Michel Picard and Rémy Madinier (eds), *The politics of religion in Indonesia: Syncretism, orthodoxy, and religious contention in Java and Bali*. London and New York: Routledge, 2011, xv + 238 pp. ISBN 9780415613118. Price: GBP 90.00 (hardback).

In postcolonial Indonesia the constitution guarantees freedom of religion, but this right comes with considerable qualifications. Firstly, religious liberty does not include freedom *from* religion. Moreover, the post-1965 eradication of 'atheistic communism' saw to it that non-religiosity has become a term of opprobrium, while all Indonesian citizens are obliged to be affiliated with one of the recognized religions, namely Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and (fairly recently) Confucianism. Secondly, what is officially understood as religion is only *agama*, 'the peculiar combination in Sanskrit guise of a Christian view of what counts as a world religion with an Islamic understanding of what defines a proper religion: divine revelation recorded by a prophet in a holy book, a system of law for the community of believers, congregational worship, and a belief in the One and Only God' (p. 3).

In this clear and thoughtful book, several noted specialists discuss the politics of *agama* in Java and Bali. The preface (pp. xi-xv) neatly summarizes the contents of the case studies that follow, while in the introduction (pp. 1-20) Michel Picard helpfully elucidates the crucial concepts of *agama*, *adat* and *Pancasila* that play such an important role in Indonesian discourse on religion. The first chapter (pp. 23-47) by Rémy Madinier addresses the Javanization of Christianity by focusing on the missionary strategy of the Dutch Jesuit Franciscus van Lith in the early twentieth century. The latter's educational and political action not only greatly contributed to the recognition of a foreign religion of colonial origin, but also created a well-educated nationalist Catholic elite which would play a disproportionately large role in national politics. The second chapter by Andrée Feillard (pp. 48-70), too, deals with the accommodation of a universalist religion to local circumstances. She examines the stance of Islamic theologians on Javanese pre-Islamic traditions in the 1930s news bulletins of the *Nahdlatul Ulama*, the largest traditionalist organization. From her analysis, it appears that missionary activities directed against Reformism carried greater weight than the question of local traditions. Traditionalist Islam appears as an instrument of Islamization with limited defence of

indigenous culture. However, already from the beginning, *Nahdlatul Ulama* was 'crossed by divergent identity currents' (p. 68), still continuing today, with some advocating an increased Islamization of the law, while others approving *Pancasila* rather than an Islamic state. The title of Robert W. Hefner's contribution poses the intriguing question of 'Where have all the *abangan* gone?' (pp. 71-91). As he points out, the 'public religious elements' (p. 72) of non-standard varieties of Islam are in severe decline. *Islam Jawa* or Javanese Islam, in Hefner's terminology *abanganism*, is 'a religion of place' and as such it is in direct conflict with Indonesian religious politics endorsing '*agamaization*'. The governmental strategy of standardization had its desired effects: 'The children of *abangan* villagers were subjected to government-mandated religious education. A generation of Javanese youth came of age who found rituals of obeisance to ancestral and guardian spirits quaintly obsolete, if not religiously repugnant' (p. 88). It is quite ironic that this push for a delocalized Islam was largely pursued during New Order, which François Raillon in the next chapter (pp. 92-113) calls 'Javanese politics' with Soeharto as 'a quintessential Javanese general' whose regime was 'felt to be deeply influenced by culture—Javanese culture at that' (p. 93). In Raillon's essay about debates of *Pancasila* in the post-Soeharto period we read about 'bearers of Javanese culture' (that is, Hefner's *abangan* Muslims) who (together with other groups) oppose a scripturalist vision of Islam (p. 92). Paradoxically, Islamic parties laying claims of authority in matters of faith and dogma have succeeded in denying various localisms' entry into the sphere of religion, relegating them to the realm of traditional lore (*adat*) and culture (*kebudayaan*), but in the field of *realpolitik* (as both Hefner and Raillon show), support for parties advocating an Islamic state has not risen. In fact, there is 'a general weariness of the public towards religious radicals, political censors and other moral supervisors' (p. 109).

The second part of the book is concerned with the way *agamaization* plays out in Bali. Michel Picard (pp. 117-41) sketches the trajectory of religion in Bali where only after years of lobbying, *Agama Hindu Bali* (Balinese Hindu Religion) was finally acknowledged, in 1958, by the Ministry of Religion. Here, too, the state stipulated that normative religion should be universalist without ethnic components, leading to the subsequent renaming into *Agama Hindu* (Hindu Religion). However, in the post-Soeharto period with its far-reaching administrative decentralization, a return to *Agama Hindu Bali* could follow. As Picard makes clear, terminology is more than

a mere formality and the bestowal of the appropriate term is at the core of intensive disputes about Balinese identity. Andrea Aciri (pp. 142-66) proposes a new perspective for so-called Balinese Hinduism by drawing attention to textual material preserved in traditional palm-leaf manuscripts. His call for a study of the localized text-focused elite tradition, which may shed new light on the pre-modern Balinese religious discourse, is a most welcome appeal against the neglect of manuscripts among anthropologists and the excess of present-mindedness. Annette Hornbacher (pp. 167-91) shows the concrete effects of *agama*ization with its firm requests for standardization upon the practice of ritual trance-possession in Bali. Just as in Java where non-standard public religious phenomena are in decline, in Bali, too, the 'current decline of possession pertains particularly to public ritual performances' and Hornbacher concludes that 'the Balinese do not reject possession as an irrational belief altogether, but only as a means of public communication concerning religious matters' (p. 185). Dance and drama have been relegated to the realm of 'art' and sold to a global market. Finally, Brigitta Hauser-Schäublin (pp. 192-213) investigates what she calls 'spiritualized politics' in post-Soeharto Bali, in which tradition, religion, and politics are amalgamated. According to her, this is an 'old precolonial pattern' (p. 193) rather than a new phenomenon and she opines that 'Balinese modernity is an inverse process that turns away from Western secularism to ideas of spirited or spiritualized politics' (p. 193). Her suggestion that present-day practices constitute a revival of precolonial conditions is challenging and invites further thought. However, few would object to the idea that what currently happens in Bali should 'also' be regarded 'as the efforts of a tiny Hindu minority to survive in 'a sea of Islam' and a province's efforts to find its own way into the future' (p. 210).

It is difficult to find fault with this meticulously executed work of scholarship. It must be due to the use of Indonesian sources that Baitul Maqdis instead of Jerusalem is named as the founding place of *Hizb al-Tahrir* (p. 96). In conclusion, this excellent collection of perceptive case studies will be valued as a most useful contribution to the study of the politics of religion in Indonesia.

E.P. Wieringa
University of Cologne
ewiering@uni-koeln.de