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Pancasila became law last June in Indonesia, the world's most populous Islamic nation, requiring even Muslim organizations to accept a five-point ideology as their sole basic principle. Thus culminated the government's controversial campaign for every religious organization in the country to accept, ahead of their own ideology, a common creed: belief in the one Supreme God, humanitarianism, national unity, democracy by consensus, and social justice. To many Indonesians Pancasila is an essential tool for unifying their vastly multi-ethnic/religious archipelagic nation.

Contrary to what non-Islamic religious interests might have thought, however, this didn't necessarily mean greater scope for their expression. For Indonesia has also embarked on what essentially amounts to an Islamisation program.

Asiaweek reports that Mosques or praying rooms are now provided in all schools, universities and government offices. Government is sponsoring Koran contests nationwide. Military and government officials are making every effort to meet rural Muslim leaders.

Strong reactions from Muslim and Christian organizations prompted assurance from President Suharto that Pancasila would never be elevated into a religion governing the spiritual values of Indonesians. The December acceptance of the code by the Muhammadiyah, an Islamic mass organization influencing about 1/2 of the nation's Muslims, had gone a long way toward defusing the potentially explosive issue which in the past has been a key subject in Islamic protests, some violent.

Just how truly Muslim Indonesia actually is today is not a simple question. By official state figures, the population is 87% Muslim, 2% Buddhist, 2% Hindu, 3%

Catholic and 6% Protestant. But according the World Christian Encyclopedia, many sociologists and observers count only 43% "Koranic" Muslims (Muslims in the strict sense). Though that estimate is probably very low, it is instructive. Indonesian Islam is a richly blended with pre-Islamic Buddhist and Hindu traditions and customs as well as animistic beliefs. And there are large numbers of "statistical Muslims" among whom Hindu elements predominate. Another source, anthropologist Clifford Geertz, observes, "Islam, which came with Arab traders in the fifteenth century, has never known quite what to do about Java's Hindu-Buddhist past, which began 1,400 years before the Arabs came. Much of the mysticism of this earlier civilization survives in Java's 40,000 villages." Hinduism predominates in one of its most glorious and unique forms on the singular island of Bali (population ca. 2 million).

On Java, the central island, "About one-third of the Muslims follow orthodox practices; they are referred to as the santri. Members of the more Hinduized Muslims, including a majority of white-collar workers, are termed priayi. A third tradition called abangan is strongly influenced by traditional and ancestral spirits and is closely associated with the peasants." (Encyclopedia Britannica 1980)

Yet, President Suharto, who himself shares the abangan heritage, has barely been able to contain the new wave of Islamic Fundamentalism. Signs are that it is changing the religious face of the nation. A journalist for the Economist of London wrote: "Your correspondent has just revisited a Javanese village for the seventh time in 18 years. Villagers who could scarcely have been called Muslims five years ago were now going to the mosque and saying their prayers five times a day." Anthropologist Geertz noted in the same article, "The younger generation of abangan...are becoming santri. However even these devout Muslims have to compromise with Hindu culture by giving Islamic meaning to olden Hindu symbols."

As in the case of Malaysia, constitutional religious freedom clauses may be the highest cards for Indonesian minority religions. The Pancasila Bill includes an article from the 1945 Constitution guaranteeing every citizen freedom to practice the teachings of his religion. It gives organizations two years to adjust themselves to the new regulation. It also empowers the government, upon recommendations of the Supreme Court, to ban or freeze those groups considered endangering to the state or public security.