

***Spiritual Economies:
Islam, Globalization and the Afterlife of Development***

**Rudnyckyj, D. (2010). Ithaca and London:
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A small flame of interest has been emerging in recent decades assessing the relationship between Islam and contemporary economic phenomena. Until now this topic has been discarded in a neglected vault, sealed by the lingering dismissal of the incompatibility of Islam and capitalism, largely owing to the writings of Max Weber however, there is now a resurgence of interest. No doubt spurred by an explosion of attention directed towards focal points such as Islam and development, Islamic banking and finance, and geopolitical shifts threatened by the Arab Spring social scientists, policy makers and journalists have begun to reassess Islam and economics. Daromir Rudnyckyj's *Spiritual Economies: Islam, Globalization and the Afterlife of Development* fits within this mould, although charting a new course in its analyses of Islam and neoliberalism in the global south. This book builds on the emerging sub-fields of economic anthropology and the anthropology of globalization while offering an original contribution through its introduction of Islam as a focus.

Rudnyckyj presents a rich anthropological study that draws on extensive fieldwork in Indonesia. This monograph focuses on a case study of a state owned steel factory, Krakatau Steel, and experiments to instrumentalize religion in order to inculcate ethics and practices conducive to development in the face of the dual threats of globalization and neoliberalism. Religion, here, takes the form of the Emotional and Spiritual Quotient (ESQ) training programme: one of the more prominent manifestations of new-age Indonesian spiritual reform programmes

that witness the admixture of modernist Islamic piety, human resources management, and self-help strategies. Rather than making an argument for Islam being inimical to modernity and development, Rudnyckyj's case study portrays an Islamic piety movement employed as a rational solution to an industrial development crisis.

The theoretical framework employed by Rudnyckyj is indicative of a recent trend in analyses of religion and economics in the context of late capitalism. Indeed, a pattern can be witnessed in recent studies that have augmented a Weberian approach with a thorough application of the Foucauldian repertoire in an effort to grapple with the meeting of religion and the forces of neoliberalism. Rudnyckyj attempts to draw on the convergences in these theoretical approaches by focusing on historical contingency, rationalization, ethics and practices. The result is a meticulous and detailed theoretical rubric from which Rudnyckyj constructs his conceptual framework and engages in analysis.

Spiritual Economies consists of three parts. Part 1 provides the context for this study, outlining the post-colonial history of Indonesia and the evolving relationship between Islam, politics and development. In Part 2 we are introduced to the doctrinal (and ritualistic) details of the programmatic solution designed by reformers in the 'spiritual economy' to readdress the developmental crisis. Ethics associated with work, transparency, accountability and good governance are targeted as sites for spiritual reflection, intervention, reform and habituation via the ESQ programme. The socio-psychological effects of the Islamic spiritual reformation project are discussed in Part 3 in terms of the diverse manifestations of identity in Indonesia tied to class, religion and ethnicity.

In his book Rudnyckyj employs several conceptual constructs which become the dominant and repeated lexicon for this study. The stated objective of this conceptual architecture is to chart the convergence of religious resurgence and economic globalization. Countering the dominant refrain of incompatibility, the conceptual toolbox deployed in this study is evident of Rudnyckyj's aim of showing the congruence of these dynamics, as have other recent neo-Weberian studies in the global

south. Largely influenced by James Ferguson's (1999) notion of 'faith in development,' Rudnyckyj argues that Indonesia has transitioned from a period characterised by 'faith in development' to an ethos of 'developing faith.' In other words, the unrealised aspirations of a state-led industrial development paradigm have been replaced by faith in a neo-liberal inspired experiment that seeks to increase individual piety in order to combat unethical behaviour deemed to be hampering Indonesian development. This project is indicative of the 'afterlife of development,' whereby an assemblage of phenomena, including religion, has coalesced in the era of globalization in order to continue the utopian teleology of development, albeit now distinctively shaped by neo-liberal norms. The deployment of the concept of 'spiritual economies' seeks to provide a comprehensive explanation of this process of social engineering. The term 'spiritual economies' "refers to how spirituality is produced as an object of self-management and intervention to instill economic reason" (p.131). In this case, led by self-styled 'spiritual reformer' Ary Ginanjar, ESQ strives to marry Islam and neo-liberal ascetic ethics in order to transform factory employees into productive, work-focused and pious subjects.

It is at this juncture, however, that cracks begin to appear in Rudnyckyj's analysis. Thus, aspects of the theoretical and conceptual framework unravel to leave us with a series of problems. Perhaps indicative of an over-eagerness to coin new concepts, the excessive repetition of concepts seems inadvertently to alert the reader to the insecurity of their footing. The concepts deployed in this brave interdisciplinary study fail to cover all of the disciplinary bases and this is significantly evident in the lack of theoretical and analytical sensitivity to religion. For example, Rudnyckyj's use of the term 'developing faith' is used interchangeably with 'spiritual reform' in a problematic fashion. It would have seemed prudent here to take stock of the discourse on Islam and modernity and the phenomenon of Islamic revivalism in order to delineate and specify to which trajectory the various actors belong in Rudnyckyj's spiritual economy. Similarly Rudnyckyj alludes to the fact that the goal of 'developing faith,' a religious project, belies the same utopian vision as 'faith in development,' a secular

project (p.3). One wonders, in fact, whether the spiritual reformation programme held heterotopian developmental visions tied to Islamist affinities, but alas this is not considered. Furthermore, the study essentially focuses on elites within the Krakatau Steel workforce who are seemingly stuck in a suffocating teleological schema of Islam being instrumentalized to further the neoliberal agenda. Insufficient attention is given to lower level employees and this shortcoming limits the potentiality for spiritual economies to foster anti-neoliberal sentiments and articulations, or to put it in Foucauldian terms, a 'political spirituality.' Furthermore, the concept of the 'afterlife of development' seems hasty and at fault in its inclusion of religious rhetoric. An 'afterlife' would designate the end of a material existence to be followed by an ethereal life in another realm. Quite how this works in terms of the ideology of development is not clear; by Rudnyckyj's own account, the materiality of the quest for development did not end, but rather its pursuit continued through another man-made strategy.

Aside from the problem of religion in the concepts deployed, broader aspects of the discussion of Islam seem rather underdeveloped. The question of the Islamic authenticity and the authority of ESQ in the minds of Muslim participant employees is not explored. One is left to wonder how employees reconcile ESQ with other religious discourses encountered outside of ESQ training centres and the effect that these alternative doctrines would have for Rudnyckyj's analysis of subjectivity and economic rationality. In addition, Rudnyckyj omitted a genealogical exploration of Islamic discourse and its relation to contemporary economic rationality, by means of an exploration of the rich legacy of pre-colonial Indonesian Islamic economic institutions.

Ultimately, the most significant anticlimax of the book is that it does not fulfil its stated aim of investigating practices. There is no evidence provided to address the question of whether ESQ training affected the practice of participants and consequently whether it had an effect on the productivity of the Krakatau Steel company. Not only are we left with potentialities, but more fundamentally it undermines the social scientific rigour of this study as we are ultimately asked to believe in the

reformative results of ESQ based on what participants *say* rather than what they *do*.

Despite the analytical, conceptual and theoretical shortcomings that sometimes emerge in this book, it is nonetheless a valiant interdisciplinary study that engages with the previously neglected analysis of religion, economics, development and globalization. Testament to an exemplary anthropological study, deep and extensive empirical data is presented and the book is filled with vivid accounts of ESQ training sessions and valuable anecdotal accounts from the field. The book helps to highlight the unavoidable necessity of religious revivalism to confront the market in the era of late capitalism. As such, it may be remembered as a pioneering experimental effort to devise a theoretical framework to contend with the interdisciplinary challenge of discussing the assemblage of religion, economic globalization and development in the global south. More specifically for our context in contemporary Africa, it sets a benchmark and beckons for a comparable analysis of contingent formations of economic rationality and Islam.