



Magic and Religion in the Indian Ocean World

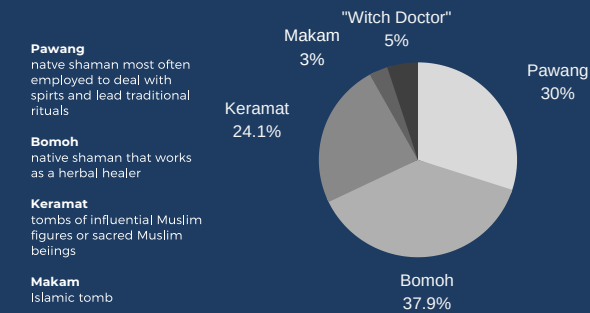
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CONCLUSION

Miracle workers were highly sought after and that, even, their abilities were uncontested. In these societies, where the supernatural was ingrained in every aspect of life, they performed vital duties to keep their community content and reinforce their elevated status in the social hierarchy. However, with the onset of British colonization and growing diversity, their influence began to diminish as people began to consult western doctors (one of their main roles was healer) instead, especially in urbanized areas. The complicated nature of this profession also found condemnation from emerging Islamic reformist movements that disliked how these individuals operated under a belief system of intermingled Islamic and Malay ideologies. Even so, they remained popular among some ethnic groups like the Chinese, Indians, and Malays who would often assign their own beliefs and traditions to those of these miracle workers. It seemed it was more beneficial for these diverse groups to create a syncretic form of Islam that appealed to all which, in turn, serves to complicate previous understandings of the religion.

*Percentages refer to distribution of relevant articles found with key words

1819-1981



INTRODUCTION

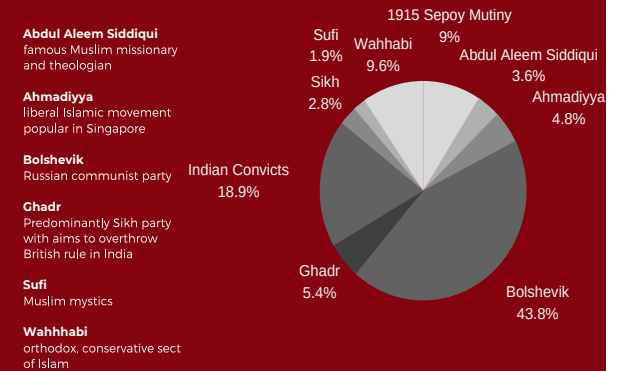
- Identify relationship between Islamic miracle workers (and objects) and communities of Southeast Asia (particularly Singapore and Malaya) in the 19th and 20th centuries
- Track said relationship and its evolution with the introduction of new groups and beliefs in an increasingly cosmopolitan area
- Survey accounts of colonized societies in South and Southeast Asia and the importance of these skilled religious individuals within specific groups (ex. Sikhs, Indian convicts and sepoys, etc.)

RESULTS

- Afforded positions of power and influence (ex. official pawang appointment in Malaya royal household)
- Consulted for variety of reasons (marital and familial problems, ailments, labor) and hired to lead rituals at ceremonies (ex. festivals, marriages, funerals)
- Perform supernatural actions (ex. invoke spirits, lead exorcisms, etc.) to fulfill more concrete functions in society like alleviate hysteria, heal clients, hunt man-eating animals, bring in the day's catch, or find metals—mining and fishing being common occupations in these areas
- British colonization and later urbanization result in decline in influence, though still retain power in remote villages

*Percentages refer to distribution of relevant articles found with key words

1819 – 1947



METHODS

- Accessed digitized newspapers based in Singapore—a resource rarely utilized
- Articles most often reflect perspective of outsider and observer
- Search contained to provided key words and those articles deemed relevant were summarized and URLs copied on word documents
- Website: NewspaperSG (<https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers/>)

