

2 October 2014, Thursday ✦ 12.00pm – 1.30pm ✦

*Lunch included*

**Federal Bartholomew Conference Room, Eu Tong Sen Building, NUS (BTC)**

# **Brunei Beyond the Recent Headlines: Emic Perspectives on National Ideology and Socio-Legal Change in a Malay Islamic Monarchy**

by **Dr. Dominik Müller**

**Cluster of Excellence “Formation of Normative Orders”**

**Goethe-University Frankfurt**

## **ABSTRACT**

Brunei Darussalam has received much international media attention for its decision to enforce a far-reaching Islamic legal reform, the Syariah Penal Code Order 2013. Beyond sensationalist headlines and alarmist rhetoric, however, there is little substantial scholarly work that sheds light on the normative complexities of a Southeast Asian Sultanate that takes pride (and intends to preserve) a legacy of more than six centuries of Islamic governance. This presentation will contextualize the country's national ideology of Melayu Islam Beraja (“MIB”, Malay Islamic Monarchy), which traditionally serves as a guiding principle for all religious and cultural policies in the country, and will explore its constitutive role in historical and contemporary processes of socio-legal change. At the same time, however, it will be shown that multiple co-existing normativities continue to be a characteristic feature of social life in the Sultanate, despite remarkable processes of cultural change and discursive resignification.

Based on fieldwork data and primary sources, a particular focus will be placed on local discourse and emic perspectives, which have been widely ignored by the recent myriad of repetitive media reports.

## **ABOUT THE SPEAKER**



Dominik Müller is a Research Fellow at the Cluster of Excellence “Formation of Normative Orders” at Goethe-University Frankfurt, and is presently a visiting scholar at the University of Brunei Darussalam. He has held a German Academic Exchange Service scholarship at Stanford University's Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center in 2013.

Müller's PhD thesis has explored the intersections of Islamic politics and popular culture in Malaysia. His dissertation received the Frobenius Society's Research Prize for the best anthropological thesis submitted at a German university in 2012. Since 2013, he is working on a book project on socio-legal change in the Islamic Monarchy of Brunei Darussalam.

Selected publications: Islam, Politics and Youth in Malaysia: The Pop-Islamist Reinvention of PAS (Routledge, 2014), “Post-Islamism or Pop-Islamism? Ethnographic observations of Muslim youth politics in Malaysia” (Paideuma, 2013), “Islamic Politics and Popular Culture in Malaysia: Negotiating normative change between Shariah Law and electric guitars” (Indonesia and the Malay World, 2015 forthcoming).

**To register, please email [cal@nus.edu.sg](mailto:cal@nus.edu.sg)**

***Admission is Free & Lunch is Provided***

**Closing date of registration: 24 September 2014**