

Understanding Asia: Bridging Margins

Indonesian Affections for Palestine and Israel as Markers of Cosmopolitan Religious Identities

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Why does the world's largest *menorah*, a symbol of Judaism and Israeli nationalism, stand in Indonesia, the largest Muslim-majority country that shares no diplomatic relations with Israel? And why do Indonesians collect donations for Palestinian hospitals when there is need and poverty in their own country? Affections for peoples and places beyond Indonesia are part and parcel of defining one's own religious identity. Yet, the flair of cosmopolitanism often says more about the domestic context rather than the international one. Tourism is a vivid example of this. A growing Indonesian middle class can afford overseas' travels, which often follow religious aims. Pilgrimage-tourism to the Middle East, Europe and Asia, and its documentation on social media, are popular representations of cosmopolitan religious identities. Strikingly, the travel destinations, markers of cosmopolitanism and the overall framework as guided package tours are similar among Muslim and Christian Indonesians. However, travels to Israel and to Occupied Palestinian Territories reveal that the presumed religious cosmopolitanism is rooted in local tensions. Based on ethnographic research in Israel, Palestine and Indonesia, this talk explores the meanings of religious cosmopolitanism, which reveal contestations over religious authority and authenticity between and within Muslim and Christian communities in Indonesia.

Dr. Mirjam Lücking is an anthropologist, working on contemporary expressions of religion and politics in and between Indonesia and the Middle East, with ethnographic research on various forms of transnational mobility, such as pilgrimage, tourism, and labor migration. She is currently affiliated with the Department of Asian Studies and the Martin Buber Society of Fellows at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Her work on Muslim self-identifications among Indonesian labor migrants and Mecca pilgrims is published in *Indonesians and Their Arab World* (2020, Cornell University Press).