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ELECTRONIC MEDI(T)ATIONS:
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Paper to
the Small Conference on

Asian Media/Practice:
Rethinking Communication and Media Research in Asia

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School of Communication Studies
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Richard Fox

ABSTRACT
In the run up to the millenium, both popular and scholarly discourse on modernity and modernization in Asia have centered the mass media, but have tended to ignore religion. Is this simply a permutation of the tendency in Euro-American thinking to _privatize_ religion, thereby expelling it from a secular 'public sphere'? If so, I would suggest that we may want to consider more closely the consequences of articulating modernity as the culmination of reason, and banishing religion as its pre-modern antithesis. For one, it will preclude any serious engagement with practices that defy a modernist account of rationality. One need only consider the centrality of Islam in Indonesia and Malaysia, or the BJP in India, to recognize the problems inherent in any attempt to ignore religion in an account of the contemporary Asian scene. I would argue that a series of issues around religion and the recent rise of electronic mass media are closely related. With respect to the Internet in particular, the number of religious and religion-related web sites, newsgroups and chat rooms seems to be increasing exponentially. But how is this to be approached for critical analysis? Are traditional modes of inquiry into religious affairs appropriate to the cyber scene? Or must we rethink the way in which we have imagined religion for a critical engagement with new media? On closer examination, I will argue that even such basic questions as "where", and "with whom" we are studying pose a formidable challenge to entrenched assumptions regarding the nature of inquiry, community and the human subject.
Electronic Medi(t)ations:  
the_religious_subject@Indonesia.net

By Richard Fox

It seems to me difficult to maintain that man in western society is not more rational than ever he was, within the normal usage of the term ‘rational’. So much more of his ordinary behaviour is controlled by cause-and-effect thinking, even if only because he knows more about the workings of the physical and social worlds... The dominance of economic costing over spiritual aspiration in modern society, is the evidence of the growth of rationality in our social affairs, and consequently, at least in some measure, in our own habits of thought. (Wilson 1969: 17)¹

In his vigorously Weberian deployment of Reason and Rationality, Bryan Wilson, a leading British sociologist of his time, charted what he understood to be the progressive demystification of ‘the west’ that accompanied the “steady loss of influence by the Churches over the various agencies of social life” (1969: 78).² It seems that modernity, on most accounts, leaves little room for religion. ‘Spiritual aspirations’, as Wilson called them, have been progressively privatized, clearing the way in the ‘public sphere’ for the progress of a secular rationality.

That such declarations of disenchantment ride on rather dubious assumptions regarding the determinacy of the world (e.g. Goodman 1978) and a unitary Reason (e.g. Feyerabend 1987, Hacking 1985)—not to mention privileged access to both—does not seem to have bothered the proponents of secularization theory. But even were we to leave them to it in their own backyard, can we assume that this relentless march of secular reason has advanced beyond Anglo-American shores? In light of the recent, and very violent conflicts in Indonesia, should we question whether a secular cause-and-effect thinking, as Wilson called it, is really a necessary accompaniment to

¹ I am indebted to Judith Coney for pointed out this passage to me.
² More recently, on the basis of media representations of religion in the US, Stewart Hoover has underlined “the extent to which this idea is embedded in American social, political, and educational philosophy” (1998: 12).

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modernity? In a later publication, Wilson has suggested that “[n]owhere in the modern world does traditional faith influence more than residually and incidentally the operation of society…” (1982: 179; emphasis added). But does this mean that we should expect ‘Asian society’, if it were truly modern, not to be influenced—more than residually and incidentally—by religion? Must Asia be classed as either a modern, hence secular ‘Tiger’ or as part of the pre-modern, ‘mystic east’? Or is it possible that in exporting such models of modernity and modernization we may be globalizing a local, albeit influential secularism? In this paper I would like to consider the ways in which religion and religious difference have been articulated in relation to the recent unrest in Indonesia at three ‘sites’ on the Internet.

the_subj@ect@religion.net

Religion has long been in the business of constituting human beings as subjects, dividing them from one another and often promising emancipation to those who land up on the ‘right side’. It seems that one’s ability to constitute oneself as a subject within those constraints is premised on truth, the actuality of one’s knowledge, belief, devotion—or, perhaps, the correctness of one’s practice. Talal Asad (1993), for example, has described the manner in which the body, previously the medium of truth in early Christian trials by ordeal, gave way to the spoken word with the introduction of torture as a means of eliciting the truth. One’s spoken confession became ‘the essential medium as opposed to bodies-as-signs’ (1993: 122; emphasis added). The outcome of this shift in medium was to radically alter the configurations of power, and the constitution of ‘Christian’ subjects. With the change in medium, also came

3 Buddhist Abhidharmaists, for example, have worked out an extremely sophisticated model of causation—more than a millennium prior to the emergence of Wilson’s secularized ‘western society’ (see, e.g. Frauwallner 1995, Kalupahana 1992).

4 For example, in the Bhagavadgita, those who are deluded by the appearance of duality, and seek the fruits of their actions are differentiated from others, the ‘yogins’ who recognize the unity of the Divine Principle in Krishna, and devote themselves to dispassionately carrying out their predestined duty. In the Old Testament, the Israelites are clearly distinguished from the Amorites and the Hittites, the Perizzites and the Canaanites—i.e. from those who will be ‘cut off by the Angel of God’ and ‘driven from the land’. In the Dhammapada, the true Brahmin, the one who will realize nirvana, is (punningly) distinguished from those who claim such status on the basis of birth or ascetic virtuosity.

5 Asad wrote, “The history of the ritual of confession shows one of the paths by which all Christians—priest and layman, husband and wife, teacher and pupil, confessor and penitent, judge and accused, even torturer and tortured—came to be subjectified in determinate ways. As the aspirants to distinctive virtues, whose exercise binds the one to the other by reciprocal duties and desires, all become subjects (at once active and passive) of power—but not all, of course, in the same manner.” (1993: 121).
changes in the means and criteria for establishing the truth of one’s articulation of oneself as a Christian subject before God. With the introduction of torture,

Verbal discourse [became] the indispensable medium of the truth. Secret thoughts had to be made available in the form of utterances—words as inner signs brought out as meaningful sounds. The words were not identical with the truth, in the way that the bodily marks of someone who had submitted to the ordeal were identical with it. For so long as the rules of the ordeal were properly followed, the marks it produced could not lie. (Asad 1993: 93; emphasis added)

However, with spoken confession, there was always the possibility of lying. “So it was that medieval theorists insisted that the accused should not know the charge; otherwise, he might easily confess to what he had not done for fear of more pain” (ibid. 1993: 93-4). How might such a potential for lying play out in the constitution of subjects online?

As Asad draws heavily on the work of Foucault, perhaps we should first consider what the latter had to say on the subject. Commenting on his work retrospectively, Foucault described his objective as an attempt to write a history of the modes of objectification which transform human beings into subjects.

The first is the modes of inquiry which try to give themselves the status of sciences... [for example,] the objectivizing of the productive subject, the subject who labors, in the analysis of wealth and of economics. ... In the second part of my work, I have studied the objectivizing of the subject in what I call “dividing practices.” The subject is either divided inside himself or divided from others. .... Examples are the mad and the sane, the sick and the healthy, the criminals and the “good boys.” Finally, I have sought to study ... the way a human being turns him- or herself into a subject. For example ... how men have learned to recognize themselves as subjects of “sexuality.” (1982: 208)

Although I will eventually return to Foucault’s first mode of objectification, my primary interest lies in the latter two—i.e. dividing practices and the ways in which human beings make themselves into subjects. I am interested in considering the ways in which these two modes of objectification are related—particularly in relation to the ‘religious’ subject.
It seems that the relationship between dividing practices and the ways in which people make themselves into subjects is, in an important sense, mediated. Asad described how a shift in the medium through which truth was established impinged on the ways in which Christian subjects were constituted at a particular point in history. But, one of the questions I would like to ask is how, precisely, does the medium matter? How do the modes of establishing truth depend on the medium employed, and how might a shift in medium affect (effect?) the possibilities for constituting oneself as a subject?

conflict@ambon.net

Online news agencies play a prominent role on the Net, being cited anywhere from casual chatroom discussions to polished analyses posted to bulletin boards and home pages. Thus they should provide an interesting place to start. Webpages as varied in their sponsorship as CNN Interactive and IndoChaos! post articles from well-known press agencies including Reuters, the Associated Press, Xinhua and, for Indonesia, Nusantara (the official news agency of Indonesia). Whether made available by the hosts of the sites themselves, or posted to a bulletin board by others, the news agency articles tend to draw quite heavily from one another, often to the point of verbatim quotation. Though they vary somewhat in length, they typically run between 400–500 words and, with the exception of CNN summations, they only rarely include photographs or video. I would like to look at the ways in which these news agencies represented a particular series of violent conflicts that occurred in eastern Indonesia. I am specifically interested in the manner in which subjects were divided from one another and attributed with agency, the ways in which that attribution of agency was altered over time and its relationship to changing modes of establishing the truth of the representation.

6 CNN Interactive (http://www.cnn.com) is hosted by the broadcasting giant, Cable News Network; while IndoChaos! is supported by a small-scale non-profit organization that was founded on 9 March 1998.

7 Whenever things began to look serious (e.g. violence, controversy, high-level shifts of political power), CNN would post an article to their site (i.e. in addition to the articles from other agencies). The CNN postings would draw on reports from other agencies (often to the point of verbatim repetition), and usually contain several pictures and links to related stories (both current, and from previous days), short videos and hyperlinks to other sites.
On Wednesday, the twentieth of January, Reuters posted an article entitled “Four Dead in Indonesia, Festivity Violence.” The conflict is described, in the very first paragraph, as occurring “between Christians and Moslems in the eastern Indonesian town of Ambon,” but little more is said in qualification of who they were and why they might have been in conflict. The motivation to violence is conspicuously unspecified. While some people are “afraid to leave their homes,” others are “on rampage, brandishing daggers and sickles.” Sources cited by Reuters for information on the events include ‘church sources and police’, a local priest, ‘one policeman on duty in Ambon’ and the ‘official Antara news agency’. The ‘church sources and police’ are said, by Reuters, to have reported that “the violence erupted on Tuesday after a drunken man extorted money from a public transport driver,” an account that would resurface through various permutations in the days to come. Also on Wednesday, in a report drawing explicitly from both Reuters and the Associated Press, CNN explained that “[t]he violence [in Ambon] was the latest in a series of religious-related clashes to hit the sprawling Southeast Asian nation as it grapples with its worst economic crisis in three decades.” It should be noted that the conflict was, at this point, explicitly deemed ‘religious’. But, aside from thinly veiled insinuations of economic determinism and the citation of church sources and police on what ‘started’ the violence, there was little in the way of explanation coming from what seemed to be predominantly local ‘sources of information’.

Day two. On Thursday, the twenty-first of January, the ‘religious tension’ and ‘religious-related clashes’ continued, with “[r]ioters [firing] flaming arrows at mosques and churches” (AP). The conflict was still between ‘Christians’ and ‘Muslims’ (AP refers to them as ‘militants’, while CNN puts them in ‘rival religious groups’, and Reuters into ‘rival faiths’), but the attribution of agency remains less than specific. It is at this point that new figures of authority appear on the scene. In addition to the ‘local’ sources from the previous day, news agencies were now citing local news media, a variety of unspecified ‘military officials’ and the Maluku governor. With the entry of these new ‘authorities’, the events—still explicitly related to religion—become more closely tied to other events in ‘predominantly Muslim Indonesia’. Although Suharto is said to have kept a lid on “lawlessness and dissent,”

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in the time "since his departure, the armed forces have found it increasingly difficult to control disorder" (AP). With regard to the initial 'cause' of the conflict, Reuters stuck to its story ("the violence erupted on Tuesday after a drunken man extorted money from a public transport driver"); but other accounts would now emerge. Xinhua, for example, suggested that the "violence was sparked" by "Tuesday night's clash between Muslims from Batumerah village and a bus driver from the neighboring Christian-dominated village of Mardika." It is worth noting that with the introduction of a bus-driver from a 'Christian-dominated village' we have what is, quite possibly, an inversion of responsibility. If the bus driver was Christian, then in order to reconcile this with the Reuters account, the drunken extortionist would have to have been one of the Muslims from Batumerah. Yet another account may be found in CNN's report in which "Muslims from the village of Batumerah attacked a man from the neighboring Christian-dominated village of Mardika. They accused him of being drunk and insulting Islam," an account not unlike that offered by the Associated Press. So, on day two, we have conflicting accounts of how things got started, and very little in the way of further details regarding the clashing Muslims and Christians. But, with the arrival of 'authorities' from outside the immediate locale, we are beginning to see the emergence of a possibility for explanation: while still 'religious-related' and between Muslims and Christians, there is increasing emphasis placed on the possibility of the conflict reaching beyond the realm of 'local rivalries'.

On Friday, the twenty-second of January, the big wigs waded in. Armed Forces (ABRI) Commander General Wiranto, together with the police chief Lieutenant-General Roesmanhadi, flew to Ambon to meet with 'local leaders'. The violence and conflict, at this point, was cast as synecdochally representative of more general "religious tensions threatening to tear the nation apart" (Reuters). Reports placed increased emphasis on broader 'religious and ethnic rivalries' as well as 'economic meltdown' and growing poverty across Indonesia. The conflict in Ambon had previously been articulated as, first and foremost, between Muslims and Christians.

8 To highlight the problems of consistency, we may compare a report from CNN (05 Feb. 1999) that refers to 'the predominantly Christian Batumerah district and the predominately Muslim Mardika district' with one from Xinhua (21 Jan. 1999) that inverts the respective religious orientations of the villages: 'Muslims from Batumerah village and ... the neighboring Christian-dominated village of Mardika'.

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But, with the arrival of Wiranto and others, the Muslims and Christians were predominantly lumped together in ‘rampaging mobs’, ‘rival gangs’, and amorphous groups of ‘rioters’, who were set in opposition to ‘police’, ‘troops’ and ‘security forces’. A report by CNN states that “[o]pposing groups of Christian and Muslim mobs armed with machetes, spears and bows and arrows have run amok on the island of Ambon.” Running amok?

The use of the phrase ‘running amok’ has a long and interesting history rooted in European colonial encounters with ‘Malay’, and particularly Balinese, warriors (see Vickers 1989: 16f). Among other qualifications, the OED entry for *amok* includes ‘rushing in a state of frenzy to the commission of indiscriminate murder’. While accounts on previous days had certainly been less than clear in attributing agency or any specific motivation to the ‘clashing’ Muslims and Christians, there was no suggestion that the violence was random, or ‘indiscriminate’—that they were *running amok*. Was this ‘religious conflict’ simply random chaos following from the initial bus driver/extortionist incident (or any permutation thereof)? Perhaps. But, with the insinuation of indiscriminate violence on the part of the masses came a most notable change: the possible involvement of *agents provocateurs*. Suddenly, with the arrival of high-ranking government and military officials, what had been a local clash between religiously differentiated agents (or instruments?), became (through its increasingly nationalized character) a conflict in which mobs, only secondarily divided along religious lines (i.e. no longer with the potential for ‘religious’ motivation but, rather, *running amok*), were pitted against military and government forces. Whereas, before, there had been at least the possibility of agency for the clashing Muslims and Christians, it now seemed likely that they were the *instruments* of rather mysterious ‘provocateurs’ mirroring, perhaps all too neatly, the police and troops who emerged as the instruments of high-ranking government and military agents.

9 “Muslims attacked a Christian man, whom they accused of being drunk and of insulting their Islamic beliefs”

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closure@ambon.net

By the twenty-fourth of January, the possibility of *agents provocateurs* was realized in the form of fifty people ‘detained by security forces’. Wiranto could now be quoted in saying ‘that in the country’s history there had been no record of clashes over religious differences’ (Xinhua). Christians and Muslims ‘brandishing daggers and sickles’ seemed previously to be responsible for the violence. But now, at a meeting of “Indonesia’s top military brass and leading civilians,” Amien Rais\(^{10}\) could request “that Wiranto arrest all the ‘intellectual actors’ behind the riots, which were ‘well organized, sophisticated, well planned and well financed’” (Xinhua)—a big change from rampaging mobs with bows, arrows and machetes...

By early February, the Muslim and Christian mobs were even relieved of their *instrumentality*, with the discovery of ‘hoodlums’ from Jakarta who, we are told, incited the violence on orders from ‘coordinators’ and ‘masterminds’ (e.g. CNN, 01 Feb 1999) who, perhaps unsurprisingly, were never identified or caught. But now, unlike before, the conflict in Ambon (was) *made* (to make) sense. By this point, approximately a week after the violence was seen to have subsided, reports posted by news agencies rarely, if ever, cited local sources (when they did, it was primarily anecdotal). But, perhaps, there was no need. Now that it was “admitted that the riots in Ambon ... were a direct consequence of ‘power games’ among Jakarta’s political elite” (Xinhua), an appropriate reaction could be formulated—an impossibility when it was unclear who or what was involved in (to say nothing of *caused*) the conflict.

I am not necessarily offering an alternative account of *what happened*, but simply wishing to draw attention to the process by which closure was, more or less, attained. I would suggest that what emerges from the gradual alterations in the assignment of agency in Ambon is an implicit theory of human action according to which people do not *really* act on the basis of ‘religious’ motivation. Despite its initially active *appearance*, the religiously differentiated subject was quickly displaced by amorphous masses flailing about aimlessly, having been set in motion by ‘hoodlums’

\(^{10}\) Amien Rais is prominent figure in Indonesian politics and the former head of Muhammadiya, one of the largest Islamic organizations in Indonesia.
who, themselves, were merely the *instruments* of secret (political) agents. Is it but fortuitous (in either sense) that such an account coincides with the arrival of major political players and the fading of local voices?

**huaren@indonesia.net**

In accounts of the conflicts in Ambon, *religious difference*, initially seen as a potential factor in motivating human action, was progressively downplayed together with the possibility of agency for the clashing ‘Muslims’ and ‘Christians’. If, in fact, the rapidly changing accounts of events did not reflect an increasingly *accurate* understanding of what *really* happened, perhaps the point to be taken is that more than one account was possible—and, particularly, that not all accounts would *necessarily* explain away religion. But, in addition to reports posted by news agencies, the recent unrest in Indonesia set off an explosion of commentary and debate on webpages, bulletin boards, and chatrooms. In an article published in the *Wall Street Journal* (and distributed on the ISSCO email list), Wayne Arnold has described what he called

...a rising tide of quiet outrage among ethnic Chinese world-wide for which the Internet—at once brash and borderless yet unobtrusive and anonymous—has emerged as a convenient rallying ground. (1998)

Setting aside borders and anonymity (at least for the moment), I want to consider this ‘rising tide of quiet outrage’. As with the news agency reports, I would like, in particular, to continue querying the differentiation of subjects, the attribution of agency and the manner in which truth claims have been established.

Of the websites devoted to the plight of the ‘Chinese’ Indonesians,11 perhaps the one to have received the most media attention is *Huaren*.12 The *World Huaren Federation*, founded by a research chemist working in New Zealand and a Hong Kong émigré living in Canada (Arnold 1998), has represented itself online as ‘a cyber-village hub’ for promoting ‘kinship and understanding’ among the Chinese

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11 I have put ‘Chinese’ between inverted commas for a variety of reasons, not least of which is the fact that some of the so-called “Chinese Indonesians” with whom I have spoken are less than pleased with being labeled as such.
diaspora. Although Huaren initially dealt almost exclusively with ‘anti-Chinese’ violence in Indonesia, it now hosts a series of message boards and archives documenting and commenting on anti-Chinese discrimination in other parts of the world, as well as more general news, job offers, ‘business ideas, and ... comments on the state of [the] economy’. But, without wishing to appear supercilious, I would like to ask who, precisely, are ‘the Chinese’?

ethnicity@huaren.org

According to Huaren, ‘the Chinese’ are an ‘ethnic’ or ‘racial’ (it varies) group that has, over many centuries, spread throughout the world. As attested by ‘a western observer’ prominently cited on the first page of the site, they have been “exiled from a motherland to which they still nurture strong cultural links.” In this diasporic exile, local ‘ethnic’ or ‘racial’ Chinese ‘populations’ are described as having been ‘affected’ and ‘changed’ by “country-specific socio-economical and political legislative influence.” So much so, that “[w]e often encounter Chinese-Americans or Chinese-Canadians who know or care little of their counterparts elsewhere.” The ‘gulfs’ between nationally dispersed, hyphenated ethnic ‘counterparts’ are described as arising from ‘ignorance’ (i.e. unawareness of their natural unity) and, as such, these artificial divisions “should be corrected.”

While ‘the Chinese’ are constituted at the Huaren site as an international diasporic community that naturally differs—according to registers of ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’—from others living in their ‘adopted countries’, what are posited as second order differences within that community are attributed to ‘social’ and ‘political’ influence—literally an ‘in-flowing’ (of foreign essence?) of foreign essence? These influences, contracted in the ‘adopted countries’, it seems, are weaker and do not affect the underlying ethnic/racial essence—even if it has been temporarily obscured. And the Internet has been articulated as a means of (re)mediating that natural unity, a

13 According to the World Huaren Federation, ‘Huaren’ ‘...is the standard Pinyin transliteration of the term “Chinese.”
14 The invocation of ‘the west’ is particularly interesting, recalling that the founders of Huaren are in New Zealand and Canada.
15 Influence (OED): “The action or fact of flowing in; inflowing, inflow, influx: said of the action of water and other fluids and of immaterial things conceived of as flowing in...” (L. influ-cre).
unity that had previously been intact in ‘the motherland’, then dispersed in space and, finally, reunited through the medium of online communications technology.¹⁶

As we have seen, the most prominent division on the Huaren site separates ‘the Chinese’ (huarens) from the rest of the world on the basis of ‘ethnicity’ or ‘race’. But, furthermore, ‘global huaren netizens’ are differentiated from “computer geeks and internet surfers aimlessly seeking vicious pleasure on the net.” Through various tropes of reason and responsibility, online ‘Overseas Chinese and Friends’ are distinguished from “ethnocentric extremists out to fan flames of ethnic or racial passions.” In an attempt “to safeguard our bulletin board from potential intrusion of irresponsible posters,” Huaren requires those wishing to post messages to register their name and email address, and they warn that they “reserve the right to delete comments that contain profanity or demeaning language.” Might we see in this an attempt on the part of the World Huaren Federation to divide and control? Having differentiated between two sorts of Internet users, Huaren excludes ‘irresponsible posters’ thereby limiting the use of their site to those who qualify as ‘Overseas Chinese and Friends’. Recalling Foucault’s second and third modes of objectification ( dividing practices and the way a human being turns him- or herself into a subject), we may want to consider the role of the medium in determining the mode of control and subjectification.

It seems that, for Foucault, control emerged as a function of the extent to which one feels compelled to constitute oneself within particular discursively constructed oppositions—i.e. those articulated through what he called dividing practices. The relationship between such dividing practices and how one is able to make oneself into a subject is one of power, mediated by control and dependence. He explained,

¹⁶ “Chinese Diaspora had existed for many centuries and spread far and wide... With modern communication technology this is the right time to bring us together and to promote the sense of kinship.” (http://www.huaren.org/; emphasis in original). Might we see parallels to communications theory itself in this movement from a self-identical unity to dispersion, and then back again?
There are two meanings of the word *subject*: subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to. (1982: 212)

*Subjugation*, it seems, would only be effective to the extent that the potential subject submits willingly—and *truthfully*—through her or his lining up as a subject within the oppositions on offer.17 Recalling Asad’s account of medieval judicial torture, the confession of guilt, once extracted under duress, had to be freely repeated in court. “Hence, the doctrine that truth cannot be the product of violence—that it must be a free confession of a conscious and sincere subject” (1993: 94). While a sense of being under *surveillance* might provide an impetus to *controlled* action and subjugation (see, e.g. Foucault 1977), a question which Foucault, to my knowledge, has not addressed directly is the role of the *medium* in determining the relationship of power.

We may recall that *Huaren* has required those wishing to post messages to their online bulletin board to register their name and email address. But, how successful have they been in avoiding the ‘potential intrusion of irresponsible posters’? It is hard to say. Though, to my knowledge, there is nothing preventing one from lying on the registration form, they seem to have been fairly successful in keeping a *clean* board. Perhaps registration, despite its obvious imperfections, functions as a deterrent of sorts—e.g. just suggesting the *possibility* of identifying a user is enough. (With very little exception, no one, at any one time, can be precisely sure of what others online can find out about them.)18

17 Foucault has described the extent to which the self-articulation of homosexuality depended upon the very categories through which it was medicalized and oppressed. “There is no question that the appearance in nineteenth-century psychiatry, jurisprudence, and literature of a whole series of discourses on the species and subspecies of homosexuality, inversion, pederasty, and ‘psychic hermaphroditism’ made possible a strong advance of social controls into this area of ‘perversity’; but it also made possible the formation of a ‘reverse’ discourse: homosexuality began to speak in its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or ‘naturality’ be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified.” (1978: 101)

18 In chat-rooms, I have often been asked where I am from, where I am at the moment, and other questions which, in a sense, fight against the relative anonymity of the medium. In the following chatroom exchange, I discovered that I was less than anonymous.

*Vic 1 says*: well rich , you r connecting the internet using aol (american online), so that,s why I know that you must be somewhere outside indonesia.

*Richard says*: How the hell did u know I am connecting using AOL???????????
Not entirely unlike Huaren, the CNN Interactive website runs a series of bulletin boards devoted to current events. The messages posted to the CNN boards may be accessed and read by anyone with Internet access but, as with Huaren, to participate in the discussion—i.e. to be able to post new messages to the board—requires registering a name and email address. Despite the posted prohibition against “using fake names or impersonating others,”[19] several contributors to the Indonesia Unrest board at CNN Interactive signed on under names such as Orang Buleh (‘Albino/White Person’), Wong Edan (‘Wild Man’), Orang Bego (‘Stupid Person’), Gue Tabok Loe (‘I Slap You’) and Hutan Bakau (‘Mangrove Forest’)—all immediately recognizable as pseudonyms to speakers of Indonesian.[20] Although, in my experience, the use of Indonesian pseudonyms has generally gone undetected at CNN Interactive, that does not mean that they do not try to enforce—with varying success—their ‘community standards’. Having slipped past the moderators for some time, a message board participant going by the name “Computer Guy” had one of his messages removed from the board, only to be replaced by a warning from CNN staff:

From CNN Community Staff-
According to the rules and guidelines, messages must be posted under your real name. Therefore, effective immediately, we are requesting that you post under your name. To change your name: click "Preferences", change name, scroll to bottom of the form, Click "Preference"). We

Vic_1 says: I can see your info using my mirc [an Internet relay chat program]

As it turns out, some Internet relay chat programs (IRC)—i.e. the software that enables you to ‘enter’ an Internet chat-room—allow you to ‘identify’ other participants in the chat. A chat-room identity may be anything from a deliberately posted photo with personal details to a blocked out email address with nothing but an indication of the Internet Service Provider—e.g. AOL—you have used to sign on to the Net. It is possible to suppress this chat-room identity or, for that matter, to use a false one. But, either way, Vic_1 was able to establish that I was using America Online (AOL), an ISP based in the United States. As it is practically impossible to sign onto the Net from Indonesia using AOL, Vic_1 knew that I was probably somewhere else.

[20] In a most interesting reply to one of the more vehemently critical contributors to the board, someone calling her/himself (?) Pemerintah Indo (‘Indonesian Government’) remarked, “Please accept apology for being silent. Please understand that we are trying hard here to put our house in order. You want to help? Meanwhile, you all clowns go ahead trash each others. I am too busy to join you nutheads right now. okay! I just fired Prabowo, who was responsible for the shooting of the 6 students. I am about to release the political prisoners. Please give me a chance.”
will delete messages posted under an obvious pseudonym.
We appreciate your contribution to the community here and welcome your assistance in maintaining a high-quality environment for discussion.
- Staff (23 May 1998; red in original, as opposed to standard black typeface)

While the Internet may contribute to undercutting the sorts of control and dependence that have tended to accompany the use of other media, the question of being tied to one’s ‘own identity’ on the Net is perhaps less straightforward than it seems. Though the Internet is often touted for its potential ‘anonymity’, we may want to consider the extent to which the modes of control and dependence, rather than being transcended, have simply been reconfigured. Further, it may be worth exploring the ever-growing potential for online surveillance. At this point, without addressing these issues in any further detail, it should suffice to raise the question of whether, in positing the emancipation of a given subject through the employment of a new medium, we would be putting the cart before the horse. We may want to raise the question of whether speaking in terms of ‘anonymity’ may, in fact, be symptomatic of a wrongheaded attempt to articulate the workings of ‘new’ media in terms more appropriate to older media.

**no_religion@huaren.org**

As the Huaren site was first uploaded to the Net in the wake of violence perpetrated against ‘ethnic-Chinese’ in Indonesia, huarens are most conspicuously differentiated, on the website, from the pribumi Indonesians, those who—like the bumiputra of Malaysia—claim autochthony (and a whole series of inalienable rights). There is little ambiguity in the World Huaren Federation’s attribution of agency vis-à-vis

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21 In a paper delivered to the Pacific Asian Cultural Studies Forum, I discussed the role of anonymity and online communications in the student movements prior to Suharto’s resignation.
22 Several sites (e.g. http://www.thecounter.com) offer detailed information on those who visit your web site. Of course, sites offering anonymity (e.g. http://www.anonymizer.com) have arisen equally quickly.
23 Cp. Foucault’s suggestion that, “I don’t think that we should consider the ‘modern state’ as an entity which was developed above individuals, ignoring what they are and even their very existence, but on the contrary as a very sophisticated structure, in which individuals can be integrated, under one condition: that this individuality would be shaped in a new form, and submitted to a set of very specific patterns” (1982: 214; emphasis added).

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discrimination and violence: “remember, we are victims, being victimized, not the victimizers! not the oppressor!”

Why are huarens seen to be singled out for such mistreatment? On a page devoted to the ‘riots and scapegoating’ of Chinese Indonesians, it is explained that, “the Rupiah or national currency crisis in Indonesia has led to widespread attacks on the ethnic Chinese population in small towns. These senseless attacks cause many ethnic and religious minorities to live in fear.” Not entirely unlike the insinuations made in news agency articles (see above), the root of the problem is said to be economic. Once again, religion seems to be relegated to the realm of the derivative. However, in addition to the above cited reference to ‘religious minorities’, there is posted, in the right margin of the webpage, a picture of a temple with a man in what appears to be military camouflage (see below). Beneath the photo, the caption reads, “‘Moslem lives!’; ‘Moslem is Supreme!’; ‘Get rid of the Chinese’ (Translated from the writing on a Buddhist temple gate destroyed by the rioters).” The writing on the temple wall (which is, it should be noted, not legible in the picture) seems to suggest what we might consider mixed registers: ‘ethnicity’ and ‘religion’.

It would appear, from the picture and its caption, that ‘the Chinese’ are singled out for attack, not only as ‘non-pribumi’, but also as ‘non-Muslim’. So perhaps we should expect to find ‘religion’ somehow tied up with Huaren’s articulation of what it is to be ‘Chinese’.

As it turns out, discussion of religious difference has been rather conspicuously absent chez Huaren. Is the relative disregard of religion as a register of difference only fortuitously related here to the invocation of economics? Reading the writing on the temple wall, we may want to consider the extent to which ignoring religion would comprise an inappropriate globalization of what is, at the end of the day, a ‘local’

Despite my reservations regarding the neatness of his periodization (of a first and second media age), this is not unlike the point made by Poster (1995).
secularism—even if it is disseminated (in the Derridean sense) to the ‘global huaren network’. I would suggest that a critical approach to the ways in which the ‘Chinese’ community is imagined (Anderson 1983) would pay close attention to differences in the articulation of what it is to be ‘Chinese’ (or, perhaps, to be not Chinese) by those without Internet access vis-à-vis their wired ‘counterparts’.

If, in fact, subjectification is necessarily mediated, exporting some registers of difference (especially those emphasized by an online elite), while ignoring others, may be a mistake. Rather, we may want to reconsider the relationship between the ‘community’ and the medium in which it is imagined. Anderson’s notion of the imagined community was mediated primarily by newsprint, but what are the implications of a switch to online communications? But the notion of an imagined community further raises the question of how people make themselves into subjects. Recalling the Foucauldian modes of objectification, we have primarily considered the second, i.e. the dividing practices through which subjects are either divided within themselves or from others. But, the Internet is supposed to be interactive, suggesting a potentially new configuration of the relationship between the ways in which subjects are divided and how one is able to constitute oneself as such.

indonesians@cnn.com

Online bulletin boards seem to provide a (relatively) new opportunity to engage with such practices of subjectification. The message board at CNN Interactive was particularly active in the weeks before and after Suharto’s resignation from the Indonesian presidency. Differing slightly in organization from those at Huaren, the CNN boards have consisted of a series of short messages, each of which has been assigned a number according to the time when it was posted in relation to other messages. That number (e.g. #1087 of 1093) is then listed as part of the message heading (see image below), together with the date, time and the registered name (see above) of the person (or people) who posted it.

Previously posted messages could be viewed in sets of between six and ten; and they would often directly refer to, and comment on other messages, and would sometimes include hyperlinks to articles, personal homepages and other ‘sites’ on the Internet. Through what oppositions have the participants in the message board discussion constituted themselves as subjects? How do they compare to those articulated by the news agencies and/or Huaren? In addressing the representations of recent events by the latter, I was primarily interested in looking at the manner in which subjects were differentiated from one another (e.g. huarens from pribumis) and assigned agency. We noted a general tendency to relegate religious difference to a secondary position in the dividing of subjects from one another. But, I would now like to consider the ways in which people have objectified themselves as subjects—particularly vis-à-vis religious difference.

no_fundamentalists@cnn.com/message-board/

On account of its frequent invocation and, perhaps, less frequent clarity as a concept, we may want to start with ‘fundamentalism’ as a way into the question of the religious subject on the CNN board. Several participants in the discussion have voiced their suspicion—or even fear—of ‘fundamentalists’. According to a contributor who referred to himself as a “moderate Muslim”, fundamentalists are “people who impose their religion on others, in other words who want to make Indonesia an Islamic State with INTOLERANCE to other cultures and religions” (msg. #1097; emphasis in original).26 Another participant in the discussion asserted that “[f]undamentalism of any kind is a dead end street” (msg. #1531), while a contributor responding to another’s concern for the “safety of minorities” in the event of an Islamic government coming to power in Indonesia remarked,

26 The above-cited proponent of “moderate Islam,” had just posted a message in which he denied the suggestion made by another participant in the discussion that “Muslim fundamentalists” were responsible for recent attacks on “non-pribumi” Indonesians. I have used quotation marks around some terms (e.g. “moderate Islam”) in order to indicate that the terms were used by the contributors to the board themselves.
I share your concerns. Indonesia may never be a safe place for minorities. Too many fundamentalists and extremists live among us. Even the so claimed educated people here can’t tolerate differences. If we’re still stuck discussing religions, races, and ethnicity, perhaps there’s no future for Indonesia. (msg. #1552)

Perhaps unsurprisingly, there were no self-acclaimed ‘fundamentalists’ participating in the discussion. Yet, whether invoked in opposition to ‘moderate Islam’ or what seemed to be a nationalist brand of secular-modernism,27 ‘fundamentalism’ was consistently deployed as a pressing threat to the future of Indonesia.

It is, furthermore, interesting to note the manner in which ‘fundamentalism’, as antithetical to tolerance, has been regularly associated with a lack of ‘education’. It was presented as a matter of some concern that ‘even the so claimed educated people’ could not ‘tolerate differences’. But, further, fearing the power vacuum left by Suharto’s resignation, another participant in the discussion explained, “[i]n times of turmoil, the situation is ripe for Islamic Fundamentalism to rear its ugly head. Preying on the ignorant and uneducated, people like [the message names a prominent Muslim figure in Indonesian politics] … will seize the opportunity to play the religious theme and promise the faithful that the promised land is near” (msg. #1570; name omitted).

When it was not set in diametric opposition to ‘fundamentalism’, ‘education’ was often cited in more general association with the tolerance of diversity and, by association, with the future of the nation.28 As one contributor, signing on as an “Indonesian graphic designer”, put it, “[t]here’s still a chance for us to make our country into a better place, with better education and better standard of living. Once we have something more in common, we could live together in peace and harmony. God will help us. Long Live Indonesia” (msg. #1153; emphasis added). By

27 Something approaching each of these general orientations has been outlined by Heffner (1998).
28 ‘Tolerance’ of difference is one of the more prominent tropes deployed in Indonesian nationalist discourse. Examples would include the national motto, ‘Unity in Diversity’ (Bhinneka Tunggal Ika), and the oft-cited acronym SARA (suksa, agama, ras & anjar-galongan), representing the four subjects to be avoided in public/published discussion.
comparison, some contributors were markedly less subtle in voicing their intolerance of 'uneducated' intolerance:

You are wasting your time trying to get the message into my muslim brother's heads. Others have tried unsuccessfully. To them the whole world is to blame except them selves. That is typical of muslim mentality. ... You see not all natives think like these bunch of people on this message board. I am a Christian Batak, and I am appalled at the riotous act commited against the Chinese in Indonesia. It as ashamed that rioters may claim to be uneducated, but it is more shameful that these so called "educated" muslim brothers and sisters here in this msg board never showed any remorse or appologized for their uneducated muslim brothers deeds. (sic; msg. #1523; emphasis added)

Though, as this message illustrates, some of the contributors to the message board made a rather facile identification of Islam with 'fundamentalism', reproof came quickly from many “moderate Muslim” participants in the discussion. Having criticized the ‘progress-preventing’ nepotism he considered characteristic of 'Javanese culture', one contributor appealed,

...please refrain from making generalization or false accusation against other religions. Who are the so called 'Muslim fundamentalists'? I thought Indonesia is known for being 'Muslim KTP'.”

29 The KTP, or residence identification card (kartu tanda penduduk/pengenal), includes a mandatory declaration of adherence to one of the five recognized religions (Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Catholicism & Protestantism).

30 Who is to blame for the dissemination of stereotypes? More often than not, the responsibility has been placed on "western media", particularly on CNN itself. As one participant in the discussion explained, "the West through it's medias (sic) like CNN, have created an opinion that Islam is a radical, militant religion, which knows no peace and respect for other religions. THIS IS A TOTALLY WRONG PERSPECTIVE" (msg. #1512; emphasis in original). And another contributor was even more specific in her/his (?) identification of bias: "...from the looting 2 weeks ago, not only the Chinese stores that being looted. Many of the stores at Cengkareng which being looted are owned by Native Indonesians. But CNN just never mentioned about it. They just want to show the world, that Indonesia, The biggest Muslim population in the world are a racist country. They just never stop condemn[ing] Muslim country, that's all." (sic; msg. #1371)
So it seems that, despite the conspicuous absence of self-acclaimed ‘fundamentalists’, the trope of ‘fundamentalism’ has loomed large on the national horizon as an excluded other, a seemingly constitutive outside (Laclau 1990) in opposition to which the contributors have represented themselves in the online discussion.
reason@indonesia.net/society/

Not unrelated to education, it seems, is the invocation of 'reason' and 'rationality'. If educated tolerance emerged as the antidote to fundamentalism, reasoned discourse seems to hold the promise of a speedy recovery for 'Indonesian society'. In a reply to a message posted by someone suggesting that, on account of their alleged support for recent missile-testing by the Chinese military, "these Chinese [in Indonesia] should expect nothing," one contributor remarked,

"Most of us on this message board are trying to argue constructively on what should be done for the betterment of Indonesia. If you cannot contribute rationally, please stay off!" (msg. #1378)

Drawing, yet again, on the importance of education, a participant who described himself as a petroleum engineering consultant explained, "[i]f reformation of Indonesian society thru political and economic structural change is not done[,] yes [the rioting and looting] will continue. You must be educated enough to understand my reasoning" (msg. #1529). His interlocutor replied, "Let me ask you something, do you feel even a little bit of regret or remorse [for] mistreating us [i.e. 'Chinese' Indonesians] for so long? I strongly doubt so. You are busy making up excuses to reason the unreasonable. And the more educated you are the more so-called 'reasons' you could make up" (msg. #1632; emphasis added). How might one, transitively, reason the unreasonable? What is unreasonable? And, perhaps more importantly, what is reasonable? The graphic designer remarked,

"It's my third times I'm visiting this boards. Thanks GOD, I don't see much annoying irrational racist comments anymore. Now, everyone speaks with some degree of fairness and clarity. Let's continue this discussion. Speaks the truth, without loosing objectivity. ... Let's identify the facts. When the time comes, we all should address it and bring it into the justice. ... This is the time we unified together as a nation to seek out the truth and Justice for us. Every Indonesian, regardless their race, religion and ethnic groups. (sic; msg. #1153; all emphases added)"
Racism is excluded as ‘irrational’ while, on the side of reason, we encounter fairness, clarity, truth, objectivity, the facts, justice, and—surprise, surprise—the unified (Indonesian) nation. Race must be simultaneously asserted as a register of difference, and denied in striving for unity. Taking a similar tack, a contributor to the board going by the name DaulatRakyat (= “PopularMandate”) remarked,

I am relieved that the debate here has been elevated to a more reasoned discourse. ... A few people have mentioned that the terms of the social contract between the government and the governed have not been properly debated in society. I cannot agree more. Once the current crisis has passed and a reasonable stability has been established, I would like to see a Constituent Assembly called to modernise our Constitution. Representatives should be called to debate in congress the amendments and make a draft. The final draft should be debated in society and put to a referendum. For only in this way will the ties that bound government and the governed be established properly. A system of checks and balances instituted among the citizens of our fair country. (msg. #1087; all emphases added)

Here, Reason is further bolstered, as the foundation for a unified Indonesia, through association with a (Rousseauvian?) social contract, (open?) debate in (civil?) society and the modernization of the constitution.

But who is to bear the burden of ‘reasoned discourse’? Whose ‘education’ is it that is supposed to prevent their succumbing to ‘fundamentalism’? Enter, ‘the individual’. A contributor to the board, who described herself as a Muslim woman

31 I have opted to translate this contributor’s ‘name’ as he seemed to do. In a later message, DaulatRakyat asserted that a prominent political figure “does not have the mandate (‘daulat’) of the people.” DaulatRakyat could be a somewhat difficult phrase to translate. Daulat can simply mean ‘good fortune’ or ‘happiness’, but often implies sovereignty, as in negara yang merdeka dan daulat, “a state that is independent and —”, (Kamus Umum Bahasa Indonesia, 1995: 232). Rakyat, more generally, can be taken to mean people, in the sense of ‘the people’ (cp. L. populus).
signing on from Jakarta, explained, in critical reply to a message posted in support of the creation of an Islamic state in Indonesia,

Religion is as good or as bad as the people practicing it. Everything comes back to the individuals. We can have 100 religions actively practiced in a country, as long as each of the individuals practice their religions’ teachings of compassion, love and tolerance, the country would be fine. That is all I have to say. (msg. #1444; emphases added)

Shortly thereafter, another participant in the discussion remarked, “[i]t’s not about what kind of religion you have that makes who you are. It’s all in your brain whether you wanna be good or bad” (msg. #1447). Responsibility for tolerance has tended to be placed on ‘the individual’ as the natural(ized) moral/ontological unit (metonymically represented by ‘your brain’), and her or his decision to act ethically—that is to say, in a manner conducive to the reform of the unified nation. As one contributor to the board exclaimed,

I think what Indonesians need are GOOD GOVERNANCE, BETTER EDUCATION SYSTEM, and DECENTRALIZATION in economy. Please stop talking about racism and religions. We need to IMPROVE. And the only thing to do that is “I” will “improve”. Introspective in to yourself. The word “improve” starts with “I” (aku). (sic; msg. #1626; emphases in original)

The participants in the message board discussion have, rather consistently, constituted themselves—generally in opposition—as ‘educated individuals’. This, it should be noted, did not necessarily entail the privatization of religion and its

32 In a publicly posted reply to my query, she explained, “I am logging [on] from Jakarta, and use the internet a lot for whatever (news, shopping, research, car reservation, etc.). Hope this helps you a bit.” Elsewhere, in reply to a query from another contributor to the board, she remarked, “My father, [name omitted], was a Directorate General in the [name of ministry omitted] Ministry. My uncle, [name omitted] is a retired two-star ... General ... I am not trying to be snobbish here, as I am sure there are many people out there with more sterling qualities in their families. This is just to let you know that I am truly 100 % a Javanese Muslim. You can easily check their credentials at the proper Ministries.” (msg. #1054).

33 Many of those invoking religion as a way forward for Indonesia (e.g., ‘a return to true religious values’ etc.) were ecumenical in their recommendations, sometimes explicitly within the framework of Pancasila, sometimes not.

34 Aku is an informal, first person singular, personal pronoun in Bahasa Indonesia.
exclusion from the realm of ‘public’ affairs. Whether supporting a public role for religion or not, the ‘educated individual’, as articulated in the discussion at CNN Interactive, would be free to choose her or his course of action, rather than it being chosen for them by an ‘irrational’ or ‘fundamentalist’ religion. The message board is beginning to look like the home of liberal democracy... But in posting these messages, to whom were the contributors’ representations addressed? More than once, chatroom discussion has turned to the possibility of there being mata-mata (‘spies’, lit. ‘eyes’) lurking about. Might the direct addressee be less important than the lurkers, quietly following the discussion without overtly contributing? A contributor to a Buddhist Studies list recently remarked,

> Frankly, when I write a post, I am really directing it not to the addressee, but to the lurkers. The addressee is usually a totally lost cause anyway, since they think they’re a Buddhist. So lurking on [name of list] is not like peeking into someone’s bedroom at night. It’s more like going to the soap box corner of Hyde Park. :)

But what implications would follow from asserting a Bakhtinian (1986) superaddressee? Might this undercut the anti-essentialist ground gained by our emphasis on commentary? Returning to CNN, how does the articulation of the ‘educated individual’ line up with the news agencies and Huaren in their displacement of religion as, firstly, a register of difference and, secondly, as an actual (as opposed to derivative) factor in determining human action? Further, how might differences of class and gender factor into this articulation of the religious subject? Might the ‘educated individual’, as constituted on the CNN message board, be

35 Although many of the contributors to the board wanted to ‘set aside religions in our discussions’ (msg. #1101), ‘separate the topic of Islam from this message board’ (msg. #1512), and simply to ‘stop talking about racism and religions’ (msg. #1626); there have been others who have suggested living ‘by peace, logic, codes of honor and the codes of your religion’ (msg. #1641), and have called for ‘a return to basic religious values whether it be Muslim, Christian or Buddhist’ (msg. #1557). As one participant in the discussion suggested, ‘...religion of any denomination is important in defining and supporting strong social values in any Nation. However, in the case of Indonesia a purely Islamic approach would not work because of the multi-racial makeup of the Nation. ... There is no reason why the objectives you seek cannot be obtained by all Muslims, Christians, Hindus and Buddhists in Indonesia by reinforcing the values of their respective religions.’ (msg. #1295)

36 She explained in a parenthetical note, ‘(See, I never had to admit to anyone that I really wasn’t a Buddhist, because it says right in the Prajna Paramita Sutra that no good Buddhist thinks they’re a Buddhist. So by thinking that I wasn’t really a Buddhist, I

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interpreted as an upper middle class fantasy of liberal democracy? How are we to reconcile this seemingly white-washed world of tolerance with the horror of recent rapes and beatings?

Thus far I have focussed on the second and third of Foucault’s three modes of objectification, but there remain those which ‘try to give themselves the status of sciences’. These particular ‘modes of inquiry’, as Foucault called them, seem to entail a special variety of dividing practices, one that tends to entail its practitioners’ denial that they are, in fact, simultaneously constituting themselves as (often privileged) knowing subjects. Perhaps the most obvious aspirants to scientificity, in our connexion, would be media and cultural studies.

One of the aims of the conference, as I understand it, is to reevaluate entrenched assumptions, particularly those around the way we understand our relationship to the ‘audiences’ with whom we are working—the outcome, hopefully, being a more critical approach to media practices. In preparing this paper, I was struck by the apparent absence of ‘religion’ in contemporary media and cultural studies. Considering their debt to critical theorists such as Marx and Gramsci—both of whom, it seems, were very much interested in religious subjectification—this came as a bit of a surprise. When I consider, for example, the importance of religion in contemporary Asian political discourse—the BJP in India, Islam in Malaysia and Indonesia or Buddhism in Thailand—I am rather worried by the assumption of a secularized Asia that would accompany the wholesale exportation of EurAm ‘critical theory’.

What sort of subject is assumed by media and cultural studies theorists in their critiques of the naturalization of race, class and gender inequality in mass mediated culture? Recalling the Marxian/Gramscian genealogy, is it possible that media representations have taken the place of religion in accounting for the perceived mollification of the masses? If so, what assumptions have been retained regarding the

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privileged access of the critical theorist to, for example, the ‘codes’ of a ‘media text’? I would suggest that if, in fact, we wish to work toward a critical approach to media practices in Asia, we must be on our guard against the simple replacement—i.e. within an already established critical framework—of one ‘object of study’ by another.

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[Note: the following articles were all downloaded from http://www.cnn.com, having been posted to that site on the date indicated.]


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Xinhua (3 Feb. 1999) "Indonesian Police Admit Political Motives in Riots."
APPENDIX

Images

1

“Moslem Lives!”, “Moslem is Supreme!”, “Get rid of the Chinese!”
(Translated from the writing on a Buddhist temple gate destroyed by the rioters.)
(http://www.huaren.org/, 29 May 1999)

2

Jakarta! Or, those fundamentalists who would use force.

DaulatRakyat 02:08pm May 21, 1998 ET (#1087 of 1093)

I am relieved that the debate here has been elevated to discourse. It is indeed time for Indonesians to set out once again to have been rudely interrupted these past 50 years.

A few people have mentioned that the terms of the social

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