simultaneous existence of diverging opinions, values, beliefs and interests within given groups, societies, or states.

In contrast to what is sociologically conceived of as 'traditional' society, conflict about these divergences in contemporary society surpasses the limits of even the most general frame of common reference - be it the religious community or the pre-nation state. The analytical question here is how these divergences are being dealt with: by open conflict, by suppression or by accommodation.

'Plurality' did not diminish with the demise of the ideological 'meta'-conflict between East and West - *the* conflict of 'Weltanschauungen'. On the contrary, if one takes a closer look at the state of non-Western societies after 1989, history only started then. This is particularly true for the two most important Muslim societies in Southeast Asia, Malaysia and Indonesia.

Arguably, the East-West antagonism had 'channelled' plurality both within societies and between states on an ideological level which eventually immersed all spheres of internal and international politics on a global scale. Today, plurality within societies is far more complex. Despite the fact that categories of 'left' and 'right' appear obsolete, plurality is ever more politicised i.e. brought into the realm of public deliberation. Plurality based on different collective identities (ethnic or religious) today may challenge both society's coherence and the state's function as the provider for public order sometimes even stronger than the 'left'/'right' divide beforehand.

The specific nature of the pluralist challenge, i.e. its composition out of ethnic, societal, and political aspects, however, varies from place to place and even within the same civilisation ('Kulturkreis'). While in the Arab/Turk/Iranian core area of the Muslim world it is the state's monopoly on defining religion (*religion de l'état*) being questioned by both secularist and post-secularist currents, and actively fought by militant groups. Whereas in the Southeast Asian periphery, the main challenge arises from the high *ethnic* plurality of a state like Malaysia, compared to most Arab states in the core of *Oriens Islamicus*.

Both in the centre and in the periphery, however, what is at stake are less the specific features of the public and political order. Rather it is the fact that this order is authoritatively ordained by the state. Those regimes/political systems find themselves under increasing pressure from internal and/or external opposition. While some still try to steer the process of transition from above (e.g. Malaysia), others, which refused to acknowledge plurality, are constantly on the verge of disintegration or have even partly disintegrated (e.g. Indonesia). In both cases, the result of these transformations is yet indeterminate. Contrary to the expectation that the Western model of democracy will smoothly proliferate around the globe -after the presumed 'end of history' (Fukuyama), it does not. The side-effects (or rather, the bases?) of this model, particularly secularisation, liberalisation (market capitalism), and their anticipated pathological consequences on society (individualism, general decline of values etc.), are fiercely fought not only by those who try to keep up the old order at the cost of democratisation (i.e. suppressing plurality), but also by those who help bring down the old order and create a new one, in the name of civil society/democratisation. Are there ways out of this deadlock ? The proposed project endeavours to a) collect, b) systemise and c) explore the plausibility of, reformist suggestions for 're-orientating' the mode of accommodating plurality - suggestions which emerge 'from within' the respective societies.

2) Relevant approaches

For the social sciences, one may consider comparison as a 'royal path to cognition/Königsweg der Erkenntnis'. But if Muslim societies undergo comparison, it is often not conducted as a comparison of varying social reality within distinct societies, e.g. a past society vs. a contemporary one. Rather, in order to argue for an incompatibility of Muslim tradition with 'modernity' on the one side, or of Western life-style with 'Islam' on the other, the preferred method is one of identifying social indicators (Human Rights violations of Muslim states on the one side, erosion of traditional values in Western societies on the other) - at least implicitly suggesting that those indicators *pars pro toto* characterise the respective societies. Those in fact rather randomly chosen indicators are then subsumed not to the same sample of empirical indicators of the respective other society but to the latter societies' ideal values (Universal

Declaration of Human Rights to the Muslim world, Islamic ethics to Western society). While this is not always explicit, both sides -with a few notable exceptions¹- confuse the category of modern/traditional 'ideal' with that of 'social reality'. Shayegan eloquently described this mutually distorted outlook as 'le regard mutilé': 'Modernity is measured with the yardstick of Tradition, while tradition is subjected to the violent stresses of modernity' (1992:54).

If these discourses took place on an academic playground only, they would remain harmless because the discussion would remain limited to a few Orientalists -as it has been the case for a long time. Unfortunately this distorted perspective has made its way on the political agenda - Huntington's 'Clash of Civilizations' (1993, 1996) only being the latest and probably the most prominent construction. The fact notwithstanding that September 11, 2001 is widely regarded as a (self-)fulfilment of this prophecy, there should take place a de-construction of the imagined reality of 'the West' as 'modern', i.e. as essentially characterized by -let alone living up to- the basic imperatives of modernity.² Just as important as a basis of an eventual intercultural dialogue is a fairer understanding of the Muslim's quest for political modernity.

Currently, four approaches to the analysis of Islam in contemporary Muslim societies are discernible:

a) The first and certainly the rarest one, is the solid social science approach: that of comparing theoretically founded, substantial indicators of a Muslim society or group on the one side and of a non-Muslim society on the other in order to name what is different and what is similar.³ On a larger scale this requires, however, a basis of empirical social science research - a minimum of which is still not yet available for most Muslim societies.⁴ While such an approach could contribute to end the continued Saidian 'orientalisation of the Orient' by the West, it would not enable us to evaluate the potential value of conceptual propositions to a specifically 'Islamic' mode of coping with plurality. The assumption is the following: Only because social statistical indicators of Muslim societies are beginning to converge with those of Europe in its modernising phase, one should not expect Muslims to follow suit Western ways in all other dimensions, not to speak of implementing ideas which Western societies themselves rarely

¹ Cf. Davis (1997), Mazrui (1997), Narahari (1995), Wimmer (1993).

² With reference to the prevalence of religious values US-society cf. R. Inglehart's recent findings of the World Values Survey Project, cit. in *The Economist*, January 2nd, 2003 or as the prevalence of religious motives in contemporary US-politics cf. Lipset (1996).

³ cf. Cole (1992); within the frame of a global comparison on the prospects of democracy cf. Vanhanen (1997). On the specific comparison of Shi'î and Protestant fundamentalism cf. Riesebrodt (1990).

⁴ cf. Hudson (1995:67-71). According to Ibrahim (1998:16) considerable empirical social science research in Egypt only began with the return of US-trained sociologists. But in the 1990ies only a third of sociological treatises was empirically founded. The recent UNDP Human Development Report (2002) contains only few relevant indicators, namely in the section on political participation (pp. 160-62).

managed to live up to, e.g. the principle of the secular state, i.e. the separation of state and the church.⁵

b) A second approach is that of philosophy, comparative law etc. Comparison of normative ideas from Muslim origin on the one hand with those from non-Muslim origin on the other has been undertaken - if not explicitly so, it may nonetheless easily be identified as the underlying motive of treatises e.g. on Islamic law and civilization (from Schacht 1966 to Tibi 1995). This approach is also predisposed to 'essentialize' the normative ideas whereby the original pluralism and even competition of norms on both sides of the comparison are inadequately reduced to an imagined cultural homogeneity. Usually, two epistemological models underlie the interpretation of these analyses: Within the design of 'universal reason' (Waldenfels 1996:72) a pragmatic understanding of culture, religion or philosophy is possible - while free from the actual context it remains confined to the interpreter's own exclusive paradigm ('identity model' cf. Mall 1993:3). This attempt to understand the unknown in terms of the known to the interpreter (thus suggesting a complete commensurability of both) will inevitably transform the substance of the object. Comprehension in this frame of reference has been interpreted as non-physical form of violence.

The model diametrically opposed to the latter, that of 'contextualism' (Waldenfels 1996:72) or, with Mall (1993:3), that of the 'hermeneutics of total difference' suggests a complete *incommensurability* of distinct cultures and philosophies. Thus, Muslim culture would only be comprehensible to Muslims. But how could one try to explain it to non-Muslims if not in foreign terms? Intercultural understanding would hence become impossible. However, as one steps into the reality of both inter- and intra-cultural plurality, the arguments emerging from the two models are different only in *modus*, not in the results. Rather, Waldenfels (1996:81) observes a broad coalition of contextualists and universalists.

c) The third approach is a comparative taxonomy of social reality's deviation from its respective normative corpus. While this would theoretically be the most anti-'essentialist' -thus anti-'orientalist'- of all possible proceedings, what would be a possible conclusion? This approach shares the pivotal difficulty of the previously mentioned inter-cultural outlook (cf. 2), that of a missing *tertium comparationis*/the neutral 'yardstick': How to evaluate the outcome? Can one learn something about the potential benefit of the respective norms with regard to the challenge of plurality? Is society's

⁵ cf. Gress (1996) or, with reference to 'secular' European philosophy, which consists, as Mall (1993:12) maintains, 'secularized versions of theological ideas indicating the latter's onto-theological trace'. Elmessiri rejects the perception of Western secularism as that of a mere separation of state from the church. In his view secularism became 'a total world outlook': '...secular humanism appropriated for itself some of the non-material categories of Christianity, superficially secularized them, then added them to its materialist system, even though they have no basis in its metaphysics of immanence' (1996:142), cf. in the same vein on the German case: Lübke (1965), Böckenförde (1967, 1995).

day-to-day's departure from normative rules as such a proper indicator for an incompatibility of the latter with the modern condition in general? Are not the mechanisms for dealing with norm-deviation, (rather: for the denial of it) more meaningful an indicator for civilisations' potential to cope with plurality ? Is Western societies' departure from its basically rationalistic democracy to be preferred to Muslim social reality deviating from *sharī'a* (interpreted as unchangeable entity of holy law)?

d) The fourth approach tries to avoid the methodological shortcomings of the above mentioned ones. Rather, it analyses propositions for coping with plurality in Muslim societies - propositions emerging *min ad-dalīl/from within* (M. al-Jâbirî) Muslim civilization. Particularly those proposals are considered relevant that neither intend to copy and implement the end-products from elsewhere nor aim at suppressing the underlying conflicts on the spot.

The underlying model of hermeneutics here may with Mall (1996:3) be called 'analogous': It tries not to be reductive and moves on the middle ground between the assumption of either a total commensurability or a complete *incommensurability* of cultures or philosophies, respectively (cf. above b).

Rejecting both as extremist (even: fundamentalist) positions, 'universalist truth' may in some cases coexist with (rather: within) the factual variety of truths of cultures - the deadly logic of an either/or is therefore rejected. Not the idea of a universally valid truth is a fundamentalist one, but rather the idea of finding this truth in one specific culture, religion, or philosophy. Hence, the quest for authenticity/*asâla* in the non-Western world, especially in the Muslim world today may with Lee (1997) be called 'a desire to break with essentialist notions of truth, both traditional and modern, but not a willingness to part with the notions of truth altogether.'⁶ The 'New Islamic Discourse' suggested by Elmessiri, for example, claims an '...awareness of a certain interrelatedness between the absolute and the relative that does not necessarily result in a nihilistic negation of the absolute [i.e. the divine truth of revelation, BJT]' (1997:59).

Ideally, an ideologically neutral approach keeps a critical distance not only toward the researcher's own categories of thought and expression but also toward those of the object. Still, 'herrschaftsfreier Diskurs/ideal speech situation' (Habermas) or the Cartesian program of a 'method without tradition' remains an ideal both in real world politics and in research on it. Practically much of the methodological problem remains to be solved as the 'communicative indifference between oneself and the 'other'' (Waldenfels 1996:74) or, the 'orthafte Ortlosigkeit' (Mall 1993:9) of a new intercultural paradigm awaits a further to be put into operation for research purposes.

⁶ Cited from Manzoor (1998:8).

As a broad guiding-line, however, it is assumed that other cultures are -in principle- competent in all questions of ethics, including the question of human rights.⁷ One has to be prepared that the 'other' -Muslim culture(s) in this context- may escape comparison and that it evades a balancing out (possibly even adequate translation) with the culture of origin of the researcher.⁸

In what way will a change in research perspective predict different results? The following chapter seeks to exemplify this by discussing the notion of 'secularism' which is a pivotal concept both in the Arab-Iranian core area of the Muslim world, and in its Southeast Asian periphery.

3) *Excursus* - Refocusing the Research Perspective: 'Secularism' between Universalism and Contextualism

Ever since the Iranian revolution of 1979, disputes about the public role of faith and religion are regarded as the strongest pluralist challenges for contemporary Muslim societies. After the demise of the two previously most potent secular *Weltanschauungen*, nationalism and socialism, the (re-)surge of religions has been interpreted not exclusively, but among alternative interpretation as an explicit attitude to counter the conquest of free-market liberalism in the guise of globalization. Even countries that have previously been considered and considered themselves as 'secular', are faced with what is indiscriminately regarded as 'fundamentalist' political currents and movements. Once again, as in the early 20th century the secular character of the state lies at core of the challenge.

However, the notion of what 'secular' actually means and the notion of 'secularism' (arab.: *'elmaniya*) proper varies highly - both in practice and within the conceptual discourses in the Muslim world. Similar to the European context earlier, 'secularism' from the early 20th century onward was promoted as a highly conflicting notion ('Kampfbegriff') within the modernizing processes by both its advocates and its Muslim opponents. In stark contrast to the European process of secularization, however, in the forerunner societies of the Muslim world (Turkey, Tunisia) it *did not* stand for the separation of the state from the religion or the church. What happened instead and still happens widely today is, on the contrary, the usurpation of religion by the state (,Etatization') following the motto of a renown Tunisian jurist: '*Pratique religieuse dans l'Etat, ni au-dessus, ni contre, ni à côté.*' (Ben Achour 1994: 362)

⁷ cf. Hoffmann (1995). Cf. only recently a similar approach in the analyses of different modes of access to legal and adjudicative systems in African and Islamic contexts, Jones-Pauly/Elbern (2002: xi).

⁸ Waldenfels (1996:73) is only able to give an *ex negativo* definition: 'Das Fremde als Außer-ordentliches steht quer zu der Unterscheidung von lokaler und universaler Vernunft, von traditionaler und rational legitimierter Ordnung...'

'Secularism' in the political reality of many Muslim societies in the 20th and 21st did not denote the institutionalized separation of the *fanum*'sacred' from the *profanum*'profane', of this-worldly issues for whom the state is responsible, on the one side from other-worldly issues, for whom the religion or church would be in charge, on the other. Rather than this separation of spheres, the process of secularization is mostly regarded as a de-spiritualization of society altogether, as is semantically reflected in the Arab and Persian term for 'secular', *dunyâwî*, which is derived from *dunyâ*, the world. Similarly, *`elmanîyya* for secularism is derived the notion of *`elm*, used for science and knowledge.

From Kemalist Turkey to independent Tunisia, from pre- and post-revolutionary Iran to post-soviet Uzbekistan and (Soeharto-)Indonesia, the central state tried to and more often than not did succeed in monopolizing the interpretation of Islam. Allegedly, autocrats like Atatürk in Turkey, Bourguiba in Tunisia and Soeharto in Indonesia tried to protect the state against the claims of religion, i.e. against the clerics, as a church does not exist, at least in Sunnî-Islam. In this context, 'secularization' mostly denoted that the state instrumentalized religion in the name of stately ordained objectives like 'development' and 'modernization'.

Returning to the initial problem of designing a proper approach, it is to be asked how this reversal of meaning of a pivotal concept affects the research design?

Any approach cognizant of its own cultural pre-conditionedness will be ready to re-orient its research focus on the social and normative questions at issue. With regard to the analysis of the specific relationship between secularism on the one side and the accommodation of plurality, development, and modernization in Muslim societies, it appears justified to also take into account the political concepts and forces which are functionally equivalent to the process of secularization (European style)⁹. Thus, in the context of the pseudo-secular situation in contemporary Muslim states one also finds religious reformist currents aiming at separating the state from religion. Contrary to fundamentalist political movements which in the name of Islam merely seek to take over the state either politically or by force (Hizb ut-Tahrîr al-Islâmî, Jamâ'a al-Islâmîyya etc.), Muslim reformists like A.-K. Surûsh in Iran, M.A. Jabirî in Morocco, or R. al-Ghanûshi in Tunisia strive to regain the freedom of religious interpretation back from the state, thereby creating space for a (Muslim) civil society in their respective countries. Their approach to plurality differs from that of their governments in that they do precisely not seek at homogenizing views on religion and politics. Rather, projects like these encourage diverging opinions to be articulated, uncontrolled by either the state or the clerics. In addition, they also strive for equal treatment of the non-Muslim minorities.

⁹ On the notion and history of 'secularization' cf. Böckenförde (1967 and its partial revision 1999) and Lübke (1965)

The main thrust of this reformism along the lines of the biblical "Render therefore unto Cesar the things which are Cesar's and unto God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21; Mark 12:17) and against all mediated interpretation of the holy sources is therefore not dissimilar to that of Protestantism.¹⁰ What today in the West figures as an exclusively this-worldly program, 'secularism', may, in the contemporary Muslim world find a functional equivalent in the projects of the dissenting religious discourse, often formulated in the Diaspora. From an intercultural perspective and contrary to both the mainstream religious (including fundamentalist) outlook and the (pseudo-)secular viewpoint of the state within the respective societies, not all projects of political Islam may *a priori* be suspected of aiming at the suppression of plurality merely because they are based on a (re-)interpretation of religious texts and traditions.

On the other hand, as history is an open-ended process, the possibility has to be taken into account that even in cases when a high degree of separation between the state and religious institutions is part of a particular Muslim tradition (12er Shi'ī) and is de facto institutionalized as in the case of pre-revolutionary Iran, it is by no means not irreversible (cf. Islamic revolution 1979).

However, conventional research strategies on the topic usually do not consider political projects out of a (in principle) holistic religion as research issues when it comes to the accommodation of plurality. In contrast to e.g. theologian or sociologist studies on 'fundamentalism(s)', a reorientation of the research focus appears necessary on the background of a contextualized understanding of pivotal notions and processes like 'secularism'. Only on this basis it becomes plausible that religious semantics and motivation are not only employed by those groups and parties which aim at establishing a pre-(nation)state, or at taking over government but also by those who primarily strive for political participation within given political systems and/or seek to at least establish a public sphere which is free of the influence of the state. Operationally, the latter differ from the former in that they do not aim at establishing Islamic religious law, *shari'a*, as the sole source of civil and public law. They also differ from the secularist/laicist viewpoint (European style) in that they do not displace metaphysical discourse out of political deliberation and the public sphere altogether.

The suggested research perspective keeps a critical distance both against its own conceptual and semantic instruments and against the research subject itself:

¹⁰ Despite prominent forerunners like Iranian 'Alī Sharī'atī, Protestantism is only rarely referred to openly in the discourse. For an exception cf. Ayelet Savyon: The Call for Islamic Protestantism: Dr. Hashem Aghajari's Speech and Subsequent Death Sentence. In: Memri Special Dispatch Series - No. 445 December 2, 2002

- Against the former by the acknowledgment of the fact that analytical key concepts like ‚secularism‘ or ‚modernity‘ in contrast to day-to-day use and also in contrast to the common use in the social sciences and the humanities have a different, sometimes even reverse meaning in the discourses on the spot.
- The approach equally attempts to keep a critical distance toward the research subject itself. The plausibility of reformist project is not measured by their respective self-proclaimed scale, namely to prevent social pathologies of Western ‚secular‘ societies (namely excessive individualism) which allegedly menace one’s own society in the course of modernization. Neither will the projects be merely explored alongside the yard stick of (western) political theory. Rather, the plausibility or implausibility of the projects will be established on the basis as to what extent they allow for and how they regulate the specific plurality on the spot.

A particular mediating approach of intercultural comparison is therefore relevant for such an endeavor: a historically informed comparison of similar configurations of plurality in different civilizational contexts, from Islamic to Buddhist, from Confucianist to Hinduist cultures (Senghaas 1998). Despite the fact that in this analysis of non-western cultures, references to the Western developments are made, this (*non-dependencia-*)approach differs from the radically universalistic perspective in that it takes into account a shift in the time frame it refers to respectively: Not today’s (OECD)-western standards are taken as the yard stick for comparison, but a comparable period of development in the history of western societies. With respect to the differentiation of social spheres in sacred and profane ones, the respective frame of reference for the analysis of the contemporary issue in the Muslim world would be the period of conflict over secularization in the West – not today’s results.

The approach also differs from radical contextualism in that it does not presume cultures are non-plural, separable (metaphysical, historical, political, social) entities. Rather, this approach is explicitly designed to provide empirical evidence for the hypothesis that the politically relevant fault lines *within* civilizations on the basis of diverging interpretations with regard to the dominant *Weltanschauung* represent just as seriously a potential for a clash as the fault lines *between* different civilizations.

A refocused research perspective has been tentatively applied in a previous phase of the suggested project in a comparative study on the accommodation of plurality in four Muslim states and their respective reformist discourses. It is also informed by the hypothesis of an impending ‘Clash of Civilizations’. The results that are relevant for the second phase of the research are now shortly summarized.

4) Results from Research Phase I

This study¹¹ has explored into the mode of the accommodation of plurality in four contemporary political systems in the core area of the Muslim world (Morocco, Tunisia, Saudi-Arabia, and Iran):

- a) de facto and
- b) how it is ideally conceived of.

In both respects, the assumption of cultural homogeneity set up by Huntington (1993, 1996), Tibi (1996), and others fails even for the Arab-Iranian core area of the Muslim world. The thesis of a 'Clash of Civilizations' is thus challenged by the counter-thesis of a 'Clash *within* Civilizations'.

It is validated on two levels of analysis:

- The scope of constitutional models ranges from 'secular' Tunisia to syntheses based on such diverse traditions like Morocco and Saudi-Arabia to the modernist synthesis of Iran. Common to them all is, however, that they use repressive means to control plurality. In those countries, the freedom of speech is severely limited with regard to issues which are pivotal to the respective political system. It is therefore justified to scrutinize the plausibility of contemporary reformist approaches against precisely this empirical background. These approaches also display a fair degree of heterogeneity.
- The range of contemporary Muslim political discourse extends from extremely conflationist attitudes, which claim a congruence of the *fanum*'sacred' and *profanum*'profane' sphere in public life-on the one side, to extremely "de-conflationist" attitudes which are based on a separation of *civitas mundi* from *civitas dei*, the separation of religion and the state, on the other. The reformist attitudes toward traditional concepts of plurality investigated are for the most part located in the middle of this discursive spectrum. Thus, the projects investigated here are not holistic in the sense that they are either 'fundamentalist' or 'secular/modernist'. On the contrary, as different as the respective projects with regard to their disciplinary and methodological approach are, they have in common an 'anti-essentialist' outlook, i.e. they reflect the specific historical legacy and contemporary experiences of the authors in the respective country of origin Morocco, Tunisia, Saudi-Arabia, and Iran.

¹¹ Cf. Trautner (1999), currently out of print, available online only: <<http://www.bernhard-trautner.de/clash>>

The results stand in contrast to Western and non-Western interpretations of 'political Islam' as necessarily 'fundamentalist' and the subsequent hypostazation of secularism to political modernity per se. Reformist intellectuals such as Moroccan al-Jâbrî or Iranian 'A.-K. Surûsh, and even political actors like Tunisian R. al-Ghannûshî establish their projects on a critical comprehension of both the historical tradition and actual modernity, i.e. on the acknowledgement of Islam constantly being instrumentalized politically and secular constitutional models being abused for the legitimisation of authoritarian rule. Such differentiated projects may offer a more realistic opportunity to prevent the escalation of the real clash, namely the one *within* civilizations, and for the constructive accommodation of plurality than the extremist slogans of "Islâm 'huw al-hall/Islam the solution" or the mirror-reflected secular battle-cry for "Tajfîf al-yanâbî' al-usûlîyyah/draining the fundamentalists' sources":

Both, the high degree of differentiation and of abstraction makes the examined reform projects evade the highly ideologised interpretations of specific Islamic notions. Based on the latter, dichotomised conceptions more often than not represent highly contested notions in day-to-day politics. Projects of the kind suggested by al-Jâbrî, al-Ghanûshî and Surûsh, however, reconfigure the problématique of authenticity in whose context political innovation and social transformation are blamed for 'westernising' one's own 'authentic' (Islamic/Arab/Iranian) culture.

Equipped with the critique of tradition and modernity those reformist approaches do not abandon the semantic field of Islamic tradition. On the contrary, historical concepts of coping with plurality such as "*ijtihâd*/individual reasoning of the legal experts" (in contrast to mere *taqlîd*/construction of historical analogies), "*nasîhah*/sincere advice" to the ruler and "*shûrâ*/consultation" of government by the electorate play a pivotal role in those approaches. The main thrust in the reinterpretation of these traditional concepts is to broaden political liberties of the ruled. That is, to extend participation and freedom of speech both beyond the limits of orthodox interpretation of the concepts and beyond the de facto confines set up by the contemporary political systems.¹²

¹² Explizit widmen sich diese Projekte daher auch der Frage nach einer, der Normativität zugrundeliegenden Rationalität, also der Rechtfertigung von Sollensaussagen gegenüber Seinsfeststellungen. Indem diese Reformprojekte ihren Hauptimpetus nun genau darin entfalten, normative Vorgaben der Offenbarung einerseits nach zeitbedingt-kontextuell gültigen Aussagen und andererseits nach überzeitlich gültigen zu differenzieren, sind sie auf der Höhe auch (säkularer) wissenschaftlicher, normativer Theorie - etwa im Sinne eines H. v. Arnim: "Neben dem Versuch universaler Werterkenntnis (gibt es) auch einen viel bescheideneren Ansatz, nämlich zu ermitteln, welche letzten Werte hier und heute gelten, nämlich in der bestehenden rechtlich verfassten Gemeinschaft eines bestimmten Staates in einer bestimmten Zeit." (Herbert v. Arnim zit. n. Mühleisen 1995: 376)

Von der orthodoxen islamischen Staatslehre grenzen sich die untersuchten Reformprojekte ab, indem sie sich, anders als diese, nicht in der Ideengeschichtsschreibung erschöpfen. Vielmehr beziehen diese Projekte die Tradition der Rechtsschulen aber auch die islamische Philosophie (sofern dem neben dem Offenbarungstext überhaupt Relevanz zugemessen wird) auf die spezifischen pluralistischen Herausforderungen ihrer jeweiligen Gesellschaft. Das Beharren auf der zwar allzeit

The first research phase has covered the pluralist challenge in the core area of *Oriens Islamicus* only. Phase II of the project extends the above summarized conceptual approach over the two predominantly Muslim societies in Southeast Asia, Malaysia and Indonesia.

5) Research phase II: Other Relevant Research and Desiderata

Compared to the Arab-Turkish-Iranian core area of *Oriens Islamicus*, Islam in Southeast Asia appears not receive due attention neither in empirical social and political science nor in Islamic studies. This holds particularly true for contemporary research in Germany¹³ and Europe - with the exception of the former colonial power, the Netherlands. The latter's research, in Leiden in particular, together with Australian research (Australian National University, ANU) are quantitatively leading the field.

However, the relative neglect of research on the area is surprising on the background of the region's relative success in coping with the pluralist challenge, and with the challenge of modernity in general (at least up to the 'Asian crisis' in 1997), which led some -even Middle Easterners- to regard it as a model for political development and reform in their own countries.¹⁴

Particularly during the last one and a half decade a body of scholarly literature on the social, political and ideational dimensions of Islam in Southeast Asia has begun to emerge.¹⁵ But like many treatises on Islamic modernism in the Islamic 'center'-region, the works on 'Muslim intellectuals'¹⁶ in the periphery explore the subject chiefly from the perspective of history of political ideas, political history in general,¹⁷ or of political

interpretationsbedürftigen, doch gleichwohl prinzipiellen Abgeschlossenheit und Gültigkeit göttlicher Offenbarung stellte somit den Versuch dar, einen nicht nur prozedural legitimierten, sondern auch wertmäßig bestimmbaren gesellschaftlichen (Mindest)konsens zu schaffen.

Solchermaßen prozedural und institutionell eingebundenen beginnt dann der kategoriale Unterschied sich aufzulösen zwischen einem 'valuational frame of reference', der sich inhaltlich vom Naturrecht herleitet, und einem, der sich auf göttliche Offenbarung zurückführt.

Ein Rückgriff auf ausgewählte (z.T. von der Orthodoxie unterdrückte) Überlieferungen der islamischen Ideengeschichte erfolgt bei den untersuchten Reformansätzen nur insoweit, als sie der inhaltlichen Re-Interpretationen der erwähnten, bislang von der islamischen Orthodoxie in Beschlag genommenen islamischen Konzeptionen dienen. Äußerlich dient diese 'islamische' Semantik dazu, den Vorwurf der 'Verwestlichung' und mangelnder Authentizität zu begegnen, mit welchem interessierte Kreise pauschal jede politische oder soziale Neuerung belegen.

¹³ A notable exception are development studies from a sociologist perspective, cf. Evers (1991) Evers/Siddique (1993)

¹⁴ Cf. Sa'ûdi professor M. N. Siddiqi (1995:20). On the particular appeal of Southeast Asian Islam for the Muslim world in general, cf. Stahr (1997:336) and Sajoo (1994:6). On the ambivalent stance of Southeast Asian Muslims toward the Arab 'centre' of Islamic civilization, cf. Abaza (1994)

¹⁵ E.g. cf. Aqsha et al. (1995), Stahr (1997), Schreiner (2001), Stauth (2000 and 2002)

¹⁶ Cf. Abdillah (1997), Riddell (2001)

¹⁷ Cf. the impressive data collection on Indonesian Islam by the Indonesian-Netherlands Cooperation in Islamic Studies eds. Aqsha/Meij/Meuleman (1995) or likewise Feillard (1998), Hefner (1997), Watson (1994).

anthropology.¹⁸ First steps have been undertaken in systemizing the reformist approaches according to their respective modes of dealing with plurality. Abdillah¹⁹, in contrast to the commented anthologies on 'liberal Islam' (Davis 1997, Kurzman 1998), undertakes a typology of a 'cultural' vs. a 'structural' approach of Muslim intellectuals towards plurality: while the former seeks to transform social and political institutions (in accordance to the increasing structural differentiation of society), the latter aims at changing the social conduct, i.e. at limiting plurality or rather, its manifestations in society. However, as in the other empirical studies, what lacks is a critical evaluation of these suggestions on the background of the respective societies' current pluralist challenges.

Except for rare examples, relevant empirical research has mostly compared cases within the respective subregions, in either the core area or the periphery of *Oriens Islamicus*.²⁰ Esposito/Voll in their seminal study on the compatibility of Islam and democracy (1995) included Malaysia in their overview, but not the most populous Muslim country of both subregions, Indonesia. Abaza (1994), Stauth (2000) and Riddell (2001) focus most exclusively on the cultural impact of the Arab core area on the periphery but only to a much lesser degree vice versa (e.g. Riddell 2001).²¹ The comparisons between Morocco and Indonesia (Geertz 1968, 1991) and between Tunisia and Malaysia (Larif-Béatrix 1999) were undertaken from an anthropological research perspective. Mehmet's study on 'Islam and Development' (1990) analyses Turkey and Malaysia, but in an illustrative manner, not as a comparative case study.

Therefore, quantitatively speaking, there is yet hardly any evidence for a proclaimed 'conventional trend in literature and research' (Stauth 2000:77) when it comes to comparative studies to include both subregions – at least not for the social sciences.

However, on the ground of this research some preliminary observations may be formulated. In a later step, those observations may be successively validated or modified, respectively, and hence further operationalized into working hypotheses for empirical analysis and comparison.

¹⁸ Cf. e.g. Probojo (1998), Kim (1998)

¹⁹ Cf. Abdillah (1996:3)

²⁰ On how ASEAN-societies cope with plurality cf. Sajoo (1994), Clammer (1996) and Rüländ (1998a). For a comparison of Islam as a tool for national development in both Malaysia and Indonesia cf. Hamayotsu (1999) and Stafford (1999).

²¹ The Netherlands Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIM) currently conducts a research project on the transmission of Middle Eastern Reformist Islam to Southeast Asia by way of *fatâwas*/religious opinions' under the title 'The Dissemination of Religious Authority in 20th Century Indonesia' cf. <<http://www.isim.nl/isim/research/programmes/dissemination.html>>.

6) The Historical and Contemporary Framework of Center vs. Periphery-Islam : Ethnical, Political and Social Preconditions

In the Arab-Iranian core area of the Muslim world, the conceptual self-image of Islam as the dominant *Weltanschauung*, from its quick expansion in the 7th Century A.D. to the advent of secular modernity in the late 18th century, has never *in principle* been challenged any more. Under the condition that the overall supremacy of the Islamic legal order was not put into question in any given political entity, the legal orders of the most important pre-Islamic religions (Christian, Jewish, not however, the proto-Islamic ones) were allowed to coexist.²² However, the classical self-image of Islamic law as a religious ideal to strive for, merely promoted *de facto* coexistence with other legal orders, not their official recognition. According to Schacht (1966:199): "...Islamic law is conscious of its character as a religious ideal;... it takes the corruption of contemporary conditions for granted... 'Islamic law is to some extent content with mere theoretical acknowledgement". Therefore, an operationally effective official recognition of deviating legal systems *within* Islam, but outside the of the four orthodox schools established in the 3rd century H/9th century AD, came about only in one case – and only late, in the 20th century AD.²³

Islam in Southeast Asia found itself in a different situation: Both, much earlier (in Indonesia since early Islamization) and much stronger than in the core area, the self-image of Muslims as the dominant group within given political entities has been challenged by the ethnic and religious plurality. On a conceptual level, therefore, it was not 'modern society' which according to Peter Berger (1983): "...pluralizes the social worlds of individuals, forcing them to rub elbows with the adherents of all sorts of cognitively dissonant world views;' and, Berger adds: '...this social pluralism, inevitably, leads to cognitive relativization." It may be suspected, on the contrary, that the early *direct* confrontation with previously established religions and the challenge by the influx of large non-Muslim groups during the colonial period (Western Malaysia, Malaya) led to a considerable degree of conceptual self-reflection within the Muslim community on a political-ideological level in Southeast Asia. In the Islamic core area, in contrast, this self-image saw itself challenged mainly *indirectly* by European imperialism (e.g. French 'political surgery' in Lebanon) and (depending on the interpretation: foreign) secular ideologies like nationalism and socialism of modern times.

²² For a general consensus on this historical fact, cf e.g. Simonsen (1995).

²³ Namely, the recognition of the Ja'afarite school of the (12er) Shī'a by the central religious authority of the *Sunni*-world, al-Azhar in Cairo in the 1980ies.

Plurality I: Malaysia

A high degree of conceptual self-reflection is predicted for Muslim political thought in Malaysia on the background of a relatively important religious heterogeneity which, in addition, runs congruently to the major ethnic cleavages. Contrary to Indonesia, Islam is the official religion of the State.²⁴ However, the ethnic Malays of predominantly Muslim denomination quantitatively dominate the total population only slightly compared to the non-Muslims of Chinese and Indian descent.²⁵

In the core area of *Oriens Islamicus*, a similarly slight Muslim majority may only be found in Lebanon. Lebanon's borders, it is to be remembered, were delimited by the French mandatory power in order to provide the initial slight Christian majority with a state on its own. However, in independent Lebanon inter-confessional heterogeneity occurs within the framework of the common ethnic-linguistic heritage of Arabism. This supra-nationalist concept may be considered as widely accepted across the major denominations (Maronite, Sunnî, and Shî'i) on Lebanese territory both before the Civil War (1975-90), and after.

Largely lacking a comparable common identity transcending the ethnically and at the same time denominationally defined groups in Malaysia, the politically and culturally dominant Muslim majority could be expected to perceive this as a strong conceptual challenge. The challenge may be reinforced by the fact that the Muslim majority has constantly profited less from economic modernization than the Chinese minority in particular.

Since independence of the then Malaysian Federation from Great Britain in 1957, the religious character of Malaysia has been disputed. In contrast, however, to the Lebanese case, where the Muslim identity of the state is disputed by of only one other denomination, namely the Maronites, the Islamic identity of Malaysia is contested by the presence of at least two ethnically and religiously diverse groups, the non-Malay Chinese and Hindu communities. Therefore, one may argue that precisely because an *ethnic* distinction between Muslim and Maronite Lebanese is not commonly made, the need to differentiate from each other in the field of *dîn*/religion is particularly strong.²⁶

²⁴ Cf. Art. 3 (1) of the current constitution: "Islam is the religion of the Federation; but other religions may be practised in peace and harmony in any part of the Federation." <<http://star.hsrc.ac.za/constitutions/mal1.html>>

²⁵ And this is only the case if the peripheral regions of the Borneo island states Sabah and Srawak are taken into account. Muslims are in a minority on the main country, the Malay peninsula which is the central political and economic area of Malaysia.

²⁶ The historical factors that Lebanon has been created as the only predominantly Christian state in the Middle East, and that Christianity, in contrast to Confucianism, Buddhism and Hinduism, is one of the acknowledged faiths by the four orthodox schools of Islamic law must also be taken into account in this context.

In contrast, the relatively large diversity of the belief systems competing with Islam (17% Buddhists, 12% Confucians in a wider sense, 7 % Hindus – none of whom is acknowledged as *dhimmi*'protected minority' by Islamic law or tradition) may have contributed to the fact that the Muslim majority has remained relatively unchallenged in its claim to predominance. Therefore, the fact that ethnic and denominational cleavages run congruently through society while a strong awareness of a Malaysian nationality still largely lacks may – contrary to conventional wisdom- decrease the desire on the side of the majority as well as on the side of the minorities to compete on the field of *Weltanschauungen*.

The lack of a coherent national awareness in Malaysia has been attributed to the fact that - in contrast to the core area of the Muslim world but also in contrast to Indonesia - genuine structures of dynastic Islam on a sub-national level continued to exist up to today. Formally, the nine sultanates on the Malay peninsular are legally sovereign mainly with regard to family law, only.²⁷ Family law, however, constitutes the pivotal issue, beside education, in the confrontation between Islamists and the 'secular' state in the Middle East since the early 1980ies.²⁸ But from among their midst, the sultans of Malaysia also determine the formal Head of State of Malaysia, the *Yang di-Peruan Agung*, who in turn appoints the prime minister.

On this background it becomes clear why neither a purely 'secular' state nor an 'Islamic state' present plausible options for Malaysia. Because, at least on a sub-national level, Muslims may identify with the traditional Sultan-system of religious representation which is also, but to a lesser degree reflected on the national level of political representation, non-Muslim minorities in Malaysia remain relatively safe from a discriminatory domination by the Muslim majority. However, it is also to be considered that a significant part of the population does thereby not participate in any mediating institution which is comparable to the Muslim sultanates, between their group on the one side and government on the other.

The fact that government pursued an affirmative action program for the economic benefit of the *bumiputra*'sons of the land' (i.e. the Muslim Malays) at the expense of the non-Muslims has in recent years led to a certain degree of alienation of the latter from government. But even Muslim opposition has disapproved for a long time of the strong nexus between ethnic Malayness on the one side and Islam on the other, as chauvinist and as opposed to the universalistic perspective of Islam. Any recent attempts of Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad at 'Islamizing' Malaysian society

²⁷ Cf. Ninth Schedule of the federal constitution <<http://star.hsrc.ac.za/constitutions/mals9.html>> n.d. (as of 1999). After the victory of the Islamist party PAS in 1998, the state of Kelantan adopted some regulations from the orthodox Islamic law, *shari'a*.

²⁸ Cf. e.g. Charfi (1998) on the case of Tunisia.

underwent strong criticism from both the Muslims side, as well as from the secular side.²⁹

Plurality II: Indonesia

In Indonesia, similar to countries in the core region of *Oriens Islamicus*, but in contrast to Malaysia, Muslims represents a strong numerical majority of the total population (87%). However, on the main peninsular Java in particular, the early exposure of Islam to previously established faiths like Hinduism and Buddhism, may have led to a relatively high degree of plurality of the legal and political discourse *within* the Muslim community itself, ever since Islamization of the vastly dispersed archipelago began in the 13th century AD in Sumatra. Despite the fact that today the large majority of the population is considered at least nominally as Muslim, the politically dominant self-image of the state since independence from the Netherlands (1945/49) was that of a neither theocratic nor wholly secular *modus vivendi* (trade-off).

Neither were the Islamic parties able to push through the adoption of Islamic law, *syaria* (arab.: *shari'a*), nor could their secular antagonists prevail by amending constitution with the '*pancasila*/Five Principles' by the compulsory parliamentary majority of two thirds. Therefore, the *pancasila* has remained a provisional political arrangement for the accommodation of one of the two basic ideological confrontations in Indonesian society. A second, grave confrontation arose later from the alleged challenge of government by the communists.

Pancasila defines Indonesia as a religious state, but at the same time abstains from preferring any one denomination against the other four officially recognized ones. As the main ideological basis of the state, the question of the Islamic character of the state had been removed from the agenda of public discourse *par ordre du mufti*, or rather: by presidential decree (No. 12 from 1968). Successively, the Soeharto regime (1967-98) in its neo-corporatist attempt to seize most spheres of public life, has obliged all political, social and religious groups on a formal commitment to *pancasila*.³⁰ Only after the demise of the Soeharto regime, and also after the subsequent conclusion of the inglorious reign by the 'philosopher's king'

²⁹ For the Islamist pole of the spectrum of critique cf. the oppositional *Parti Islam se-Malaya (PAS)*, for the rather secular position, the former Head of the Muslim Youth Movement (ABIM), Anwar Ibrahim, and the ALIRAN-movement of the Muslim reformist Chandra Muzaffar, in between the to poles.

³⁰ On the corporatist seizure of civil society by the state under Soeharto, cf. Porter (2002)

Abdurrahman Wahid, alias *Gus Dur*,³¹ the question of introducing *sharī'a*-regulations in national law has made its way on the agenda of Majles/parliament again (2001).

However, none of the pivotal Muslim personalities in Indonesia today argues in favor of declaring Indonesia an *Islamic* state. Two of the most prominent Muslim politicians, the aforementioned Gus Dur, and Amien Rais, speaker of the national People's Consultative Assembly (MPR)³² have time and again insisted on their view that in the history of Islam there was no precedence of an 'Islamic state'. In the history of Indonesia, the few attempts at transforming the Muslim state into an Islamic one have failed. *Syaria/sharī'a*-law may, however, may in the future at least partially gain more influence. This may be the case in the semi-autonomous region of Aceh in Northern Sumatra, where *syaria* throughout history has provided only one, but nevertheless an important source of law. However, with its comparatively homogenous Muslim society ever since it became the first Muslim stronghold on the Indonesian archipelago in 13th century AD and an later independent sultanate, Aceh remains an exception in the Indonesian context.

There is no evidence that any important portion of the Muslim majority would opt for a strict and more comprehensive implementation of Islamic law in Indonesia. This does not exclude the existence of extremist Muslim groups, often youth gangs, in multi-confessional urbanized environments who, under the motto of *amr bi-l ma'rûf nahî l-munkar*'encourage the virtues, prohibit the evil' have in recent years attacked night clubs, discotheques, and alleged brothels.

Post-independence Indonesia thus represents a special case of a religious and predominantly Muslim, albeit not an Islamic state. In not so few Middle Eastern countries the state has usurped religion (Turkey, Saudi-Arabia, Tunisia) viz. institutions which are vital to religious practice (primary and secondary education, welfare), or in the very exceptional case of Iran, the lesser clergy has in turn, captured the state's institutions. In contrast, despite similar efforts by the Soeharto regime in Indonesia, both spheres appear to have maintained some independence from each other. To a certain extent, large Muslim organisations constitute a mediating institution between the state on the one side, and (Muslim) society on the other. Without entering into a discussion over more or less precise definitions on the term 'civil society', one may well argue that those Muslim organisations of Indonesia which have *grosso modo* evaded the incorporation into the state today constitute a significant part of an emergent civil society. Nothing comparable can –as yet- be found in most societies of the core area of *Oriens Islamicus*.

³¹ A renown Muslim scholar and leader of one of the largest Muslim organisations in Indonesia (Nahdat ul Ulama). With an alleged figure of 40 million members it may also be regarded as the largest such organisation in the Muslim world.

³² Previously leader of the second largest (claimed 35 mio.) Muslim organization of the country (Muhammadiyah).

The two largest Muslim organisations of Indonesia, Nahdatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, have a long-standing (pre-independence) tradition of social, charitable and educational activities – in contrast to HAMAS in the occupied territories or Hizballah in South-Lebanon. Less in direct opposition but certainly in competition with the state, for the well established Indonesian Muslim organisations there appears to be less of a need for establishing an independent ideological basis and framework of action in fundamentalist references to a ‘Golden Age’ of Islam than in the aforementioned cases of the Middle East. Rather, as first evidence suggests, the drive to unduly reduce social and political complexity in order to accommodate plurality is weaker than it is in Middle Eastern contexts, which does not foreclose the existence of minor fundamentalist groups.

While it appears grossly overstated to oppose a Western (rather: Christian) ‘guilt society’ to a Far-Eastern ‘shame-society’ and both of them to an alleged Muslim ‘blame-society’,³³ the extent of self criticism within the Muslim discourse in Indonesia after the demise of the old order (viz. Soeharto’s ‘New Order’) stands in remarkable contrast to the failure of political discourses in the Middle East to acknowledge shortcomings that were not inflicted upon the Muslim world from the outside.³⁴ While one of the major preoccupations of Muslim political discourse even within the reformist spectre in the Middle East³⁵ is the question of cultural ‘*asâla*/authenticity of development, versus ‘westoxification’, i.e. the problem of Westernization.

In contrast, after a heavy self-critique for having been too preoccupied with organisational matters and charitable agendas only, and after criticising having failed to educate Muslim intellectuals, leaders of the Muhammadiyah, like the NU, have called to found independent centres for the study not only of Muslim tradition but also Western, and other cultural traditions in order to cope with the plurality in Indonesia.³⁶ And only recently, the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Mahathir Mohammed criticised: "Even when Islam enjoins upon us to be just, we ignore justice but uphold the procedures only. Clearly our teachings do not emphasize the real priority in Islam. We are taught to uphold the forms rather than the substance of the religion we believe in. ... We must... banish the idea that the only knowledge that we need to acquire is that of Islam. Neglect of other areas of knowledge has led us to our lack of industrial capacity, our capacity to invent and produce weapons to defend ourselves... There is no need to feel guilty when we study the other subjects. We

³³ Lewy, Mordechai: Nimm meine Schuld auf mich. DIE ZEIT Essay, 16.1.2003, p. 7

³⁴ cf. ‚How We Can Coexist’ critique of 153 Saudi intellectuals to ‘What We’re Fighting For: A Letter from America Sixty scholars make the moral case for the war on terrorism.’ Feb 12, 2002 <www.americanvalues.org>

³⁵ From Iranian Āl-e Ahmad (d. 1969) to contemporaries like Egyptian H. Hanafi and M. A. Jabiri in Morocco.

³⁶ Cf. eg. Dawam Rahardjo in Jakarta Post 3.12.2001

should indeed consider that it is important 'Ibadah, an Islamic injunction that is no less meritorious than the study of religion."³⁷

Accommodation of Plurality in the Islamic Periphery – *Extremo Oriente Lux* ? Explanatory Assumptions

Although the specific historical, social political and cultural *problématique* on the spot varies in both subregions of *Oriens Islamicus*, many of the pertinent reformist suggestions are based on the very same concepts like '*ijtihād*/individual strive for a (legal) opinion'³⁸ and *shûrâ*/consultation. The only significant exception is the '*adat*/custom'-notion: In contrast to the Near and Middle East, in Southeast Asia a blend of pre- and extra-Islamic traditions with the body of the Islamic heritage produced not merely an eclectic arbitrary composite of the two. On the contrary, according to some scholars, in '*adat*-Islam both were amalgamated into a genuinely new whole.³⁹ Contrary to the synthesis of Islam and Hinduism, which is held responsible for the stronger 'leadership-orientation' of the population in areas where this amalgam has remained, the coexistence of '*adat* with (orthodox) Islam is regarded to have helped 'emphasize the democratic tenets of Islam'.⁴⁰

With varying degrees of admissibility rooted in the four orthodox schools of law, but (with the exception of '*adat*) firmly entrenched in Muslim modernist thought since the early 20th century, the mentioned concepts claim religious legitimacy and historical authenticity. However, both *shûrâ* and *ijtihād* denote rather procedural categories of legal tools. Rather few substantial or institutional arrangements with reference to a public order/political system may be derived from them. This may be one of the reasons why reformist thought in the core area of the Muslim world remains fairly abstract. Rather, what is commonly deplored is the continuing suppression of the freedom of speech, the lack of political participation and the collaboration of the Muslim orthodoxy with the post-colonial state.

Workable conceptual alternatives to the existing order are rarely elaborated on. However, the operational deficiency of the reformist projects itself eventually became subject of the discourse. With respect to their plausibility, however, it must be taken into account that in the core area of *Oriens Islamicus* most attempts at political reform have been suppressed from the start, regardless of the ideological bases of the regimes: be it 'Islamic' (Iran, Saudi-Arabia) be it 'secular' (Tunisia, Turkey). Political and/or religious dissent has been rigorously prosecuted by the governments, from M.

³⁷ Quoted from the Saudi paper "The Message," December 20, 2002 cf. http://www.memri.org/bin/opener_latest.cgi?ID=SD46003

³⁸ On the historical implications of *ijtihād*, cf. Hallaq (1984) on the contemporary implications, cf. Trautner (2001)

³⁹ On the notion of '*adat* cf. Stauth (2000:59)

⁴⁰ Cf. Bey (1983)

M. Tahâ in Sudan, to Sheikh Yassine in Morocco, R. al-Ghanoushi in Tunisia, Ayatollah Muntazerî and A.-K. Surûsh in Iran.

To a lesser degree than in the core region, however, it is to be expected that in the periphery of *Oriens Islamicus* the semantic reference to relevant concepts of Islamic law are historically 'worn out'. Both in Malaysia and in Indonesia, it appears that the competitors over the power in the state utilized the Islamic frame of reference much less and with less support of the *de facto* clergy, than this was the case in the Middle East, to either defend power positions in hybrid political systems (e.g. Morocco traditionally Islamic or modernistically Islamic, Iran) or in order to capture the state in 'secular' political systems (e.g. post-1989 Algeria or independent Tunisia).

In addition, the struggle of the predominantly secular élite of the Indonesian independence movement carried a twofold anti-western thrust: against Europe (as the colonial oppressor) and against Arab Islam. The latter's claim on representing the only authentic heir of the *sunna*'the prophet's heritage', was strongly refused by Indonesian Muslims.⁴¹

The construction of an authentic political model for development was therefore not to be based on a culturally 'pure' past, on a 'golden age' of the prophet and his *rashidûn*'legitimate successors', the Caliphs. Rather, it has been argued, an autonomous synthesis from ancient Javanese principles of solidarity (*gotong royong*, originally among local neighbourhoods) on the one side and the universal (over-ethnic, transcending the Arab heritage) Islamic tradition, of mutual consultation (bahasa: *musyawarat*, arab.: *shûrâ*) and of consensual decision-making (bahasa: *mufakat*, arab.: *muwâfaqa*), on the other side was to be achieved. The projected cultural synthesis was not only to transcend 'genuine' autochthonous and Islamic facets. Sukarno, founder of Indonesia, repeatedly referred to the return of the *ratu adil*, the just king, a historical personality of 17th century AD who had incorporated not only the Islamic *mahdî* (the translated 12th Shî'i-successor of prophet Muhammad), but also the Hindu (10th) *avatara*-Wishnu, and the *maitreya*-Buddha into one single Messiah.⁴²

The relative high degree of tolerance of Southeast-Asian Islam with regard to ideological deviation and to the competition of *Weltanschauungen*, may also stem from the long-standing tradition of synthesising the collective practices of faith. The latter, it may be argued, originates in the specific character of Islamization in Southeast Asia. The propagation of Islam in the Malay archipelago was not conducted militarily from the center of Arabia, but rather by traders from Southern India. This happened in a period of time, when Islamic legal orthodoxy had been

⁴¹ Cf. Riddell (2001:???)

⁴² Cf. Schumann in Ende/Steinbach (1996: 370f, 854f)

established (9th century AD), but Muslims did not yet reign over South-Asia. Contrary to Islam in the Arabian lands, which had become the dominant religion of the rulers within a very short time, Indian Islam at the time which is relevant for the Islamization of the Malay archipelago had remained –in analogy to the history of Christianisation- in a pre-Constantine phase of theological development. In addition to that, it synthesized both mainstream *Sunnî*-Islam and dissenting *Shî'i* cultural traits.⁴³

Prior to the advent of Islam in Java and Bali, two major belief-systems, Hinduism and Buddhism, had been synthesized by local religions. Therefore, from both a comparative and a historical perspective, it is hardly surprising that Islam has also been strongly moulded by external influences there, in addition to the Judeo-Christian ones which are inherent to it from the start anyway. This assumption was mainly sustained by empirical evidence with respect to rules of behaviour for individuals and small collectives (village level).⁴⁴ The assumption remains yet to be properly validated with regard to the commonly held 'rigid' belief-system and the legal order of the *sharî'a* on a federal and national level of analysis.

Early *inculturation* of Islam in the peripheral Muslim societies of Southeast Asia may offer promising experiences also with regard to the contemporary reformist discourse in the Middle East and with respect to the conceptual approaches to plurality under the conditions of modernity. If the assumptions are validated, Muslim reformist discourse in the periphery and, to a certain degree, reformist practice lend themselves as an exemplar paradigm also for the Middle Eastern core area – *extremo oriente lux*.

⁴³ Cf. Brakel in Ende/Steinbach (1996: 738).

⁴⁴ From Geertz (1968) to Probojo (1998).

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