

Role of Islam in Contributing to the Construction of ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community



Muslim Studies Center, Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University 2016

**Role of Islam in Contributing to the Construction
of ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community**

Srawut Aree
Shekh Mohammad Altafur Rahman

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Office

Institute of Asian Studies
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Foreword

Role of Islam in Contributing to the Construction of ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community is a unique and timely window to understand the inter-dependence of the socio-religious variants for the success of the ASEAN. It is a compendium of relevant thoughts identifying the essential scope of abetting a functioning ASEAN generated from a well-timed research conducted by the authors.

I believe the co-authors Dr. Srawut Aree and Dr. Shekh Mohammad Altafur Rahman have written this excellent book that explains the real connections of Islam as faith with the ongoing Southeast Asian regional scheme. The book has rightly pointed out that the ASEAN region is extremely diverse considering its' political, ethnic, religious, cultural, and geographical characteristics. Defying the differences people in ASEAN region strives to bind themselves with something that is common.

Many find unity in the core of their religious believes and cultural practices, which is one significant inspiration for creating a common identity for ASEAN people. In this crucial junction the book narrated that believers of Islam are the majority population of the ASEAN. Since faith guides both personal and public life of the adherents of Islam it is important to analyse whether the Islamic faith contradicts with values of ASEAN scheme or not.

The authors have identified that actually the Islamic faiths guides are largely supportive of the ASEAN values, especially for the third pillar of ASEAN; the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community.

I am confident that this book will be immensely beneficial for the educators, policy makers, scholars and people living in ASEAN.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nualnoi Treerat
Director
Institute of Asian Studies
Chulalongkorn University, Thailand

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Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University,
Thailand

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ABSTRACT

The ASCC reflects ASEAN's social agenda that is focused on poverty eradication and human development.² The ASCC is also to address the cultural and civilizational cohesion during the socio-economic changes those are taking place in ASEAN countries and consolidate the regional cultural unity (ASEAN, 2014). Ensuring the cooperation among diverse groups of people of ASEAN is vital which often dictates by the inspiration of specific religious and cultural norms and practices. Islam as the widely practiced religion in ASEAN inspires the success of ASCC. Since Islam guides both the private and public life of its followers the book pertinently provides an analysis on the potentials of Islamic values and cultural practices in ASEAN countries to materialize the ASCC.

Since the integral focus of the ASCC is to realize the ASEAN community- it is important to link and assess whether the practical norms of Islam; such as direction for cooperation, coexistence, and dialogue; inspire the strategic objectives of ASCC Blueprint. Notably, Islamic norms have historically provided stability and progress in various ASEAN nations. Even in recent global turmoil Muslims in ASEAN countries have successfully guarded intra-faith

2 The ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) Plan of Action, Available at www.asean.org, visited September 5, 2014

coexistence. Islam provides common understanding of values to its' ethnically and nationality varied followers across ASEAN. Mostly Muslims are proactively participating in the construction of ASEAN Community irrespective of their citizenry in the Muslim majority or minority countries.

The book identifies that Islamic values are in-line with the necessary normative aspects required for the construction of ASCC. Islam guides its members and inspires its non-members to ascertain the common ground for creating regional solidarity for caring and sharing society by designing and shaping various practical programs across ASEAN. The study emphasizes that the emergence of the unique ASEAN identity doesn't negate or contradict the cultural practices of Islam rather aids the process of building ASEAN Community. Thus the Islamic norms enhance the opportunity of human development, formation of ASEAN Identity, and emergence of common heritage of ASEAN.

KEYWORDS: ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community, Integration, Islamic Norms, Common Identity, ASEAN Blue-print.

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