



Waters in South and Southeast Asia: Interaction of Culture and Religion

3rd SSEASR Conference, Bali Island, Indonesia June 3-6, 2009

A Regional Conference of the IAHR, member CIPSH

under the auspices of the UNESCO

organised by

South and Southeast Asian Association for the Study of Culture and Religion

in collaboration with

Institut Seni Indonesia (ISI)

Universitas Hindu Indonesia (UNHI), Denpasar, Bali, Indonesia

Religion is a term which encompasses almost every part of our life. Whether it is our culture, language and literature, history or civilization, social behaviour or understanding of the humanity, religion shapes us. The common inherent traits shared by our various civilisations in the past three millennia make the region of south and Southeast Asia a role model of co-existence where the external elements get accepted adjusted, absorbed and honoured.

Our region has the largest number of inhabited zones, nations and geographical entities which has been contacted and connected with water. This unique situation of constant inter-relation, harmony and co-existence has been provided to us by the huge masses of waters in and around our living place. River to river (such as Mekong) and sea to sea (Arabian Sea to the Indonesian seas), crossing of the waters has not only carried the merchandise from port to port but also religions, faiths, socio-cultural elements, art schools and what not. Three great rivers-the Mekong, the Menam and the Irrawaddy-and their giant deltas embrace the states of mainland Southeast Asia. Alongside these arteries of the local material life numerous towns, villages and peoples have flourished. Similar was the scene in south Asia with Indus, Ganga and Brahmaputra. Trade and religion often went together. Since the time of pre-history, exchanges have taken place as evidenced in the carnelian beads of Indian origin and the images of Hindu-Buddhist deities found in archaeological excavations along the coastlines in Southeast Asia. With such trade links over waters, several religious ideas were carried afar. Indigenous belief system in unknown land, and rites and rituals from all sorts of arriving religions intermingled with each other. Ethnic groups through such regular interaction were exposed to several religious concepts, ritual practices, and related symbols. Thus also grew centres of pilgrimage based on the concept of *tirtha* (literally meaning banks of rivers), devotion and socio-religious practices among the masses, water related rites. It

also led to the evolution of the concept of **Agama Tirtha** (*religion of holy water*) in Southeast Asia. Thus was shaped the concept of sacredness, It was the “**waters**” which facilitated all of them.

Our South and Southeast Asia does not have only one third of the total world population, but also the largest number of islands, rivers, water channels, straits and early water management (such as that of Harappans at Dholavira and Khmers in Angkor). This very role of waters in creating links between various cultures and sub-cultures of South and Southeast Asia through river channels, straits, and seas is being highlighted by the 3rd SSEASR Conference to be held in Indonesia at Bali in June 2009. Indonesia referred to by its people as *Tanah Air Kita*, which means *Our Land and Water*, is the most suitable country to host a first-ever academic based culture and religion conference on water. Its geographical makeup consisting of 18,108 islands with a total land mass of 1.91 million square kilometers connected by six seas covering more than 3 million square kilometers, Indonesia is set to witness your learned presentation at an island called Bali. The two large universities in Bali, viz., the **Institut Seni Indoensia (ISI)** and **Universitas Hindu Indonesia (UNHI)** have joined together to host this 3rd SSEASR Conference which has been also declared as **an IAHR Conference** for the year 2009.

Session and paper proposals dealing with the study of this phenomenon through various academic disciplines are invited. The papers can be submitted on the following suggested sub-themes (*but not limited to these only*) include:

Rivers: Routes, Rites, Rituals and Sacredness

Ports and Peoples in South and Southeast Asia

Religion, Faith and Beliefs in Island Southeast Asia

Mainland Southeast Asia: Water and Symbolism

Culture and Religions along the Rivers

Religious Trends and Patterns of Life in South and Southeast Asia

Maritime Routes and Religious Links in South and Southeast Asia

The Indonesian Waters and the Malay World: Syncretism and Society

Islam: Trade and Traditions

Hinduism and Buddhism across the Seas

Christianity: Spread and Localisation

Art and Religion in Jambudvipa and Beyond

Religious Languages, Texts and Literature

Pilgrimage: Concepts and Centres

Diaspora Overseas

Other papers are also welcomed covering the study of culture and religion in the region.

We also plan to host special symposia related to **Religion and Science**, the **Role of Women in Religions**, etc.

Note:

The **SSEASR** operates under the policies and principles of the parent body International Association for the History of Religions (**IAHR**), which seeks to promote the activities of all scholars and affiliates that contribute to the historical, social, and comparative study of religion. As such, the IAHR is the preeminent international forum for the critical, analytical and cross-cultural study of religion, past and present. The IAHR is not a forum for confessional, apologetical, or other similar concerns."

There would be a subsidised post-conference tour of **Borobudur Stupa** and **Prambanam Temples**, Yogyakarta. Other details regarding the accommodation, the amount of registration fees and the mode of payment would be announced very soon. For details, please visit the website www.sseasr.org or email us at thirdSSEASR@hotmail.com or secretariat@sseasr.org

Important Deadlines

Pre-Registration: **October 30, 2008**
Early Registration Deadline: **December 30, 2008**
Submission of Abstract: **February 15, 2009**

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