



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

3<sup>rd</sup> 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**

hosted and co-organised by

**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.

The 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 and sea to sea, crossing of the waters has not only carried the merchandise from port to port but also religions, socio-cultural elements, art schools and what not. 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. 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 these religious developments.

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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 Indonesia (ISI) and Universitas Hindu Indonesia (UNHI) have joined together to host this 3<sup>rd</sup> 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**
- **Religion, Faith and Beliefs in Island Southeast Asia**
- **Culture and Religions along the Rivers**
- **Maritime Routes and Religious Links in South and Southeast Asia**
- **Islam: Trade and Traditions**
- **Christianity: Spread and Localisation**
- **Religious Languages, Texts and Literature**
- **Ports and Peoples in South and Southeast Asia**
- **Mainland Southeast Asia: Water and Symbolism**
- **Religious Trends and Patterns of Life in South and Southeast Asia**
- **The Indonesian Waters and the Malay World: Syncretism and Society**
- **Hinduism and Buddhism across the Seas**
- **Art and Religion in Jambudvīpa and Beyond**
- **Pilgrimage: Concepts and Centres**

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

We also plan to host special panels related to **Religion and Science**, the **Role of Women in Religions**, and **Diaspora Overseas**.

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 three-day tour of **Borobudur Stupa** and **Prambanam Temples, Yogyakarta**. Details regarding the conference accommodation, and the mode of payment of the registration fees, excursion tours, etc. are announced. For details, please visit the website [www.sseasr.org](http://www.sseasr.org) or email us at [thirdSSEASR@hotmail.com](mailto:thirdSSEASR@hotmail.com) or [secretariat@sseasr.org](mailto:secretariat@sseasr.org)

Important Deadlines

**Early Registration: November 30, 2008 • Submission of Abstract: February 15, 2009 • Registration Dedline: April 30, 2009**

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