

# Unit 12i: Country Area Studies--Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Singapore

## Objectives

At the end of this unit, you will

### Be aware of the following

- High percentage of Muslims in Indonesia
- Syncretistic nature of much of Indonesian Muslim practice
- Close association of Hinduism with Bali
- Hindrances to gender equality in Indonesia
- Impact of nongovernmental agencies in providing education for disabled Indonesian people
- Close ethnic-religious identity in Malaysian society
  - Close government surveillance of fundamentalist Islamic sects in Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore

### Identify

- Tudong
- Abangan, santri
- Pancasila
- Kartini Day
- Suharto
- Gestapu affair
- Pidgin language
- Singapore Muslim Religious Council
  - NGO

### Realize

- World influence of Brunei due to its rich oil and natural gas reserves
- Concern of Indonesia archipelago countries for Islamist fundamentalisms

- Secularist nature of Indonesian politics
- Impact of 1965 abortive coup on Indonesian religious practice
- Intertwined nature of Confucian, Taoist and Buddhist thought and practice in Malaysia
- Three cultures--Malay, Chinese and Indians--comprising much of Malaysia
- Lower standard of living experienced by Malay Singaporeans

## **Brunei (broo-N/)**



<u>Population</u>	292,266
% under 15 years	33%
<u>Commo</u>	
TV	1:3
Radio	1:2.5
Phone	1:4
Newspaper	no figure
<u>Health</u>	
Life Expectancy	Male 70/Female 73
Hospitals	no figure
Doctors	no figure
IMR	25:1,000
<u>Income</u>	\$9,000
<u>Literacy Rate</u>	85%

## 1. Religious Groups

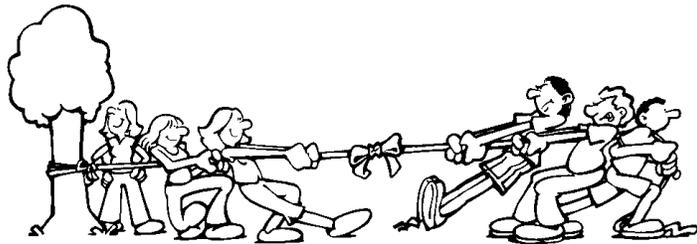
### a. Islam (63%)

- b. Buddhist (14%)
- c. Christian (8%)
- d. Indigenous beliefs and other (15%)

## 2. Ethnic/Racial Groups

- a. Malay (MAY-lay, 64%)
- b. Chinese (20%)
- c. Indigenous (16%)

## 3. Gender Issues



### a. Domestic servants

*"One area of apparent abuse involves female domestic servants. While the level of violence in society is low, beating of servants--or refusing them the right to leave the house on days off, sometimes on grounds that they 'might encounter the wrong company'--is less socially unacceptable behavior. Since most female domestics are foreign workers who are highly dependent on their employers, those subject to abuse may be unwilling or unable to bring complaints, either to the authorities or to their governments' embassies."* (Unless stated otherwise, all quotes come from U.S. Department of State Human Rights Report, 1996--Brunei.)

**b. Equality** *"In accordance with Koranic precepts, women are denied equal status with men in a number of important areas, such as divorce, inheritance, and custody of children. Under the Brunei Nationality Act, citizenship is transmitted through males only. Female citizens who are*

*married to foreigners or bear children by foreign fathers cannot transmit citizenship to their children, even when such children are born in Brunei. This has resulted in creation of a sizable population of stateless children, estimated at more than 5,000 residents, who are entitled to live in Brunei and be documented for travel by the Government, but who cannot enjoy the full privileges of citizenship, including the right to own land.*

*Religious authorities strongly encourage Brunei Muslim women to wear the tudong (too-DONG), a traditional head covering, and many women do so. Some Muslim women do not, however, and there is no official pressure on non-Muslim women to do so. All female students in government-operated schools are required to wear the tudong; students in nongovernment schools are encouraged to wear it."*

**4. Conflicts** *"International disputes: the Malaysian salient divides the country; all of the Spratly Islands are claimed by China, Taiwan, and Vietnam; parts of them are claimed by Malaysia and the Philippines; in 1984, Brunei established an exclusive fishing zone that encompasses Louisa Reef, but has not publicly claimed the island." (1996 CIA World Factbook-- Brunei.)*



**5. Holidays/Observances** In addition to traditional Muslim observances, the following also apply.

**a. Constitution Day (29 September)**

- Honors the issuance of the Brunei constitution on September 29, 1959.

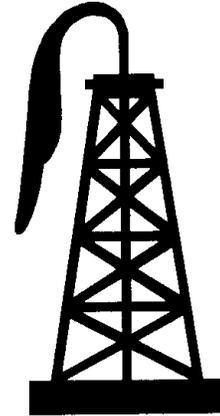
**b. Sultan's Birthday (15 July)**

- Honoring His Highness the Sultan who was crowned on August 1, 1968.

## 6. Customs

**a. Gestures** Follow practices applicable to Muslim societies of the Indonesian archepelego.

**b. Economy** "A tiny country with enormous oil and gas reserves--the economy is almost totally supported by exports of crude oil and natural gas--Brunei's financial reserves are reportedly more than \$30 billion. The country's wealth, coupled with its membership in the Association of Southeast Asian nations (ASEAN), give it influence in the world disproportionate to its size."



**c. Partnership for peace** "Brunei's armed forces engage in joint exercises, training programs, and other military cooperation with the U.S. A memorandum of understanding on defense cooperation was signed on 29 Nov 1994."

**d. Freedom of religion** "The Constitution states that, 'The religion of Brunei Darussalam shall be the Muslim religion according to the Shafeite sect of that religion: Provided that all other religions may be practiced in peace and harmony by the person professing them in any part of Brunei Darussalam.'

In recent months, the Government has sporadically voiced alarm about 'outsiders' preaching radical Islamic fundamentalist or unorthodox beliefs. Citizens deemed to have been influenced by such preaching (usually students

returning from overseas study) have been 'shown the error of their ways' in study seminars organized by orthodox Islamic religious leaders.

The Government seems more concerned about these so-called Islamic 'opportunists' than unwelcome political

*views. Moreover, the Government does not hesitate to investigate and to use its internal security apparatus against these purveyors of radical Islam.*

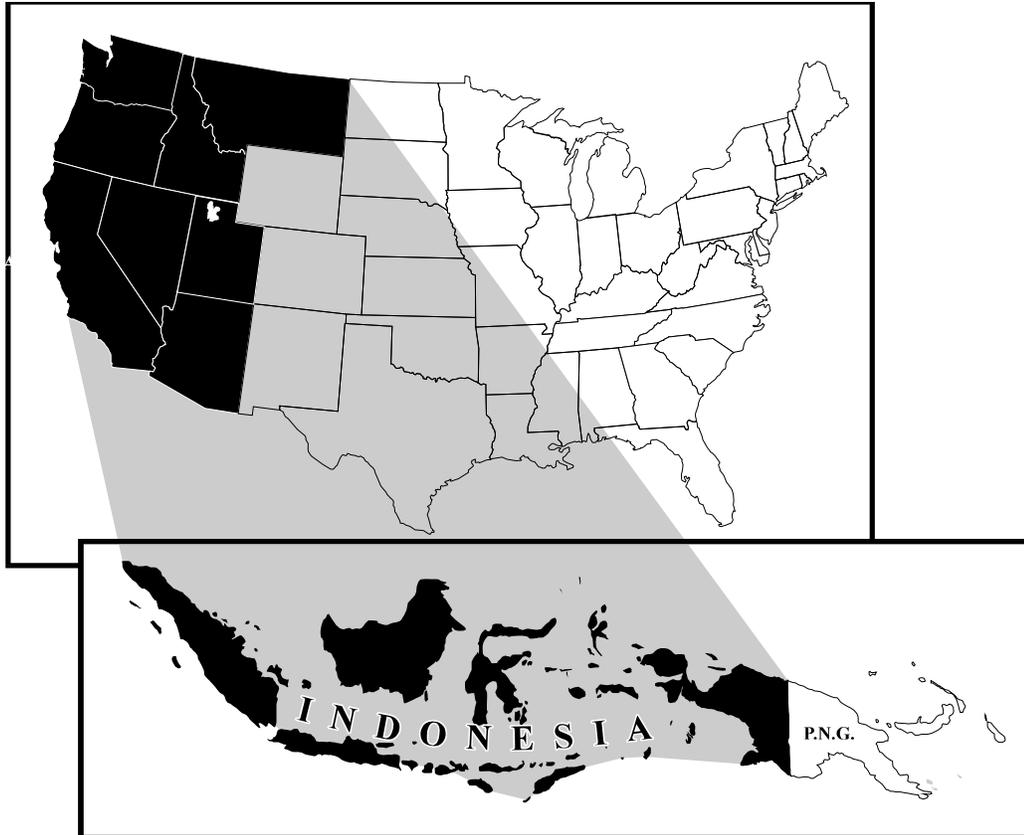
*Despite constitutional provisions providing for the full and unconstrained exercise of religious freedom, the Government routinely restricts the practice of non-Muslim religions by: Prohibiting proselytizing; occasionally denying entry to foreign clergy or particular priests, bishops, or ministers; banning the importation of religious teaching materials or scriptures such as the Bible; and refusing permission to expand, repair, or build new churches, temples, and shrines."*



"The tension between the moral and the practical is evident today. Citizens of the United States and many other nations are shocked by the starvation, murder, and mayhem in various parts of the world. There is not an easy solution to be found. We cannot ignore the reality to deploy the Army to achieve humanitarian goals, but we cannot also ignore the reality that such a use of force may not be peaceful in the sense that we would like it to be. Support of humanitarian goals is part of our past, our present, and undoubtedly our future. The prospect for the future is that we will continue to be presented with hard choices, since we cannot do it all."

General Gordon R. Sullivan

## **Indonesia** **(IN-dah-NEE-zhah)**



(Among the major islands of Indonesia are Sumatra, Java, Celebes [SEL-ah-BEEZ], Ceram [see-RAM], Kalimantan [kah-LEE-mahn-tahn], Bali [BAH-lee], Timor [TEE-mohr] and New Guinea [GIN-ee].)

<u>Population</u>	203,583,886
% under 15 years	32%
<u>Commo</u>	
TV	1:17
Radio	1:8.5
Phone	1:114
Newspaper	no figure
<u>Health</u>	
Life Expectancy	Male 59/Female 63
Hospitals	1:1,643
Doctors	1:6,841
IMR	65:1,000
<u>Income</u>	\$2,900.00 per cap
<u>Literacy Rate</u>	78%

**1. Religious Groups**   *"Religion in Indonesia was a complex and volatile issue in the early 1990s, one not easily analyzed in terms of social class, region, or ethnic*

group. Although Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and other religions influenced many aspects of life, the government generally discouraged religious groups from playing a political role.

*The state guaranteed tolerance for certain religions (agama, ah-GAH-mah) regarded as monotheistic by the government, including Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism, but only as long as these creeds remained outside of politics." (Unless stated otherwise, all quotes come from the Library of Congress Country Studies/Area Handbook--Indonesia.)*



**a. Islam** (87%) Belief in one God is the first of the five principles of Pancasila, Indonesia's state/secularist ideology.

*"Islam was the dominant religion by far in Indonesia, with the greatest number of religious adherents: around 143 million people or 86.9 percent of the population in 1985, which when adjusted for 1992 estimates represents between 160 million and 170 million adherents. This high percentage of Muslims made Indonesia the largest Islamic country in the world in the early 1990s.*

*According to orthodox practice, Islam is a strictly monotheistic religion in which God (Allah or Tuhan) is a pervasive, if somewhat distant, figure."*

**(1) History** *"To a significant degree, the striking variations in the practice and interpretation of Islam--in a much less austere form than that practiced in the Middle East--in various parts of Indonesia reflect its complex history.*



Introduced piecemeal by various traders and wandering mystics from India, Islam first gained a foothold between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries in coastal regions of Sumatra, northern Java, and Kalimantan. Islam probably came to these regions in the form of mystical Sufi tradition. Sufism easily gained local acceptance and became synthesized with local customs.

The introduction of Islam to the islands was not always peaceful, however. As Islamized port towns undermined the waning power of the East Javanese Hindu/Buddhist Majapahit kingdom in the sixteenth century, Javanese elites fled to Bali, where over 2.5 million people kept their own version of Hinduism alive. Unlike coastal Sumatra, where Islam was adopted by elites and masses alike, partly as a way to counter the economic and political power of the Hindu-Buddhist kingdoms, in the interior of Java the elites only gradually accepted Islam, and then only as a formal legal and religious context for Javanese spiritual culture.

These historical processes gave rise to enduring tensions between orthodox Muslims and more syncretistic, locally based religion--tensions that were still visible in the early 1990s.

On Java, for instance, this tension was expressed in a contrast between *santri* (sahn-TREE) and *abangan* (ah-BAHNG-ahn), an indigenous blend of native and Hindu-Buddhist beliefs with Islamic practices sometimes also called Javanism, *kejawen*, *agama Jawa*, or *kebatinan*. The terms and precise nature of this opposition were still in dispute in the early 1990s, but on Java *santri* not only referred to a person who was consciously and exclusively Muslim, *santri* also described persons who had removed themselves from the secular world to concentrate on devotional activities in Islamic schools called *pesantren*--literally the place of the *santri*."

**(2) Syncretism** "In contrast to the Mecca-oriented philosophy of most santri, there was the current of kebatinan (kuh-bhat-TEE-nahn), which is an amalgam of animism, Hindu-Buddhist, and Islamic--especially Sufi--beliefs. This loosely organized current of thought and practice, was legitimized in the 1945 constitution and, in 1973, when it was recognized as one of the agama, President Suharto counted himself as one of its adherents.



*Kebatinan is generally characterized as mystical, and some varieties were concerned with spiritual self-control. Although there were many varieties circulating in 1992, kebatinan often implies pantheistic worship because it encourages sacrifices and devotions to local and ancestral spirits. These spirits are believed to inhabit natural objects, human beings, artifacts, and grave sites of important wali (Muslim saints). Illness and other misfortunes are traced to such spirits, and if sacrifices or pilgrimages fail to placate angry deities, the advice of a dukun or healer is sought. Kebatinan, while it connotes a turning away from the militant universalism of orthodox Islam, moves toward a more internalized universalism. In this way, kebatinan moves toward eliminating the distinction between the universal and the local, the communal and the individual."*

**(3) Traditionalist/Modern** "Another important tension dividing Indonesian Muslims was the conflict between traditionalism and modernism. The nature of these differences was complex, confusing, and a matter of considerable debate in the early 1990s, but traditionalists

generally rejected the modernists' interest in absorbing educational and organizational principles from the West. Specifically, traditionalists were suspicious of modernists' support of the urban madrasa (mah-DRAH-sah), a reformist school that included the teaching of secular topics.

The modernists' goal of taking Islam out of the pesantren and carrying it to the people was opposed by the traditionalists because it threatened to undermine the authority of the kyai (kee-YI-ee, religious leaders).

Traditionalists also sought, unsuccessfully, to add a clause to the first tenet of the Pancasila state ideology requiring that, in effect, all Muslims adhere to the sharia. On the other hand, modernists accused traditionalists of escapist unrealism in the face of change; some even hinted that santri harbored greater loyalty towards the ummah (congregation of believers) of Islam than to the secular Indonesian state.



Despite these differences, the traditionalist Nahdlatul Ulama (oo-LAH-mah, literally, Revival of the Religious Scholars, also known as the Muslim Scholars' League), the progressive Consultative Council of Indonesian Muslims (Masyumi), and two other parties were forcibly streamlined into a single Islamic political party in 1973--the Unity Development Party (PPP). Such cleavages may have weakened Islam as an organized political entity, as demonstrated by the withdrawal of the Nahdlatul Ulama from active political competition, but as a popular religious force Islam showed signs of good health and a capacity to frame national debates in the 1990s."

#### (4) Religious nationalists (Islamist fundamentalists)

"Muslim critics of the regime in the early 1990s claimed that the government policy toward Islam was 'colonial' in that it was putting in place in modern Indonesia the advice of the

*Dutch scholar and adviser to the Netherlands Indies government, Christian Snouck Hurgronje. As an adviser between 1891 and 1904, Snouck Hurgronje advocated tolerating the spiritual aspects of Islam but containing rigorously Islam's political expression.*



*The goal was the same in the colonial period and during the presidencies of both Sukarno and Suharto: to see to it that the business of government and administration remained a secular one.*

*However, Islam could not be fully 'depoliticized.' The traditional structures for Islamic communication and mobilization, pesantren and mosque, were resistant to external control. Religious teachers, through the dakwah (DHAK-wah, the vigorous promotion of Islam), still proselytized and propagated guidance and values in the early 1990s that influenced all aspects of human affairs. The 'floating masses' were touched by a social and political message couched in terms of Qur'anic injunctions and the hadith.*



*The so-called 'hard' dakwah, departing from sermons and texts tightly confined to matters of faith and sharia, was uncompromisingly antigovernment.*

*The Islamists (often referred to as Islamic fundamentalists) called for the people to die as martyrs in a 'struggle until Islam rules.' This call, for the government, was incitement to 'extremism of the right,' subversion, and terrorism.*

*In the late 1970s and early 1980s, security officials warned against the revival of Darul Islam in the guise of a Komando Jihad (Holy War Command). Isolated acts of violence, including, in early 1981, the hijacking of a Garuda Indonesian Airways DC-9, gave credence to these alerts. This unrest also was the context in which the government viewed the Tanjung Priok affair. The government reaction to radical Islamic provocations was unyielding: arrest and jail.*

*The followers of the 'hard' dakwah were a minority within a minority in 1992. Although Islamists might be disaffected with the state, the goal of urban, middle-class Muslims, who shared in the benefits of government economic policies and who were relatively untouched by the preaching of rural Muslim teachers, was not to overthrow the regime. They wanted to transform the regime from within to make its acts conform more with Islamic values--a focus then that was not on the state itself but on policies and practices that were offensive.*

*The issues that spurred middle-class Muslims on included not just the persistent Muslim complaints about secularization, Christianization, and moral decline, but also contemporary political grievances about the inequitable distribution of income, concentration of wealth and power in the hands of Chinese Indonesians to the detriment of indigenous entrepreneurship, corruption, and the role of the president's immediate family.*



*These kinds of issues cut across religious boundaries and united moderate middle-class Muslims with more secular middle-class critics, both civilian and military."*

## b. Christianity (9%)

*"Although Christianity--Roman Catholicism and Protestantism--was the most rapidly growing religion in Indonesia in the 1980s, its numbers were small compared to Islam.*

*Christianity had a long history in the islands, with Portuguese Jesuits and Dominicans operating in the Malukus, southern Sulawesi, and Timor in the sixteenth century. When the Dutch defeated Portugal in 1605, however, Catholic missionaries were expelled and the Calvinist Dutch Reformed Church was virtually the only Christian influence in the region for 300 years.*

*Whereas the United East Indies Company (VOC [from the Dutch words]) was primarily a secular and not a religious enterprise, and because Calvinism was a strict, austere, and intellectually uncompromising variety of Christianity that demanded a thorough understanding of what, for Indonesians, were foreign scriptures, Christianity advanced little in Indonesia until the nineteenth century.*



*Only a few small communities endured in Java, Maluku, northern Sulawesi, and Nusa Tenggara (primarily Roti and Timor) . After the dissolution of the VOC in 1799, and the adoption of a more comprehensive view of their mission in the archipelago, the Dutch permitted proselytizing in the territory. This evangelical freedom was put to use by the more tolerant German Lutherans, who began work among the Batak of Sumatra in 1861, and by the Dutch Rhenish Mission in central Kalimantan and central Sulawesi. In addition, Jesuits established successful missions, schools, and hospitals throughout the islands of Flores, Timor, and Alor.*

*The twentieth century witnessed the influx of many new Protestant missionary groups, as well as the continued growth of Catholicism and of large regional and reformed Lutheran churches.*

Following the 1965 coup attempt, all nonreligious persons were labeled atheists and hence were vulnerable to accusations of harboring communist sympathies.



At that time, Christian churches of all varieties experienced explosive growth in membership, particularly among those people who felt uncomfortable with the political aspirations of Islamic parties.

In the 1990s, the majority of Christians in Indonesia were Protestants of one affiliation or another, with particularly large concentrations found in Sumatra Utara, Irian Jaya, Maluku, Kalimantan Tengah, Sulawesi Tengah, and Sulawesi Utara. Catholic congregations grew less rapidly in the 1980s, in part because of the church's heavy reliance on European personnel. These Europeans experienced increasing restrictions on their missionary activities imposed by the Muslim-dominated Department of Religious Affairs. Large concentrations of Roman Catholics were located in Kalimantan Barat, Irian Jaya (IHR-ee-yahn JAI-yah), Nusa Tenggara Timur (noo-sah tehn-GAR-ah tee-mur), and Timor Timur provinces."

**c. Hinduism (2%)** "Hinduism is an amalgam of related traditions and cults that seeks to explain cosmology in primarily deistic terms. The religion has countless gods but no exclusive creed. One of Hinduism's primary ethical concerns is the concept of ritual purity. Another important distinguishing feature, which helps maintain the ritual purity, is the division of society into the traditional occupational groups, or varna (literally, color) of Hinduism: Brahmans (priests, brahmana [BRAH-man-ah] in Indonesian), Kshatriya (ruler-warriors, satriya in Indonesian), Vaishya (merchants-farmers, waisya in Indonesian), and Shudra (commoners-servants, sudra in Indonesian)."



**(1) Practice** "Like Islam and Buddhism, Hinduism was greatly modified when adapted to Indonesian society. The caste system, although present in form, was never rigidly applied.

*The Hindu religious epics, the Mahabharata (ma-hah-BHAR-at-tah, Great Battle of the Descendants of Bharata) and the Ramayana (rahm-ah-YAHN-ah, The Travels of Rama), became enduring traditions among Indonesian believers, expressed in shadow puppet and dance performances."*

## **(2) Bali**

*"Hinduism in Indonesia is primarily associated with Bali. Hindu believers in the early 1990s were relatively few outside of Bali, where they made up more than 93 percent of the population.*

*Others were scattered throughout the other twenty-six provincial-level units. Among these non-Bali communities were groups labeled as Hindu by the government--for example, the adherents of the Kaharingan religion in Kalimantan Tengah, where government statistics counted Hindus as 15.8 percent of the population.*

*It is difficult to describe the Balinese version of Hinduism in the same doctrinal terms as Islam and Christianity, since this unique form of religious expression is deeply interwoven with art and ritual, and is less closely preoccupied with scripture, law, and belief. Balinese Hinduism lacks the traditional Hindu emphasis on cycles of rebirth and reincarnation, but instead is concerned with a myriad of local and ancestral spirits.*

*As with kebatinan, these deities are thought to be capable of harm."*

**(3) Bali ritual** *"Balinese place great emphasis on dramatic and aesthetically satisfying acts of ritual propitiation of these spirits at temple sites scattered throughout villages and in the countryside.*

*Each of these temples has a more or less fixed membership; every Balinese belongs to a temple by virtue of descent, residence, or some mystical revelation of affiliation. Some temples are associated with the family house compound, others are associated with rice fields, and still others with key geographic sites.*

Ritualized states of self-control (or lack thereof) are a notable feature of religious expression among the people, famous for their graceful and decorous behavior.

One key ceremony at a village temple, for instance, features a special performance of a dance-drama (a battle between the mythical characters Rangda the witch and Barong the dragon), in which performers fall into a trance and attempt to stab themselves with sharp knives.

Rituals of the life cycle are also important occasions for religious expression and artistic display. Ceremonies at puberty, marriage, and, most notably, cremation at death provide opportunities for Balinese to communicate their ideas about community, status, and the afterlife."

#### (4) Bali Hindu leadership

"Balinese religion is hierarchically organized, with one small segment of the aristocracy--the Brahman, or priestly, class--being the most prestigious. A Brahman priest is not affiliated with any temple but acts as a spiritual leader and adviser to individual families in various villages scattered over the island.



These priests are consulted when ceremonies requiring holy water are conducted. On other occasions, folk healers or curers may be hired."

**d. Buddhism (1%)** "Indonesian Buddhism in the early 1990s was the unstable product of complex accommodations among religious ideology, Chinese ethnic identification, and political policy. Traditionally, Chinese Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism, as well as the more nativist Buddhist Perbuddhi, all had adherents in the ethnic Chinese community.

Following the attempted coup of 1965, any hint of deviation from the monotheistic tenets of the Pancasila was regarded as treason, and the founder of Perbuddhi, Bhikku

