

GUEST LECTURE

NOVEMBER 2, 4 PM
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One Among Zeroes |0100| - Towards an Anthropology of AI in Islam

Digital technologies and religion have more in common than meets the eye, as they both produce futures in both professional and popular imagination. The ideal of an Islamic information society spearheading the latest technologies offers a model for an alternative to the dominant pathways of digital transition: Californian 'big tech', the Chinese social credit system, or European regulation. The |0100| Team investigates the Islamic Information Society's most controversial component – artificial intelligence – with multimodal and mixed methods, comparing and contrasting narratives and imagery of digital religious futures in the national settings of Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore, each with a considerable yet differently positioned Muslim population. It situates ethical dilemmas surrounding algorithms, bots and deep learning by ethnographically and longitudinally observing and interviewing makers and users. Innovatively using a historical analysis of future-making discourse, we probe big and 'thick data' ('in situ' and through digital ethnography) and use infographics, animations and comics to both map and represent 'scripted futures'. |0100| delivers salient ethnographic portraits as well as an overarching socio-anthropological analysis, of what digital everyday religion is like, how Southeast Asians use AI 'in the wild', and how digital technology contributes to exciting societal experiments and ethical dilemmas.

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