

# Nation-State-izing Islam in Southeast Asia: An anthropological inquiry into the enchanting appeals of bureaucratic form

Dr. Dominik Müller  
Understanding Asia Colloquium Series  
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Time: 16:00-18:00 Room: X-C3-107

## **Abstract:**

Dominik Müller outlines the conceptual contours of an anthropological research group project that investigates the bureaucratization of Islam as a social phenomenon in five Southeast Asian countries. Grounded in his own empirical contributions to the project, he will present ethnographic illustrations from two (soft-)authoritarian micro-states where Islam and Malay Muslims constitutionally enjoy a special status albeit in very different ways, namely, Brunei and Singapore. National histories institutional structures and local power-knowledge regimes differ, but in both countries state-sponsored Islamic bureaucracies aim to inform (if not prescribe) the direction Islamic discourse is taking in their territories and how proper Muslim citizenship should (not) look like. Non-state actors position themselves towards and within this attempted exercise of the state's classificatory power in diverse ways and while state-Islamic bureaucracies aim to influence them non-state actors simultaneously try to influence how the state is governing Islam. The speaker will reflect upon transnationally observable "family resemblances" of bureaucratic Islam and link this discussion to theoretical considerations about the (dis)enchanting appeals and social agency of bureaucratic form in the contemporary Malay World.

## **About the Lecturer:**

Dominik Müller is a political anthropologist whose research focuses on Islam in Southeast Asia. Since 2016 he is heading the DFG Emmy Noether Group "The Bureaucratization of Islam and its Socio-Legal Dimensions in Southeast Asia". He is also currently a Visiting Fellow at Harvard University's newly established Program on Law and Society in the Muslim World (PLS), is a fellow (non-resident) at the National University of Singapore (2017-2020), and holds a grant from the Daimler and Benz Foundation ("Social Categorization and Religiously Framed State-Making in Southeast Asia", 2018-2020).