



## State Management of Religion in Indonesia (Routledge Religion in Contemporary Asia Series)

By Myengkkyo Seo

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Although Indonesia is generally considered to be a Muslim state, and is indeed the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation, it has a sizeable Christian minority as a legacy of Dutch colonialism, with Christians often occupying relatively high social positions. This book examines the management of religion in Indonesia. It discusses how Christianity has developed in Indonesia, how the state, though Muslim in outlook and culture, is nevertheless formally secular, and how the principal Christian church, the Java Christian Church, has adapted its practices to fit local circumstances. It examines religious violence and charts the evolution of the state's religious policies, analysing in particular the impact of the 1974 Marriage Law showing how it enabled extensive state regulation, but how in practice, rather than reinforcing religious divisions, inter-religious marriage, involving the conversion of one party, is widespread. Overall, the book shows how Indonesia is developing its own brand of secularism, neither a full-blooded Islamic state like Saudi Arabia, nor an outright secular state like Turkey.

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## Editorial Review

### Review

**'Nowhere has the rising religiosity which marks the modern age wrought such profound societal changes as in Indonesia. Over the tumultuous sixty-seven years since independence, the 'Islamisation' of Javanese society has called into question traditional belief systems and the legitimacy of what were once seen as comfortable 'nominalist Muslim' values. Myengkkyo Seo's pathbreaking work offers a highly original and perceptive framework with which to understand this profound phenomenon as it works itself out in one of the most complex societies in the world. The current contest over the boundaries of the secular state will determine whether Indonesia's future will be as a Southeast Asian Pakistan or Turkey. The stakes could not be higher.'** – *Peter Carey, Trinity College, University of Oxford, UK*

**'Myengkkyo Seo has written a pioneering and illuminating account of a minority religious life in an overwhelmingly Muslim country. Indonesia has dealt with religious pluralism in a variety of ways since it became independent, and remains an arena for competing versions of Islam, ranging from the ultra-tolerant to the strictly orthodox to Political Islam. In the midst of this Christians, especially Protestants, have survived and in some ways have flourished due to some very surprising factors including their provision of a haven for the survivors of the massacres of Communists and others in 1965-66. This book is written with clarity and insight and offers to experts and non-experts alike a refreshing panorama of pluralism and of the micro-devices which make religious coexistence possible, in a country which has the largest Muslim population in the world and is also one of the new generation of emerging economies.'** – *David Lehmann, Department of Sociology, University of Cambridge, UK*

**'Seo gives us a rare and valuable account of how Indonesia's religious pluralism is experienced by a Christian minority in Java, showing how the gospel call to spread its truth is nonetheless reconciled with the need for harmony among family members and neighbours, many of whom find their religious certainties in Islam.'** – *Julia Day Howell, University of Western Sydney, Australia*

### About the Author

**Myengkkyo Seo** completed his doctorate at the University of Cambridge, UK and now teaches Southeast Asian Studies at the Department of Malay-Indonesian Studies, Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Korea.

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