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Hybrid Pathways to Orthodoxy in Brunei Darussalam: Bureaucratised Exorcism, Scientisation and the Mainstreaming of Deviant-Declared Practices

Dominik M. Müller

Abstract: This article investigates the bureaucratisation of Islam in Brunei and its interlinkages with socio-cultural changes. It elucidates how realisations of state-enforced Islamic orthodoxy and purification produce locally unique meanings, while simultaneously reflecting much broader characteristics of the contemporary global condition. The article first introduces a theoretical perspective on the bureaucratisation of Islam as a social phenomenon that is intimately intertwined with the state's exercise of classificatory power and related popular processes of co-producing, and sometimes appropriating symbolic state power. Second, it outlines the historical trajectory of empowering Brunei's national ideology, *Melayu Islam Beraja* (MIB). It then explores social imaginaries and bureaucratic representations of "deviant"-declared practices, before illustrating how these practices become reinvented within the parameters of state power as "Sharia-compliant" services to the nation state. Simultaneously, national-religious protectionism is paradoxically expressed in thoroughly globalised terms and shaped by forces the state cannot (entirely) control. Newly established Sharia-serving practices become culturally re-embedded, while also flexibly drawing upon multiple transnational cultural registers. In the main ethnographic example, bureaucratised exorcism, Japanese water-crystal photography and scientisation fuse behind the "firewall" of MIB. These hybrid pathways to orthodoxy complicate the narratives through which they are commonly framed.

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Introduction

The cultural and political position of Islam in contemporary Brunei Darussalam (henceforth Brunei) is commonly perceived as conservative and orthodox. [1] Indeed, the government's powerful Islamic Religious Council and its Legal Committee *de jure* follow "the orthodox tenets" of Sunni Islam (of the Shafi'i legal school[2]) in their rulings. Beyond the Sultanate's shores, portrayals of Brunei as a vanguard of Islamisation in Asia have become increasingly prominent since 2013/2014, following a series of international media reports, according to which the Sultan (sic) had suddenly (sic) decided to implement the Sharia (sic).[3] Over the past three decades the government has undeniably formalised an increasingly restrictive state-brand of Islam, with far-reaching social consequences. Personal liberties in the religious field are more limited than in neighbouring countries, and the government zealously aims to transform its

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2   Exceptions are possible where following the "orthodox tenets" opposes "public interest", and where His Majesty directs otherwise. Then, the "less orthodox tenets" of Sunni Shafi'i Islam should be applied. If even those contradict public interest or the Sultan's orders, the Islamic Religious Council, headed by the Sultan, can refer to other Sunni legal schools (Religious Council and Kadis Courts Act, RCKCA, Article 43).

3   The legal reform was planned since the 1990s, largely unnoticed outside of Brunei (Müller 2015: 323). In 2011, the Sultan announced its imminent completion, asking rhetorically "Who are we to say wait?", much cited in Brunei and Malaysia. Yet, in 2013/2014, when international media finally discovered their story, observers appeared puzzled why the Sultan "suddenly wants to implement the Sharia". Notably, not "the Sultan", but a complex assemblage of institutions, individuals and working groups had prepared and publicly and non-publicly argued for the reform, to which he "consented", although not everybody even in the state apparatus had been aware of these preparations (indeed, even some state elites were taken by surprise). Similarly, "the Sharia" was not "introduced", but an existing Sharia legislation was transformed/expanded. The reform is still in its first stage (Müller 2017).

citizenry into obedient religious subjects adhering to state-defined doctrines. However, generalised narratives of "growing Islamisation" and "orthodoxy" tell us little about the actual empirical realities, social meanings and discursive embeddedness of Brunei's "Islamisation" policies, and how different actors position themselves towards and within these processes. In the context of Brunei, such questions have so far received little scholarly attention, even among experts of Islam in Southeast Asia.

This article ethnographically explores state-enforced Islamisation policies in post-colonial Brunei vis-à-vis parallel socio-legal and cultural transformations.[4] As we shall see, the pathways to state-enforced orthodoxy and its social realisation can be remarkably flexible and culturally hybrid. This challenges not only essentialising narratives about "Islamisation" and "the Sharia" in Brunei, but also has implications for our understanding of developments elsewhere that are framed in similar terms in scholarly and media representations. Such explanatory schemes may obscure more than they reveal, and to generate a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics at play, we should examine them where they take place – that is, in the spheres of everyday life – ideally by looking "over the shoulders" (Geertz 1973: 452) of involved actors. As my case study will demonstrate, developments of assumed Islamisation and growing orthodoxy are shaped by and need to be understood vis-à-vis their unique settings. The closer we examine them, the more our findings may challenge dominant assumptions about the phenomena these terms aim to signify.

I start by introducing theoretical considerations pertaining to the bureaucratisation of Islam as a social phenomenon that transcends its institutional boundaries, informs cultural change, and is inherent to the state's exercise of classificatory power. In a second step, I sketch the historical trajectory and institutional empowerment of Brunei's official national ideology (*Melayu Islam Beraja*, MIB) and state-brand of Islam. I then ethnographically elucidate social imaginaries and bureaucratic representations of supernatural powers and deviant-declared practices such as magic healing and exorcism, before illustrating how such practices become reinvented within the symbolic parameters of bureaucratised state power, while simultaneously drawing upon other interlinked cultural registers, including Islamic legalism, objectification/rationalisation, glob-

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4　Most names other than public figures are pseudonyms, and some circumstantial information has been changed to protect identities. All translations are the author's. I have slightly altered some of my interlocutors' wording for better readability. Some citations have been recorded, others are based on fieldnotes.

alisation, marketisation, and the transnational "conservative turn"[5] in Southeast Asian Islam. This hybrid reconfiguration of outlawed traditions gives rise to novel cultural forms. In the main ethnographic example to be addressed, all of these forces are at play, as "Sharia-compliant" exorcism, Japanese water-crystal photography and the quest for scientific evidence-making enter into a symbiotic relationship behind the self-declared "firewall" of *Melayu Islam Beraja*. I will conclude that some newly established Sharia-serving practices have become re-embedded in a pre-existing symbolic vocabulary while simultaneously drawing upon trans-national cultural flows that are creatively appropriated from multiple sources and, in many ways, reflect the contemporary global condition. New cultural forms arising from such appropriations are likely transitory, like many hybridities that serve as "instable forms of mediation and distinction" between local and global spheres (Hahn 2016). Yet, they demonstrate how the pathways to Brunei's state-enforced orthodoxy, at a deeper symbolic level, tell a quite different story from the narratives of Islamisation, purification and national cultural protectionism through which they are framed.

Bureaucratic Meaning-Making, Classificatory Power and the Nation-Stateisation of Islam: Conceptual Considerations

This article departs from an anthropological perspective that conceptual-ises the bureaucratisation of Islam (henceforth BoI) as a social phenom-enon that transcends its organisational boundaries, as categorical schemes of Islam diffuse into society and become appropriated by social actors and institutions (Müller 2018). In settings, such as Brunei, where governments have empowered Islamic institutions to influence the direc-tion Muslim discourse is taking in their territories, the BoI often pene-trates deeply into public discourse and everyday life in society. Therefore, the BoI is not simply a formalisation, expansion and diversification of Islamic institutions, or a government attempt to control religious actors and neutralise opposition, as it is often conceived of in functional terms. Instead, as a multi-dimensional phenomenon, it also affects dynamics of social and cultural transformations, although it does not simply deter-mine them. The BoI goes along with a *bureaucratisation of knowledge* and

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5   Van Bruinessen 2013. "Conservative" should not be misread as indicating the conservation of an actually existing previous condition; rather, it is often a transformative and future-oriented project (cf. Feener 2013).

related processes of systematising and reflecting, which Eickelman (1992, 2015: 605) calls an "objectification of Muslim consciousness", resulting in "a significant reimagining of religious and political identities".[6] Accordingly, the BoI implies distinct epistemic modes of understanding and organising the world. These often fuse with other registers, such as cultural marketisation, the punitive turn (Peletz 2015), and other transnational flows, alongside discursive frames of the nation state, which result in novel cultural forms and social meanings of Islam and being Muslim.

The BoI is entrenched in the empowerment of what Bourdieu (1994: 13) called "state forms of classification" and their "social frameworks of perceptions", "understanding", "appreciation" and "memory", which are inscribed to varying extents to the spheres of habitus. Therefore, the state's classificatory power is not simply produced by state actors in the term's conventional sense, but *co-produced and contested in society* (Müller 2018), while the boundaries between state- and non-state spheres are blurring (Gupta 1995). In certain contexts, non-state actors thus become state-actors as well. Accordingly, symbolic power, of which state power and state-imposed social classification are manifestations,[7] "presupposes, on the part of those who submit to it, a form of complicity which is neither passive submission nor a free adherence to it" (Bourdieu 1991: 50–51). Social actors within and beyond the bureaucracy position themselves in diverse ways: they do not simply internalise state-classification to a "taken-for-granted" and "commonsensical" level (Handelman and Shamgar-Handelman 1991: 294), or circumvent, pragmatically adapt, subversively resist, or cautiously navigate between "public" and "hidden transcripts" (Scott 1985, 1990), although all of this likely occurs and affects individual subject formations. Of most relevance to the present article, they also *ascribe their own meanings* to the hegemonic discourse and creatively re-signify it, which is only partly conditioned by its embeddedness in existing power-knowledge regimes. Although actors may submit to symbolic state power and participate in its social production, they may still actively (often even unintentionally) inform some of

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

7 Similarly, Herzfeld (1992: 38) viewed "(s)tate order" as "the most massively organised and systematically controlled symbolic system that the world has so far known", echoing Bourdieu's notion of state power as symbolic power.

its contents in ways that were originally unanticipated by the ruling order's creators.

This article illustrates such creative state-making with the example of an Islamic healing centre that incorporates the symbolic language and categorical schemes of state power in Brunei. The centre specialises in exorcism, which had long been the domain of Malay supernatural specialists (*bomoh*) whose once-normalised practices have become bureaucratically classified as deviant (*sesat*) in the post-colonial state (Müller 2015); growing segments of the population have internalised this position as commonsensical Islamic. In this context, the BoI in Brunei affects cultural changes in the normativities of everyday life, but it also informs social agency and its creative realisations of the state. The agency behind the establishment of this Islamic healing centre problematises wide-spread notions about Brunei society being "apathetic" (Horton 2004: 274), which continue to dominate perceptions of the country.[8]

Another conceptual point of reference pertains to paradoxical, uneven continuities in the Brunei government's self-declared path towards religious purifying Malay culture, or what Herzfeld calls in more abstract terms "the organic part played by symbols in creating the new order out of the old" (Herzfeld 1992: 35). Transformations presented as radical shifts may, on a deeper level, not always be what they purport to be. Herzfeld (1992: 25–26, 42) provided the example of sudden changes towards new state ideologies, such as Kemalist secularism in early 20th century Turkey. In its proclaimed abandonment of public religious symbols, this "non-religious" regime of "secular modernisation" appropriated religion-like symbols into a new nationalist culture, although these were neither intended to appear, nor consciously perceived, as religious. While some forms change, "others will probably persist, if not as external symbolic forms, then as structures of thought that will continue to provide an organizing framework for people trying to come to terms with change" (Herzfeld 1992: 57). New normative projects "batten on to an existing cultural vocabulary",[9] allowing people to "make their respective accommodations to this new order" (Herzfeld 1992: 57). In Brunei, where spirit beliefs, sorcery, exorcism and consultation with supernatural specialists had long been a "widely accepted symbolism" (to borrow

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8   The idea that Bruneian society is "apathetic" may have more to do with conventions of *explaining* Brunei. Very few studies illustrate popular agency, but signs of change are in the air (Zawawi and Amalina 2017; Chin 2017; Tolman 2018).

9   To avoid misunderstandings, it should be noted that obviously, no cultural vocabulary is stable or isolated.

Herzfeld's 1992: 58 wording), the state-policy towards establishing an Islamic order in a complete (*lengkap*, Muhammad Hadi 2017a) manner became similarly re-embedded. Before going into further ethnographic and analytic detail, however, it is important to provide some contextual information.

Bureaucratised Islam and Classificatory Power in the "MIB State"

Brunei has been conceptualised by its government as non-secular "Islamic State" (*Negara Islam*[10]) and, more specifically, a "Malay Islamic Monarchy" (*Melayu Islam Beraja*), since Independence in 1984. The country never established a parliamentary democracy and the charismatic monarch, Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah (who has held office since 1967) *embodies* state power more than any other Southeast Asian leader. In the spirit of *l'état c'est moi*, he is the prime minister, minister of finance, minister of defence, minister of foreign affairs and trade, commander-in-chief of the army and police, university chancellor, holds absolute executive powers, and is "head of the official religion" (*ketua ugama rasmi*, Constitution, Article 3(2)); that is, Islam (Figure 1).

Constitutionally, the Sultan "can do no wrong in either his personal or any official capacity" (Constitution, Article 84(B1)). *De jure*, no checks-and-balances limit his powers, although *de facto* he constantly needs to stage and reactualise the legitimacy of his rule and integrate various interest groups, including the religious bureaucracy, to ensure their support.

The Sultan enjoys enormous popularity[11] and, as Bourdieu notes on states more generally, *personally* serves as the country's "(central) bank of symbolic capital".[12] This popularity is not just fostered, choreographed and demanded by state-controlled media but also an undeniable (in a double-sense) social fact that contributes to upholding the political *status quo*.

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10   The Sultan regularly stresses that Brunei "is an Islamic State" (e.g. cited in Jabatan Penerangan 2017). Cf. Shukri Zain 1996.

11   This is, at least, my own perception based on regular visits since 2007. Cf. Lindsey and Steiner 2016: 553.

12   He strikingly resembles the "President" acting as the Mauss'ian "sorcerer" in Bourdieu's (1994: 11–12) essay on the "bureaucratic field", also pertaining to the "monopoly over nomination".

Figure 1. Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah's 71st Birthday Celebrations (*Hari Keputeraan ke-71*). Bandar Seri Begawan

Source: Picture by Dominik M. Müller, 2017.

Another stabilising factor is the oil- and gas-funded high living standards. The Sultan is widely considered to have personally provided Brunei's welfare state in his capacity as a "caring/benevolent monarch" (*raja yang prihatin/pemedulian*), discursively naturalised terms that are normative for public speech. Poems and patriotic songs, such as those played in state-media during the Sultan's three week-long birthday celebrations, similarly emphasise his benevolence and artistically reproduce the caring monarch motif. And with compelling arguments: There is no personal income tax, a pension is provided for all citizens from the age of 60, education and medical services are largely free (except private clinics), and the state provides numerous social services.

The "hierarchical reciprocal relationship between the ruler and his subjects" (Siti Norkhalbi 2005: 247) is also framed in culturalist and primordialist terms as representing a "traditional" Malay principle according to which "the ruler must be just, the people must be loyal" (*Pelita Brunei* 2017, translation). Despite standing "above the law" (Siti Norkhalbi 2005: 13), the Sultan is not perceived as an arbitrary ruler or dictator by any significant grouping of citizens. With his promotion of the rule of law, justice and accountability, his rule comes closer to what

Turner (2015) calls soft-authoritarianism in the Singaporean context. To be sure, the media-scape is controlled and ideologically streamlined, and Brunei witnessed six decades of systematically de-politicising the population following a rebellion in 1962. Also, Brunei's small population (420,000 inhabitants) adds to its controllability.

Institutionalising a National Ideology:
Melayu Islam Beraja

The government seeks to instil the values of Brunei's official national ideology (*ideologi negara*, also "national philosophy") *Melayu Islam Beraja* (MIB) in the population's minds. MIB privileges Malay (*Melayu*) supremacy, *Islam* (as interpreted by the state – no other Islam), and the monarchy (*Beraja*). As a bureaucratic categorical scheme, MIB is at the very heart of the state's attempted exercise of classificatory power.

Officially, MIB has been in place since the first Sultan converted to Islam, assumedly in 1368. Leaving aside discussions whether MIB is a "centuries old creed" (*Borneo Bulletin* 2013), an invented tradition for nation building (Braighlinn 1992), or possibly both, notably MIB propagators readily admit the acronym's inventedness, although its spirit would have been "practiced […] for more than 600 years as a way of life and source of unity and harmony" (Muhammad Hadi 2017b, translation).

In the Declaration of Independence in 1984, the Sultan proclaimed Brunei "*shall be forever a […] Malay, Muslim Monarchy upon the teachings of (Sunni) Islam*" (Jabatan Penerangan 2017). MIB became gradually institutionalised, and Brunei-specific notions of *Melayu*, Islam, and the monarchy became translated into the language of bureaucracy. In 1986, an MIB Concept Committee (*Jawatankuasa Konsep MIB*) was established, which transformed in 1990 into the MIB Supreme Council (*Majlis Tertinggi MIB*, originally *Majlis Tertinggi Kebangsaan MIB*). Its Secretariat is hosted by the Academy of Brunei Studies (*Akademi Pengajian Brunei, APB*) at the University of Brunei Darussalam. The APB was established in the same year, with overlapping purposes and personnel. This double-structure, a crucial site for MIB knowledge-production, continues to exist today. In 1991, compulsory MIB classes were established at the university, organised by the APB. For citizens, the MIB modules have become obligatory for obtaining degrees. In 1992, MIB became a compulsory school subject (it had been part of curricula since 1986, Dewan Majlis 2014: 469). The contents of MIB teaching have been modified over time – regrettably, no study has yet systematically examined this doctrinal meaning-production and its historical genesis.

The Supreme Council is responsible for defining, systematising and propagating MIB. It prepares curricula and teaching materials, alongside publications for the public. Systematic publishing began in 1994, although texts conceptualising MIB existed earlier (e.g., Hashim 1987; Moehammad 1989; Kementerian Pendidikan 1992). Its Secretariat constantly reminds citizens of their obligations towards the MIB State (*Negara MIB*, Dewan Majlis 2014: 271). One of its leaders, Muhammad Hadi Muhammad Melayong (2013), argues that MIB's "values […] are innate for every Bruneian," a descriptive claim and normative expectation. Similarly, a former Minister of Education stated: "Every individual is responsible for practicing, appreciating, and strengthening the concept of MIB" (Dewan Majlis 2014: 473) (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Secretariat of the MIB Supreme Council, Located at the University of Brunei Darussalam's Campus, Gadong

Source: Picture by Dominik M. Müller, 2014.

The government insists on exclusively defining MIB – in the Secretariat's words, its "interpretation must be protected" (Muhammad Hadi 2016, translation). MIB bureaucrats themselves reflect upon how its propagation has undergone reorientations; for example, MIB is now taught in a more interactive and activating manner, resembling transnational pedagogical trends. Learners should then become "multipliers". In line with target-group adjusted marketing and evidence-oriented bureaucratic thinking, the Council tries to maximise quantified and measured "success rates" (Dewan Majlis 2014: 472–473, the author holds further statistics).

I have observed MIB teaching in 2014, where transnationally inspired up-to-date didactic methods were applied. Another new trend, as a former MIB lecturer told me, is, somewhat paradoxically, to encourage "critical thinking": learners should reflect critically upon how they can strengthen the realisation of MIB in private and public life. MIB teaching now also extends to previously less explored fields, such as environment protection, which, as the same teacher argued, would be essentially Islamic and Malay.

Reflecting the language of bureaucracy, the Council operates with "five-year working plans". The current plan (2015–2020) calls for further expansion of the MIB bureaucracy's "human resources" and "infrastructure", alongside other goals. The Secretariat distinguishes three propagation fields – educational sector, other institutions, and general public – and five target groups: government officers/staff, sub-district and village heads (as multipliers), youth/pupils/students, the private sector, and society at large. By educationally empowering these groups to themselves empower MIB in society, the authorities seek to *make* the BoI transcend its institutional boundaries: MIB should not simply be state-dictated and obeyed, but society should actively strengthen it, and thus co-produce the state's classificatory power. As the Council also integrates other institutions and companies under its "multi-agency approach", boundaries between state and society blur in many ways and the MIB State takes a paramount interest in fostering a state-in-society understanding of good citizenship.

The Council's outreach activities, which are often co-organised with other agencies and companies, include lectures/speeches, courses/workshops/seminars, forums/dialogues/discussions, briefings, exhibitions, roadshows, competitions (such as arts and poetry), camps, distributing publications, and propagation through state media.

Thus, Bruneian citizens are extensively exposed to the MIB discourse and its normative expectations for public and private behaviour. They are not only subject to control and disciplining mechanisms, but also to the everyday didactics and *contents* of MIB discourse. Even those who circumvent or deliberately resist the state's pedagogical aspirations can rarely evade being affected by its symbolic power and classification. For Bruneians below 40 – the generation that underwent MIB education – being MIB citizens and being expected to present themselves as such has become inscribed, to varying extents, into their habitus. This is often accompanied by hidden transcripts, negotiations and insecurities (also among MIB propagators); nevertheless, MIB discourse, which is integral to Brunei's BoI, deeply penetrates their lifeworlds and subject formation.

Centralising Islamic Discourse: The Ministry of Religious Affairs and the State Mufti Department

Unlike in other countries where Muslim institutional actors and interpretations openly coexist and compete, Brunei has zero public space for non-state Islamic organisations or voices. The government and bureaucracy legally enjoy the exclusive right to publicly speak about and publish about Islam. Islamic scholars are, by definition, civil servants. Islam-related publications from abroad are screened before they can be distributed, which can take months, as officers told me. As Iik (2002: 88) concluded, religious policies "are discussed internally and [...] introduced slowly and quietly. Open religious […] debates have never taken place". Earlier attempts to establish alternative Muslim groups were quickly cracked down on (Müller 2015: 317), with many becoming bureaucratically classified as "deviant teachings" (*ajaran sesat*, Norafan 2007). One exception, the supposedly apolitical Sunni orthodox Tablighi Jamaat, is not classified as deviant, but it cannot establish its own registered organisation, mosques or media, and involved individuals are monitored. Others, such as the Bahai and al-Arqam, faced sanctions up to imprisonment, "re-education", and, in the Bahai's case, a civil service employment ban in the past.

The MIB Supreme Council is entrenched in a wider bureaucratic assemblage of institutions enacting so-called Islamisation policies. Its most powerful actors include the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA, *Kementerian Hal Ehwal Ugama*), the State Mufti Department (*Jabatan Mufti Kerajaan*), and the Islamic Religious Council (MUIB, *Majlis Ugama Islam Brunei*).

Initially called the Department of Religious Affairs (*Jabatan Hal Ehwal Ugama*), the MoRA was established by Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddin III in 1959. Its predecessor body (*Badan Penasihat Ugama*) was founded by Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin and served as the Sultan's Mohammedan religious adviser. In 1954, Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddin III had already formed a consultative council for Sharia affairs (*Majlis Mesyuarat Syariah*); in 1955, he established the MUIB, which continues to serve as the "chief authority" in "all matters relating to religion" (Religious Council and Kadis Courts Act, RCKCA, Section 38) and belongs to the MoRA.

The MoRA's responsibilities include the building/maintenance of mosque, employing mosque personnel, compulsory Islamic education, pilgrimage matters, propagation (*dakwah*), conversions (and supporting converts), alms (*zakat*), handling religious offences (*kesalahan ugama*), "doctrine control", *halal* certification, advice for families, prayer services, and cemeteries. It also manages the Sharia judiciary, which exists parallel

to a British-derived Civil judiciary. With a budget of BND 236 Mio. (2017/2018) – more than double that of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – it is among the largest government institutions.

Among its sub-institutions are the *Pusat Da'wah Islamiah* (propagation centre), the Sharia Affairs Department (*Jabatan Hal Ehwal Syariah*), the Doctrine Control Unit (*Bahagian Kawalan Aqidah*), and many other offices (classified into *jabatan*, *pejabat*, *bahagian*, *unit*, and *institut*). The current Minister, Badaruddin Othman, was among the "creator(s) of MIB" (Kershaw 2001: 19).[13]

Like other market-inspired religious institutions translating Islam into the globalised languages of bureaucracy and marketisation (on Malaysian Sharia Courts, see Peletz 2015), the MoRA has formalised a "vision and mission" (*visi dan misi*). The "vision" includes "strengthening of the officiality (*kerasmian*) and practice of Islam as a straight and complete way of life […]", its "mission" is to "support and protect Islam and its officiality through an effective and dynamic administration". Both aim at the "development and prosperity of the state, based on Sharia Law, the Constitution, other laws, and the MIB philosophy" (Kementerian Hal Ehwal Ugama, translations).

The State Mufti Department works under the Prime Minister's (Sultan's) office. The Mufti is Brunei's chief interpreter of Islam. His office holds the exclusive authority of issuing of *fatwas* (Islamic legal opinions) and transgressions are punishable with up to two years imprisonment under the Syariah Penal Code Order 2013 (*Perintah Kanun Hukuman Jenayah Syari'ah, 2013*, henceforth SPCO, Section 228). Whereas *fatwas* elsewhere are most often non-binding advisory opinions, the State Mufti's *fatwas* enjoy the force of state law. They are binding on Shafi'i Muslims in Brunei, which all Brunei Malays are legally expected to be, once the Sultan or MUIB order them to be published in the Gazette (RCKCA, Section 43; SPCO, Section 228). Mocking or insulting these *fatwas* can result in imprisonment (SPCO, Section 220). Printing/publishing/selling/importing books containing instructions, doctrinal positions or *fatwas* "contrary to […] any lawfully issued fatwa" by the State Mufti is punishable by jail terms or fines (RCKCA, Section 188). Spreading doctrines "contrary to" state-interpreted Sharia Law is punishable with up to five years (SPCO, Section 207).

The State Mufti regularly explains doctrinal views on matters of daily life, often in response to citizens requesting a *fatwa*, sometimes on

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13   He was involved in a controversial gender-separation at the Prophet's Muhammad's birthday celebrations in 1985, enacted without the Sultan's consent, followed by an "ambassadorial exile" (Kershaw 2001: 19).

television. His office's Friday prayer sermons (*khutbah*), read in all mosques, frequently address and justify government policies and remind the public of its religious duty to support the government. The bureaucracy conceptualises the Sultan as the leader of the Muslim believers (*ulil amri*) and *khalifah* (Allah's vice-regent) in Brunei. This points to the religious dimension of the reciprocal relationship between the Sultan and his subjects. As Siti Norkhalbi (2005: 247) concluded, "the people sustain their obedience and loyalty to the ruler, as obeying and being loyal to the ruler is part of obeying Allah's commands".

The MoRA, the State Mufti Department and the MIB Supreme Council are the authoritative forces in producing the BoI's official – that is, doctrinal and textually formalised – meanings (which, of course, also unfold beyond textual language). These official meanings are related to, but must be distinguished from, its *social meanings* that social actors ascribe to and derive from the official discourse (equally transcending text, although this cannot be substantially addressed here).

The Firewall of MIB and its Supernatural Counterforces

As the Bruneian scholar Asiyah az-Zahra Ahmad Kumpoh (2011: 39) put it, somewhat paradoxically, in post-colonial Brunei the "status of religious tolerance [...] remained unchanged" but there have been "cultural changes where activities […] which did not conform to Islamic teaching could no longer be tolerated". This may be a logical contradiction for uninitiated outsiders ("tolerance unchanged" vs. "can no longer be tolerated") but for many Bruneians it is not. It sums up two locally powerful themes. The first is feeling misrepresented by the outside (especially Western) world as intolerant/radical, whereas in reality, Bruneian Islam would be "moderate" and oriented towards "harmonious" relations with everybody. The second is the banning of supernatural traditions that long have been and often remain central to Malay everyday life. The latter, in the now hegemonic logic, is not a question of freedom of religious practice and thus (potentially) tolerable, but of protecting the very essence of Islam and Muslim souls facing Judgement Day. The following sections address this second theme.

In 2015, the Sultan made a locally much-cited comment that the MIB was a "firewall" against unwanted elements. These include crime, social ills, and undesired cultural flows invading Brunei from abroad if

no "firewall" separating "positive" and "negative" influences were in place.[14] The underlying idea of this digital metaphor points to a long-standing view contrasting Brunei *Darussalam* (*Abode of Peace*) with a "zone of disorder" (Braighlinn 1992: 51, 57) abroad. Undesired "external" elements are not just alternative readings of Islam, militant groups/ideologies, non-Muslim missionaries, and "immoral" or "Westernised" behaviours – they also pertain to "widely accepted symbolism(s)" of the supernatural, which are deeply rooted in the Malay "cultural vocabulary" (to borrow Herzfeld's notions).

One such tradition that Asiyah az-Zahra (2011: 50) mentions as no longer tolerable are "[c]elebrations at spirit shrines", such as "powerful graves" (Müller 2018). A red line is crossed where Muslims attempt to contact the deceased or other spirits as intermediaries to convey wishes to God, nowadays considered a sin (*syirik*) that leads to divine punishments, and generally where uncontrolled ceremonies are held at such places.

The Islamic bureaucracy conceptualises the state as a protector of Muslim souls: It is *obliged* and accountable towards God to realise the principle of "enjoining good and forbidding wrong" (*amar makruf dan nahi mungkar*). Nowadays, the Malay mainstream similarly views many banned traditions as either deviant or outdated. This view was fostered by state-Islamic education, but also takes inspiration from bottom-up trends of Islamic resurgence, which have transformed ways of being Muslim across the Malay world, also (albeit to lesser extents) in countries without similar policies.

Other deviant-declared practices are certain Malay customs (*adat*) in fields like wedding ceremonies (Abdul Mufidah 2014), dances, and dress. A *khutbah* (Mosque Affairs Department 2015) recently told Muslims not to shake hands with members of the opposite sex who are not their spouses or certain relatives (*mahram*) – an instruction that many, including state elites, ignored,[15] and which is not enforced. In other fields, the bureaucracy takes action. A striking example is supernatural specialists/healers (*bomoh*). Their status has changed from "an indispensable figure in a Malay village" whose existence was largely "taken for granted" (Mohd Taib 1988: 157, note the same wording as the Handelman and Shamgar-Handelman's and Eickelman's cited above) to a shadowy crim-

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14   Globalisation as a threat has always been a theme in MIB literature.
15   A digital voice tongue-in-cheek asked whether "girls that shaked (sic) hands with Sultan should be sent to religious camp to wash their sins" (<www.reddit. com/r/Brunei/comments/3dsijn/imam_dont_shake_hands_with_nonmahram _people/>).

inal figure who engages in *syirik* (sin) and *khurafat* (forbidden superstition). Although the "indigenous institution"[16] of *bomoh* has long been widely accepted, under the MIB State's claim to classificatory power, it can, *officially* and *under that term*, no longer be tolerated, resulting in far-reaching changes in Malay everyday lifeworlds. *Bomoh*, as a social institution, and certain individuals in particular have always been surrounded by ambivalence, due to their simultaneously fascinating and suspicious access to invisible worlds (Peletz 1993: 155). Now, however, this ambivalence has been restructured and revalorised vis-à-vis state policies that aim to govern individual practices and beliefs, and in ways that pay more heed to the negative side of things. Thus, this socio-legal transformation pushed forward by bureaucratic religious actors is not a historical rupture *per se*, although the changes at play are dramatic.

Social Imaginaries and Bureaucratised Representations of Black Magic

Notwithstanding these normative shifts, beliefs in the omnipresent workings of sorcery (*sihir*) are still a social reality, as this section will ethnographically illustrate. During a car ride in 2017, a married couple of two religiously observant Bruneians, both postgraduate students, whom I had known for years, shared their personal experiences with me. Neither were inclined to any deviance in the MIB State's sense, had temporarily lived abroad, and one had taught MIB before. Like most Bruneians I spoke with, they were convinced of the powers of sorcery and possible interferences of spirits (*jin/hantu*). "I have seen it with my own eyes", Tijah told me. In her youth, she saw a "fireball", assumedly caused by a form of sorcery called *ranggau*, at the sky. Others had seen it too, and her father told her to come into the house immediately. Such fireballs, she explained, are known to be the result of the workings of sorcerers (*tukang sihir*) – specifically (non-Muslim) Iban, but any sorcerer could learn it. Tijah recalled her father saying that when such a ball is nearby, a person will be harmed or die. The fireball would be related to a spirit controlled by the sorcerer, which must be fed with human lives. Tijah had seen such fireballs twice. Other interlocutors confirmed the concept's existence in social imaginaries.

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16   In 1988, Mohd Taib Osman (1988: 174, 168) noted that, in Malaysia, "*bomohs* enjoy comparative freedom from the sanctions of the religious authorities", adding "without a *bomoh,* the village community is felt to be incomplete".

The couple narrated several such stories. Her husband, Mamat, later stated that a generation earlier, the cause for such phenomena, and protection against it, had been the *bomoh's* domain. Thanks to "better education", this was now known to be *syirik*, especially by the younger generation (whom I call the MIB generation). Both emphasised that orthodox Islam, as they learned it, confirms the reality of sorcery, evidenced by the Quran and *hadith*. In an attempt to provide legitimate evidence, they (and other interlocutors) stressed that even the Prophet Muhammad had once been under a spell (*disihirkan*). This reflects state-Islamic positions.

MoRA officers showed me two exhibitions of confiscated objects used by both "real" and "fake" sorcerers in 2014. At first, all objects had been "cleaned" by a high-ranking *Ustaz*, as Khairul, the officer who showed me the exhibition, told me – yet, strange sounds were said to have come from the room after dark, and nobody would enter it at night. Khairul also narrated how a MoRA scholar had "tested" a confiscated talisman (*azimat*) for "academic" purposes, and "it worked, he was not able to cut into his skin!" Such experiments, he added, were dangerous for anyone's soul.

In the late 2000s, this theme room, entitled "Objects Leading to the Deviation from the True Doctrine (*Aqidah*)" (translation), was opened within a larger exhibition at the MoRA's premises. It became the most popular room. The purpose was pedagogical; that is, to explain "what is prohibited, what you cannot do, and cannot sell". Khairul added, "20 years ago, Islamic education was not as strong as now". In particular, some elders (*warga emas*) would still trust *bomohs* and practice deviant traditions, although this would gradually change since the 1990s (informal conversation, Bandar Seri Begawan, 8 October 2014).

Some of the exhibited objects had been used, for example, to protect their owners from other people's magic, to increase business profits, for love magic, and to become temporarily invisible or invincible. There were protective bottles with mystical symbols, numbers and Arabic letters that "offenders" place above doors, and cooking/eating bowls with inscribed chants/numbers, kept in restaurants to enhance revenues (Figures 3 and 4).

Figure 3. "Exhibition of Objects Leading to the Deviation from the True
          Doctrine (*akidah*)". Ministry of Religious Affairs, Islamic Da'wah
          Centre, Bandar Seri Begawan
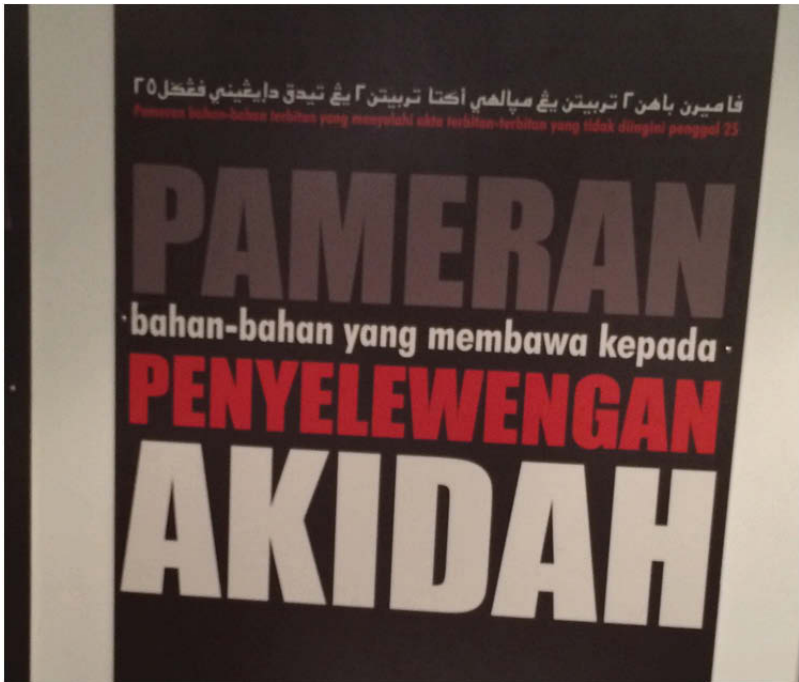
Source: Picture by Dominik M. Müller, 2014.

Some restaurant owners had been elderly Malays "who still believe in
such methods". Khairul himself had investigated such a case, although
elders would stop once they were "strongly" exposed to the "right in-
formation". He added another anecdote: A "very religious" restaurant
customer realised his drinking glass was cracked. A newly ordered one
cracked again (altogether four times). The "disgusting" reason was that
"the restaurant owner had used *najis* (excrements) on his dishes" for
magic purposes. God, I was told, may protect pious persons in such
moments.

    Other objects are protective rings, often found in a suspicious mix;
for example, wrapped in yellow cloth, indicating usage for worshipping
(*alat pemujiaan*). When such objects are found at post offices or border
posts ("often" sent by/for foreign domestic helpers) or confiscated lo-
cally, they are sent to the MoRA for investigation. Some are "harmless"
and others are "used for special purposes, although the owners them-

selves often don't exactly know what" (ibid.). Normally, no legal action is taken, but they remain confiscated.

Figure 4. Confiscated Objects Assumedly Used for Magic Practices, on
              Exhibition for Educational Purposes. Ministry of Religious Affairs,
              Islamic Da'wah Centre, Bandar Seri Begawan
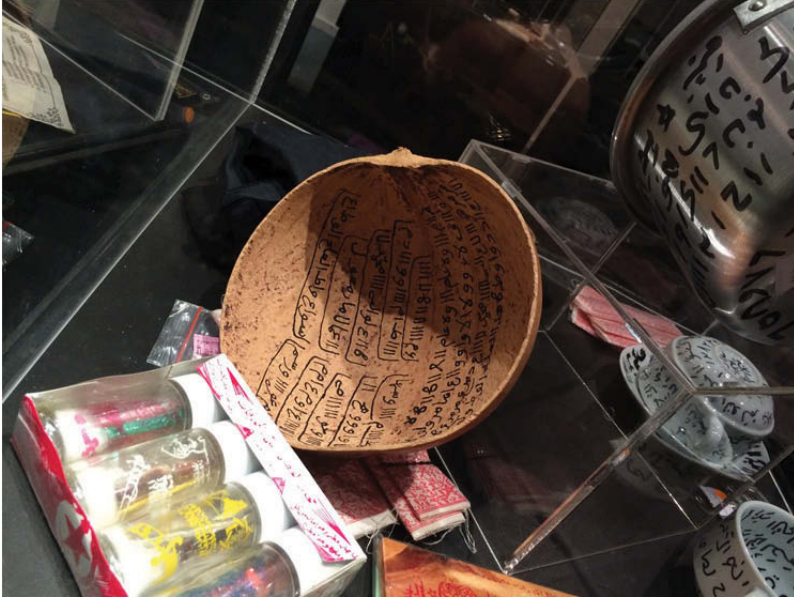
Source: Picture by Dominik M. Müller, 2014.

At the second exhibition, officers showed me pictures of a graveyard where photographs of a target person of sorcery had been buried, wrapped in underwear. They regularly find pictures in other settings, such as in vases. An officer joked "we confiscate so many, we sometimes know the people on them, possibly it's one of us!" (informal conversation, Bandar Seri Begawan, 18 October 2014) (Figure 5). This concerns many Bruneians: An MIB officer told me how friends recommended that he not put a photograph on his Facebook profile as it could be used by enemies (informal conversation, Gadong, January 2017).

Figure 5. A Picture that Went Viral in Brunei Darussalam in 2015,
         Reportedly Used to "Harm" a Civil Servant Named "Hassan"
         through "Black Magic", Confiscated by Religious Authorities

Source: Social media.

Arif, a "doctrine control" officer explained that there are no written
guidelines regarding what defines a good *bomoh* and a bad *bomoh* – theo-
retically their "practice can be good if it is not against Islam". If a hospi-
tal is far away, a "good *bomoh*" (who, Arif added, should rather be called
orang pandai) might provide helpful herbs. However, even well-intent-

ioned *bomoh/orang pandai* would often unintendedly engage spirits/demons. I did not find any consensus, either among my bureaucratic interlocutors or elsewhere, about what defines the difference between *bomoh* and *orang pandai*, and whether they are *necessarily* "deviant" (*sesat*). The tendency was to categorically view *bomoh* as deviant (reflecting the tone in state-media), and *orang pandai* more undecidedly with mixed suspicion and admiration. Bruneian *bomoh* do not call themselves *bomoh* anymore, as the term has acquired a de-legitimising stigma. Some are called *Cikgu* or *Ustaz* (teacher), albeit in one case, a more daring underground healer, who unsurprisingly became investigated, extravagantly called himself *Yang Keramat Agong* ("holding superior powers").

Arif argued that *bomoh* were "already established" and advertise their work, whereas *orang pandai* were "quiet", would "not reveal themselves", and were more concerned with healing, contrasting the *bomoh*'s broader repertoire (although I know a counter-example). Arif estimated "hundreds" of *bomoh* in Brunei, "70 to 80 per cent foreigners", mainly Indonesians. Local *bomoh* were mostly elders ("*kampung* people"), who learned "from generation to generation", and whose often-unintended deviance was mainly about interacting with *jin*. No generation followed the family transmission pattern any longer. Local suspects in their thirties and forties were often "fake *bomoh*" engaging in financial or sexual exploitation.

For many students, exchanging supernatural stories is part of their daily life. Ramlee shared with me hearsay, of which he appeared convinced, about a certain Prince having a room for his dagger (*keris*) collection that was haunted (*bilik panas*). One *keris* "stood in the room", haunted by "several spirits" (including a sea spirit, *hantu laut*) causing troubled family relations. The Prince, following the narration, called an Indonesian "good *bomoh*" who "cleaned" the room, performed prayers (*baca doa*) and brought away the *keris*, refusing any payment. Ramlee added that some people believed the Prince himself has "powers"; "he can walk up walls, like Spiderman!" Ramlee also shared a story (known by other interlocutors) that the Sultan's father had supernatural powers ("like other Sultans before") and could control the rain by twisting his moustache (informal conversation, July 2017). Indeed, some royal graves were popularly considered "powerful" (*keramat*) in the past. One, *Makam Di Luba*, is still rumoured to be haunted and, according to MoRA officers occasionally visited by "deviants".

The main institution responsible for "controlling" religious deviance is the MoRA's Doctrine Control Unit (*Bahagian Kawalan Aqidah*). It organises surveillance, arrests (with other enforcement agencies), "faith rehabilitation," and maintains a confidential 24-hour hotline. Formed in

1986, it has undergone several restructurings (Müller 2015: 328). Following public calls to report suspects, 38 *bomoh* were arrested in 2004 and 55 in 2005. Later unpublished statistics list smaller numbers, but arrests continued.

I interviewed Razak, who spied on a *bomoh*'s community for the authorities, acting as his helper and disciple. He has an attractive private sector job and narrated his motivation as ethical: As the *bomoh* was cheating, and spiritually harming his patients and disciples, he viewed spying as a civic duty. He thus fulfils the government's expectations for MIB subjects to co-produce and strengthen the MIB state's classificatory power as "multipliers" in society.

Bomoh cases are normally settled outside of courts, through warnings and "voluntary" re-education called counselling (*kaunseling*). Its legal basis has long been the RCKCA (Section 186, "False Doctrine"). In 2014, Arif emphasised that, if enacted, the SPCO would make prosecution easier: Muslims worshipping "any person, place, nature or any object, thing or animal in any manner" contrary to Islamic Law, or making "(a)n act or statement that shows faith to any object, thing or animal" possessing "power," "for example the ability to bring good luck, increas(ing) wealth, grant(ing) wishes, heal(ing) diseases and others", could be sentenced to imprisonment, fines and counselling. Muslims who claim that they "or any other person knows an event or a matter that is beyond human understanding", contradicting Islamic teachings, can receive ten years' imprisonment, caning, and forced repentance. Advertising black magic is punishable by up to five years' imprisonment; attempted murder through black magic with 10 years, and fulfilled murder with the death penalty (Sections 152, 153, 206b, 208, 2016). The SPCO is enacted in three stages, and severe punishments will only be enforced in the not-yet-enacted second and third stages.[17] Even then, there would be high procedural burdens and mechanisms to avoid the punishment.

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17   The SPCO's implementation is in its first phase (Müller 2017). The second phase is scheduled to begin 12 months after the additional Syariah Criminal Procedure Code ("CPC Syariah") has been gazetted. After long preparations, during which the Sultan publicly criticised the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Attorney General's Chambers for slow progress, the CPC has been finalised and "consented" by the Sultan as of March 2018. Despite stating it will be implemented as scheduled, the Minister of Religious Affairs also alluded to some further temporal flexibility, pointing to the enormous logistical challenge of implementing such a far-reaching legal reform and restructuring judicial and enforcement procedures (*Pelita Brunei* 2018; Dewan Majlis 2018: 6ff.), aspects that have likely been initially underestimated (cf. Müller 2017).

Sharia-Compliant Healing, Japanese Water-Crystal Photography and the State-Controlled Reconfiguration of Deviant-Declared Practices

Parallel to the outlawing and social marginalisation of *bomoh*, Brunei witnessed the rise of "Sharia-compliant" Islamic healing and exorcism (*ruqyah syariah/pengubatan Islam*). State-*ulama* have long conducted such practices (sometimes officially, sometimes unofficially), but the most insightful example for my analytic purposes, and the biggest local trend, is Darusysyifa' Warrafahah, an institution legally established in Brunei in 2007. Its model was the Malaysian Darusyifa', led by the late Haron Din, a former Islamic Studies professor who held prestigious degrees from Egypt, and Spiritual Leader of the Islamic Party of Malaysia. Until his death in 2016, Haron Din was Malaysia's most prominent expert of the invisible world: his books were bestsellers, his institution expanded throughout Malaysia, and he was admired across religious-political divides.

Many Bruneians admired Haron Din too, including an aspiring small group of Bruneians who came in touch with him and gradually developed the idea of establishing a local branch. Haron Din repeatedly visited Brunei, in some cases upon the Sultan's invitation, and was accepted ("cleared") by Brunei's Islamic bureaucracy, the MUIB in particular, to teach and speak locally about Islam-related matters, which is remarkable, considering he was a foreign politician and religious scholar, and shows the respect he enjoyed among Bruneian religious elites.

As one of the founders narrated to me, it took some time before they were finally able to establish the institution as an association, which legally had to be done through the Registrar of Organisations (ROS), a complex procedure that goes along with a range of requirements and obligations. The group had to learn about this first, but finally succeeded and received permission and set up Darusysyifa' Warrafahah – a non-state Islamic organisation, which is highly unusual in Brunei. *De facto* Haron Din was its supreme teacher, but *pro forma* it became an independent local organisation. Its "governing committee" reports all activities to the ROS, and the organisational structure follows the ROS's obligatory pattern. The original group of founders consisted of 20 people, from both genders, of diverse educational and professional backgrounds, ranging from government employees, retirees, and private sector workers to housewives – some of whom held PhD degrees and others who had primary school education. Despite this diversity, however, they all were literate in reciting the Qur'an, as a founding member emphasised.

Brunei's Darusysyifa' offers a standardised one-year curriculum course on the "basics of Islamic healing" (*Kursus Asas Perubatan Islam*), using Haron Din's writings. Students learn purpose-specific Quranic verses, recitation patterns and "ethics". Their certificate (*tauliah mudawi/ sijil pengijazahan*) entitles them to practice as volunteers at the centre and/or privately. In 2014, 500 people were actively involved, from diverse backgrounds, but all were necessarily Muslims. Patients also included non-Muslims, such as Chinese Bruneians, Filipino and Thai guest workers, and a local Japanese manager who hired Darusysyifa' after "many disturbances" in his company. The number of certified Islamic healers (*perawat Islam*[18]) and treated patients/places grew annually (Figures 6 to 9).

Figure 6. Number of Patients Treated by Darusysyifa' Warrafahah
            Annually in Brunei Darussalam
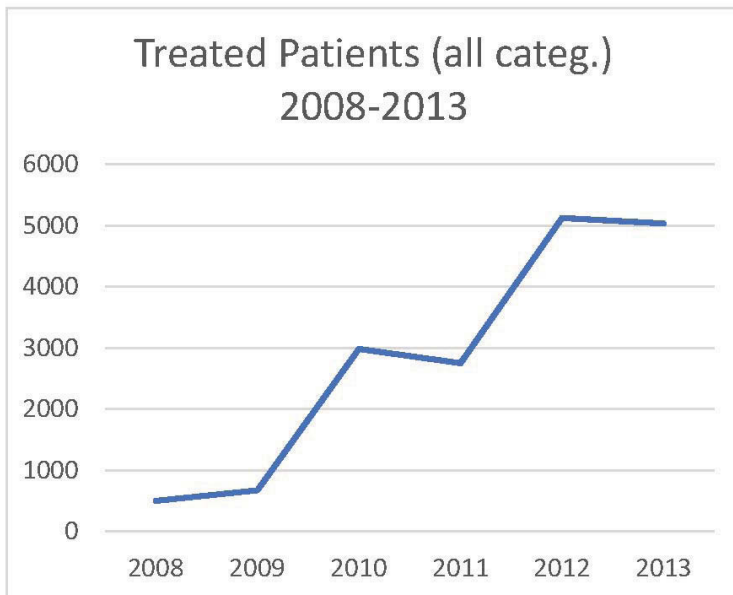
Source: Courtesy of Darusysyifa' Warrafahah.

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18   Darusysyifa' distinguishes *mudawi* (also *perawat*/"medical practitioner") and *musa'id* (also *pembantu perawat*/"assistant"). *Mudawi* undergo 90 hours training.

Figure 7. Number of Healers Certified by Darusysyifa' Warrafahah
          Annually in Brunei Darussalam

Certified Healers 2007-2013

Source: Courtesy of Darusysyifa' Warrafahah.
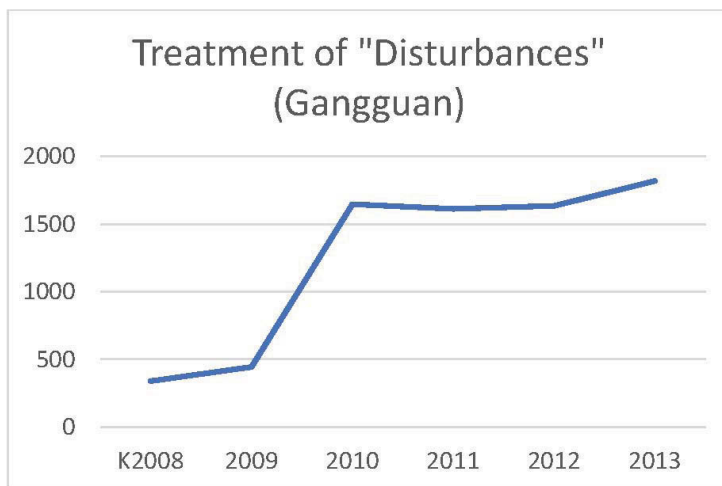
Figure 8. Number of "Disturbed" Houses/Offices Treated by Darusysyifa'
          Warrafahah Annually in Brunei Darussalam

Treatment of "disturbed" houses/offices*
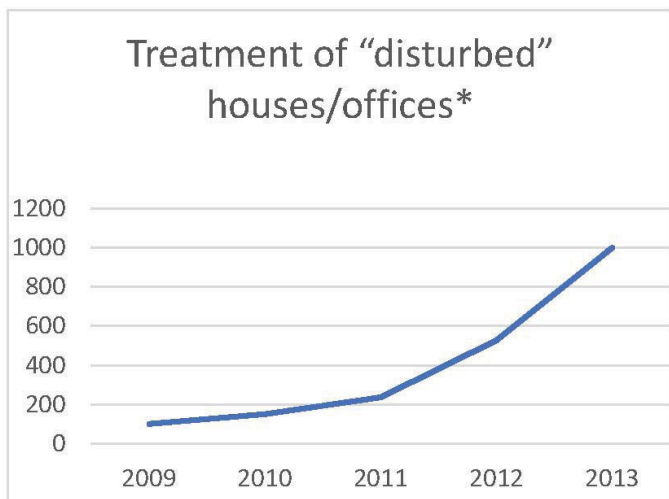
Source: Courtesy of Darusysyifa' Warrafahah.

Figure 9. Number of Cases of Disturbances (Individual Level) Treated by Darusysyifa' Warrafahah Annually in Brunei Darussalam

Treatment of "Disturbances" (Gangguan)

Darusysyifa' categorises three treatment fields: Physical (for example, headache, migraine, flu), spiritual/emotional (*rohani/emosi*) (for example, insomnia, problems with neighbours, anxieties, searching a husband/wife, "weak spirit" (*lemah semangat*)), and "disturbances" (*gangguan*). "Disturbances" are caused by *jin* and/or sorcery, affect individuals or places/buildings, and may result in possession (*kerasukan*) or "hysteria" (*histeria*). They may also be manifested by poisoning (*santau*), a classical *bomoh* tool in Malay social imaginaries (Peletz 1988). Sometimes, *jin* accompany people, some consciously own and feed them, until "in the end, the *jin* owns them" (group interview with Darusysyifa' representatives, 8 October 2014). *Jin* ownership can also be hereditary. An indication of disturbances is difficulty in reciting Quranic verses that one normally knows. During exorcism, Muslim *jin* would often leave the body "if they are told in Islamic terms, but not always!" Infidel *jin* (*jin kafir*) are considered even more challenging, but they can convert, which is central to exorcism strategies. One should avoid speaking with them ("they lie the whole time"), but if they express willingness to convert, healers must assist.

   Jin speaking through possessed patients happened "twice each week" in 2014. More frequent disturbances are not manifested by alien voices. "Often there is no clear identification of the cause: *jin*, *syaitan*, we don't want to know, what counts is successful healing!" In the Japanese man-

ager's case, company workers had seen legs flying and headless people ("like in the movies, it's the same!", a Darusysyifa' member explained[19]). Such scenes were "very common" (compare Ong 1987). Some solutions are immediate; some treatments take months.

When I visited the centre one evening in 2014, all 10 treatment rooms were occupied. I witnessed a "disturbance": Maryam's sister had tried to heal her "by copying Darusysyifa' without knowing the right method, then a *jin* became involved", a healer explained. Black spots emerged on Maryam's skin, and she went to Darusysyifa'. A female healer exorcised Maryam, who made long buzzing noises before throwing up (the material outcome of which is normally disposed at a nearby river) when the *jin* assumedly left her body, a pattern the healer expected. I was told that because this is a dangerous moment, Darusysyifa' healers (and their families) must use protection. In its previous smaller building, spirits "sometimes jumped from one person to the next". The situation improved after the Darusysyifa' clinic was enlarged, with partitions to provide enclosed treatment spaces (Figure 10).

After the exorcism, Maryam received a mixture of mashed herbal leaves and rice powder to shower with at home. Medicines can be purchased but are free for patients. In most other cabins, counselling took place for issues such as social/family problems, to be solved by Quranic rather than traditional *bomoh* means. Many patients visited *bomoh* before they came, a healer stated. Common advice is to pray the *right prayers in the right way*, remember Allah, and observe Islamic norms for social behaviour.

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19   On equations of experienced supernatural events with films ("it was exactly like in *Ghosts*") and their intimate relationship, see van de Port 2006.

Figure 10. A Certified Darusysyifa' Healer Treating a Woman Assumed to Be "Disturbed". Kampong Manggis, Brunei Darussalam

Source: Picture by Dominik M. Müller, 2014.

Darusysyifa' also exorcises state buildings, such as university buildings, the national hospital (Darusysyifa' 2011) and, during my visit, an Arabic school for girls that had been closed following a "mass-hysteria/posses-sion" (*Brunei Times* 2014),[20] some of which has been reported on by local

20   In 2010, a "mass hysteria" hit three schools during examinations time. Even "teachers" and "the school's cook" were "possessed", before Darusysyifa' and the Institut Tahfiz Al-Quran solved it (*Borneo Bulletin* 2010). At one school, even non-Muslim students received "religious treatments". At another, the "hysteria" started when a "student cried after seeing a spirit". A teacher commented

media. Darusysyifa's first graduation ceremony in 2010 took place at a Ministry of Defence building. In return, Darusysyifa' cleaned it. Disturbances had occurred, particularly after dawn: A solider "heard somebody calling him, found somebody sitting at a table, asked why he had called him, suddenly the person was gone!" During the exorcism, "a door opened and closed by itself, but not in the direction in which it would have been pushed by the wind, the other direction! Banners at the wall were shaking, a lamp stopped working". After the exorcism, the "disturbances" stopped (group interview with Darusysyifa' representatives, 8 October 2014).

Darusysyifa' also cleaned the Friendship Bridge to Malaysia before its opening. A worker had approached a car ("an old Honda Accord") on the not-yet-opened bridge, occupied by a man and a child. When he asked what they were doing there, the car suddenly vanished (group interview with Darusysyifa' representatives, 8 October 2014).

But Darusysyifa's engagement with state power goes beyond state-prescribed bureaucratic forms and cleaning jobs. When the first healers graduated, the Sultan himself launched a Darusysyifa' event at the Convention Centre. Prince Malik, the Sultan's son, became Darusysyifa' patron. Princes Sufri and Jefri, the Sultan's brothers, also visited Darusysyifa' events (Darusysyifa' 2013: 12). These visits expressed royal endorsement and provided the locally most powerful form of symbolic capital. Photographs in Darusysyifa' annual reports documented this legitimation of the highest order.

Those of Darusysyifa's graduation reports that were available to me (2010, 2011, 2013) share a similar structure: A full-page portrait of His Majesty on the first page (in 2010 preceded by Quranic verses) and Prince Malik on the second. In 2013, the third page carried a text thanking Prince Malik and emphasising popular "trust" in Darusysyifa', adding that "the people" now turn away from *bomoh*. In one report (2010: 8), a picture shows Harun Din standing next to the Sultan, the Crown Prince, and Prince Malik, symbolising the foreign Islamic scholar's royal acceptance. A picture of the State Mufti on the same page symbolised the Islamic bureaucracy's equally crucial endorsement. In 2009 the Mufti, who himself writes about Islamic healing (Abdul Aziz 2012), inaugurated

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"(i)ronically, the spirit also made several demands. But the religious expert from Tahfiz Institute told us not to meet the demands as it was the voice of Satan" (ibid.) The acting Minister of Education "advised the school authorities to clean the restrooms, believed to be the favorite spot for the spirits and the school environment", which illustrates that controlling the invisible world is a state affair of high priority.

the year's course with a speech. Some course events were held on the MoRA's premises (*Pelita Brunei* 2016), which underlines its proximity ("blurring boundaries") to the state's BoI. The Darusysyifa' leaders I spoke with stressed their contribution to MIB and the Sultan's goal of Brunei as *Negara Zikir* ("a nation that always remembers *Allah*") under his Vision 2035.[21] Through all these references to and cooperation with state power, Darusysyifa' performatively stages its conformity with the MIB State's normative expectations, expressed through powerful symbolic codes in a Brunei-specific cultural vocabulary. It is a *necessary condition* for its existence to co-produce the MIB State's classificatory power in society, yet its leaders also passionately believe in that project. But through the very act of establishing Darusysyifa', they not only reproduce state power but also inform some of its meanings in ways that were neither originally planned nor expected by the architects of the government's BoI, resulting from the creative agency of individuals who *appropriate symbolic state power* for their own purposes.

Unlike the earlier cited MoRA officer, the Darusysyifa' interlocutors assumed that *bomohs* were "always negative": "for example, when they say a prayer, the last part is not correct, they always twist verses [through which evil powers become involved]". Yes, "white *bomoh*" and "black *bomoh*" would exist, and some "do not know they practise the wrong way", but "in the end they are all the same, they use the powers of *syaitan* and *jin*". Some certificate holders are ex-*bomoh*: "Some admit it openly", but Darusysyifa' would not ask about "earlier mistakes", following Haron Din's advice not to expose sins. They believed that the role of *bomoh* was declining due to Darusysyifa's work, state education, and the MoRA's *dakwah*. As one representative stated enthusiastically, "now there is an alternative!"

There is clearly demand for these practices. A local academic told me how his father had practised traditional healing in the family before attending Darusysyifa's course to learn the "proper" way. Just like former *bomoh*, people like him can purify and re-legitimise their work vis-à-vis hegemonic power-structures, and simultaneously protect their souls.

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21 Darusysyifa' members narrated how the Sultan saw a possessed girl at a school in 2005, asking the *jin*: "Why do you possess her? Get out of this girl!" He was successful, "because he is the *khailfah*". He has powers, not only over humans, over everything, over all *makhluk* (creations) in his country". They added: Some loggers tell trees, themselves *makhluk*, creations of Allah, they have the Sultan's permission (compare Skeat 1900: 194!). A video exists of the school incident (<www.youtube.com/watch?v=Do9b-ZtFNRs>), excluding the narrated details.

The strong interest in the services previously provided by *bomoh/orang pandai*, and now by Darusysyifa', results from requirements that have not disappeared. Peletz (1993: 150) described sorcery and consulting supernatural specialists in Malaysia as "counterparts of formal social exchange" relating to personal vulnerabilities and "concerns with autonomy and social control". Supernatural knowledge (*ilmu*) entails "power to influence other people and to maintain one's autonomy in the face of countervailing forces invoked by others who aim to limit it", particularly "in societies in which one never really knows what is in the minds of others". In the MIB State, the normative parameters for handling such anxieties have shifted, resulting in a gap that Darusysyifa', with its ethically purified and bureaucratically certified services, offers to fill.

However, MoRA's officers stated that "not everything labeled Darusysyifa'" was unproblematic; for example, an arrested *bomoh* had falsely claimed holding a certificate to practice. And even certified healers would "not all practice the right way". One had inappropriately touched a woman, claiming that a *jin* made him do it. Another *bomoh* brought a real certificate to a *kaunseling* session to prove his innocence, but had misused it. Some "turn to the wrong direction again after a few years". Darusysyifa' was not to be blamed, though, and the MoRA generally welcomes its work (interview with MoRA representatives, Bandar Seri Begawan, 8 October 2014). However, these individual cases of transgression indicate yet other modes of creating agency by (mis-)appropriating state-approved symbolic codes; namely by (false) reference to Darusysyifa' and the authorising powers its certification system provides.

Darusysyifa' healers work voluntarily and provide their services for free. Patients "can donate if they wish" and "pay as much as they like". *Bomoh* and *orang pandai* typically use the same wording. Darusysyifa' is funded by donations, but also sells products exposed to prayers (*dizikirkan*), such as herbs, coconut oil, and honey. This, too, presents a paradox: an uneven continuation of *bomoh* practices of praying into natural products such as water, although Darusysyifa' views these as entirely different: one realises divine normativity through authentic verses, the other engages demonic forces, either through lacking education, or on purpose. Its bestselling item during my fieldwork was prayed-upon healing water, large boxes of which were stored at its premises (Figures 11 and 12).

Figure 11. Pictures of Water-Crystals ("Before" and "After Having Been
Exposed to Prayers", and "*zam-zam* Water") Placed at the
Walls of Darusysyifa' Warrafahah's Headquarters. Kampong
Manggis, Brunei Darussalam

Source: Picture by Dominik M. Müller, 2014.

When I sat together with Darusysyifa' representatives in a room ("for
authorised personnel only"), they showed me a PowerPoint Presentation
visualising the powers of their healing water through microscopic photo-
graphs of water crystals. Darusysyifa' had sent frozen samples of differ-
ent types to a non-Muslim Japanese water photographer, Masaru Emoto
(1943–2014). Emoto was internationally renowned among esoteric cir-
cles for his water experiments. In academia, his work is widely dismissed
as pseudo-scientific, to which he once responded his work was merely
art. For my interlocutors, however, it possessed academic character.[22]

22   Emoto also served as a reference for the Indonesian preacher Aa Gym, where
he "wisely tailored his presentation to address Islam" (Hoesterey 2016: 82).

Figure 12. Healing Products (That Have Been Exposed to Prayers, *sudah dizikirkan*) on Sale at Darusysyifa' Warrafahah's Headquarters. Kampong Manggis, Brunei Darussalam

Source: Picture by Dominik M. Müller, 2014.

This added yet another powerful vocabulary of legitimation, which is inherent to the BoI: the quest for scientific evidence in the construction of facts (Latour and Woolgar 1979), and its importance for convincing others (Latour 1986: 5).

Samples included average water, water exposed to "4444 prayers" (*selawat tafrijiyah*), water exposed to *zikir* prayers, and *zam-zam* water from Mecca. Emoto assumes that water "has a memory" that is acoustic and visual. Negative influences "break the micro-crystals" but water also "remembers" positive influences. Going beyond Emoto's interpretive frame, my interlocutors stated that water is a "creation of Allah" (*makhluk Allah*). Going beyond more common orthodox Sunni discourse, but appropriating Emoto's ideas, they explained that water "can hear" and "has feelings".

Emoto compared Darusysyifa's samples with others, including water exposed to rock music. He was "fascinated", they told me, and the pictures left little doubt: Prayed-upon water exhibited the "most beautiful" structures. Other samples had gradually less fine structures. The "heavy metal"-exposed water was the "worst", "completely destroyed". The crystals exposed to *zikir* prayers looked exceptional, but the *tafrijiyah*-exposed water (4444 prayers, including by Haron Din) went even beyond that: "Emoto had never seen anything like that!" (ibid.) For Darusysyifa', Emoto's pictures and the PowerPoint presentation *visualised the invisible*, and objectively proved their prayers' effectiveness. The scientific character was also stressed at a Darusysyifa' symposium in 2013, which Emoto and Haron Din came to Brunei to attend. Emoto presented a "working paper" entitled: "The Science of Beautiful Water". The written programme, which referred to him as "Prof." (he never held a university professorship[23]) described Emoto as a "scientific expert" (*pakar saintis*) presenting "scientific findings" (*hasil kajian saintifik*) (Simposium Air Cantik 2013).

Pictures of water crystals decorated a wall inside Darusysyifa's building, next to pictures of herbs. The back cover of its 2013 graduation report also showed water crystals. These crystals, and the ideas attached to them, had become part of Darusysyifa's corporate culture, and of its culture of self-presentation towards interested outsiders.

Darusysyifa' sold *tafrijiyah* water for 70 BND cents (*sen*) per bottle ("some people now drink it every day"). It serves as a medicine, and for protection from harm or disturbances, which, in earlier days would have been done through talismans and/or related verses. To be effective, it should be used alongside particular prayers and firm belief.

Somewhat related, an MIB officer whom I met in 2017 was said by a colleague to be a "very good healer", "like an *orang pandai*". He would also "read verses into water" and sometimes treated my interlocutor's children. He would never be seen as a *bomoh*. Like him and Darusysyifa', however, *bomoh* always used water (and oil) as a medium and prayed into it.[24] From Darusysyifa's perspective, any equation, or claiming a continuity of "structures of thought that […] continue to provide an organizing framework" (Herzfeld), would be fundamentally misleading, with dangerous consequences.

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23   Emoto held a PhD from a controversial distance learning school in India.
24   The caretaker of Singapore's Habib Noh shrine similarly does this every day.

Concluding Remarks:
Hybrid Pathways to Orthodoxy

As a social phenomenon, the BoI in Brunei is deeply structured by the MIB State's unique discursive substrate. Boundaries between state and society are in many ways *made* blurring through educational means, and by non-state actors themselves who appropriate the state's powerful symbolic forms and bureaucratic schemes. Therefore, the BoI transcends its organisational boundaries and informs social and cultural transformations, as the state's classificatory schemes diffuse into society and become actively embedded in everyday lifeworlds.

As the case of Darusysyifa' illustrates, such appropriations do not simply reproduce state power, but also serve to ascribe new meanings to it. The politics of self-declared orthodox purification become creatively re-embedded into both pre-existing cultural vocabularies and the discursive arena of the nation state, while simultaneously drawing upon transnational cultural flows from multiple sources. Some deviant-declared practices become reinvented within the symbolic parameters of the MIB State, alongside the more universal languages of bureaucracy, cultural globalisation, modern nationalism, marketisation, scientisation, and statisticalisation, among other hybridised registers. This goes beyond what Herzfeld called "the organic part played by symbols in creating the new order out of the old": The BoI, viewed as wider societal phenomenon, here also integrates a vertiginous mixture of other influences, such as Japanese water-crystal photography, the objectifying powers of Power-Point, digital metaphors, future-oriented corporate governance, and transnational trends in pedagogy. Such accommodative reconfigurations should not be surprising, as they reflect a more general global condition. What makes the Bruneian case special, however, is how the MIB State, and "state actors" in the term's expanded sense, passionately seek to purify local culture through zealous Islamisation policies, yet the pathways towards realising this orthodoxy are remarkably flexible and hybrid. Such micro-level negotiations of state power and Sharia-framed normativity – explored ethnographically by looking over the shoulders of involved actors – tell a different story from the meta-narratives of Islamisation that dominate portrayals of Brunei and often narrowly draw upon official policies, government declarations, and legal provisions. In fact, the MIB State's "firewall" of cultural protectionism is itself expressed through vocabularies of cultural globalisation and in multifold ways shaped by transnational forces that it cannot (entirely) control.

Bureaucratised thinking, speaking and planning, which goes hand in hand with translating Islam into the language of modern state bureaucracy, informs the quest for objectified evidence-making, as manifested in Darusysyifa's case or the MIB bureaucracy's statistical success rates, "visions and missions" and five-year-plans, among other examples. The systematisation and reflection that Eickelman calls an "objectification of Muslim consciousness" form a necessary condition. In objectified modes of being Muslim, earlier practices and social institutions, such as the *bomoh*, are systematically re-examined vis-à-vis their (un)Islamicness. Yet, subsequent "abandonments" are themselves *culturally productive* endeavours and should be analysed as such, instead of reproducing their self-idealising logics by describing them in their own terms.[25]

Although this article is primarily concerned with symbolic power, bureaucratised meaning-making and transformations coinciding with the nation-stateisation of Islam, the question of what drives the BoI remains debatable. While any reduction of variables inevitably violates the complexity at stake, factors to consider include a bureaucratic quest for rationalisation[26] intersecting with globalised marketisation, the rise of Islamic legalism with its passions for taxonomical purity and cleansing (entailing other transnational trends subsumed under labels like the "conservative" or "punitive turn"), but also pedagogical aspirations for Islamic social engineering (Feener 2013). Similarly, what Scott (1998: 3) described as "state-simplifications" ("the basic givens of modern statecraft") surely informs any state-driven BoI (cf. Peletz 2015: 148), just as its inherent quest of eradicating spaces of informality – here especially unregulated spaces of *bomoh* healing[27] – although, as I have illustrated in Darusysyifa's case, related attempts at formalisation then give rise to new informalities. On these counts, we could, to a certain extent, adequately conclude that much of what we see in Brunei is common throughout

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25   The alternative would be what Bourdieu (1994: 1) calls "the risk of taking over (or being taken over by) a thought of the state, i.e. of applying to the state categories of thought produced and guaranteed by the state".

26   To avoid misunderstandings, supernatural beliefs and practices can be perfectly rational; this insight dates back to Malinowski's (1954: 86, 34) reflections on how "magic is fundamentally akin to science", and I do not imply that bureaucratic rationalisation/objectification necessarily cause disenchantment or undermine charisma (see Fogg in this special issue). Multifold cultural meanings can be bureaucratically empowered, including spirit beliefs, as Darusysyifa's bureaucratised exorcism illustrates.

27   In an earlier phase of the socio-legal deviantisation of *bomoh* activities, calls had been made that "*bomohs* should register" (*Borneo Bulletin* 2001). From the mid-2000s onwards, this issue was approached less ambiguously.

Southeast Asia (and indeed much of the world), including non-Muslim settings. After all, we might even declare the described case as yet another manifestation of the "age of total bureaucratisation" (Graeber 2015: 17), or "the bureaucratisation of the world in the neo-liberal era" (Hibou 2015). Without denying the explanatory usefulness of such "broad-brush" approaches (but see Heyman's 2004: 490ff. nuanced critique), I insist on not downplaying the hermeneutically productive and epistemically structuring role of the MIB State's very own, locally-unique discursive setting, and to take it seriously also on its terms. In a conventional functional (i.e. more narrowly power-, control-, and resources-oriented) analysis of bureaucratised religion, realising shared characteristics such as those listed will likely dominate our conclusions, whereas a hermeneutic/particularistic analysis would rather emphasise more unique aspects inherent to precisely the same phenomena. Both conclusions are legitimate, they simply address different questions.

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