

12 August 2016, Friday ✦ 12.30pm – 1.30pm ✦

Blk B Conference Room (next to CBFL), Block B, Level 2, NUS (Bukit Timah Campus)

Overlapping Consensus or Clash of Normativities? The Malaysian approach to zakat management and its (in-) compatibility with secular humanitarianism

Dr Dominik Müller
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Chairperson: Assistant Professor Arif Jamal

ABSTRACT

The administration of Islamic alms (*zakat*) funds in Malaysia underwent spectacular transformations since the 1990s, shaped by the appropriation of marketized forms of management and a skyrocketing growth of collection and distribution rates. Simultaneously, local *zakat* funds are increasingly used to pursue targets of sustainable poverty reduction, such as the empowerment of micro-entrepreneurship. This globally inspired 'success story' of 'Islamic humanitarianism' is referred to by various international observers, including secular development organizations, academics and *zakat* practitioners, as a 'role model' for other countries to learn from. After illustrating what makes the Malaysian case so particularly attractive, my presentation will develop a critique of international perceptions of this 'success story' by making explicit some of its underlying normative ambiguities. Instead of narrowly celebrating instrumental aspects of business-style organizational innovation and calling for their globalization, a deeper understanding of the local discursive and political embeddedness of Malaysian *zakat* management would reveal significant normative tensions with secular humanitarian ethics and human rights law, with implications beyond the Malaysian case.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER



Dominik Müller is a Visiting Research Fellow at the Centre for Asian Legal Studies at the National University of Singapore. At his home institution, the Cluster of Excellence 'Normative Orders' at Frankfurt University, Germany, he is a Post-Doctoral Fellow in Political and Legal Anthropology. His research interests include religious bureaucratization, popular culture, and dynamics of socio-legal change in Malay-speaking Southeast Asia. Müller studied Anthropology, Law, and Philosophy in Frankfurt and Leiden. Since completing his PhD in 2012, he held visiting positions at Stanford University (2013), the University of Brunei Darussalam (2014), and the University of Oxford (2015). Müller's PhD thesis received the Frobenius Society's Award for Germany's best anthropological dissertation of 2012 and was published by Routledge in 2014 (*Islam, Politics and Youth in Malaysia: The pop-Islamist reinvention of PAS*). He has published in peer-reviewed journals such as *Globalizations*, *South East Asia Research*, *Indonesia and the Malay World*, *Asian Survey*, the *International Quarterly for Asian Studies*, and *Paideuma*.

REGISTRATION

There is no registration fee for this seminar but seats are limited.

A light sandwich lunch will be provided on a first-come-first-serve basis.

Closing Date: 10 August 2016, Wednesday

For enquiries, please contact Haikel at cals@nus.edu.sg

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