

Contextualizing the Global: Exploring the Roots of Pentecostalism in Malaysia and Indonesia

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In 2005 the Pew Forum estimated that there were 351 million Asian Christians, of which about a third, 135 million, could be considered Pentecostals-charismatic, and over the last decade or so there has been an exponential rise in publications on the global success of “P/c” churches.¹ While this figure is still below that of Latin America and Africa, observers have spoken of the “explosive growth” of Pentecostalism in several Asian countries and there are claims that it is developing into the dominant expression of indigenous Christianity in Asia.² In 1998 the topic of “Asian Pentecostalism” was deemed sufficiently important to launch a dedicated journal, and the rising number of publications demonstrates the expansion of scholarly interest.³

Since most Pentecostals are drawn from an existing Christian population, case studies of “Asian Pentecostalism” have tended to focus on the majority Christian countries, Korea and to a lesser extent the Philippines.⁴ In the rest of Asia (except for Timor Loro Sae) Christianity is a minority faith, and contemporary Pentecostalism has

¹ “Overview: Pentecostalism in Asia.” <http://pewforum.org/surveys/pentecostal/asia/> (Accessed 11 June, 2009). In this survey the Pew Forum included the United Nations sub-regions of Central Asia, East Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia and West Asia; see also Joel Robbins, “The Globalization of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 33 (2004), 117-43.

² Hwa Yung, “Pentecostalism and the Asian Church,” in Allen Anderson and Edmund Tang, ed. *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia* (Oxford: Regnum Studies in Mission, 2005), 53; Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 123.

³ See the references attached to the essays in Anderson and Tang, ed. *Asian and Pentecostal*.

⁴ See, for example, Hong Young-Gi, Myung Sung-Hoon, ed. *Charis and Charisma : David Yonggi Cho and the Growth of Yoido Full Gospel Church* (Oxford: Regnum, 2003); Hwa Yung, *Mangoes or Bananas?: The Quest for an Authentic Asian Christian Theology* (Oxford, England ; Irving, Calif. : Regnum International, 1997), 205-13; Katherine L. Wiegele, *Investing in Miracles: El Shaddai and the Transformation of Popular Catholicism in the Philippines* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005).

seemed to warrant less research. In Southeast Asia this relative neglect may be also due to the relatively recent fluorescence of P/c churches. There is, moreover, a propensity to see Christianity generally as non-indigenous, and Pentecostalism in particular as a “prosperity” belief system whose greatest appeal is to the commercially-oriented Chinese community.⁵ Evidence in apparent support of such an argument is not hard to find. The most obvious example of the interaction between religious commodification, Pentecostalism and “Chineseness” in Southeast Asia comes from Singapore, with a population that is around 77% of Chinese descent. Here mega-churches like City Harvest and New Creation regularly fill auditoriums with thousands of worshippers, mostly from the professional, English-educated middle class.⁶ The pattern is more muted in Indonesia and Malaysia, but in September 2008 the Katedral Meias opened in Jakarta with seating room for around 4000 people, catering largely to an Indonesian-Chinese congregation.⁷ In October 2009 the Assembly of God Church in Petaling Jaya, Malaysia, will host the third Chinese Pentecostal Convention.⁸ Yet in Indonesia and Malaysia the association between Chinese and Pentecostal is heavily freighted, for not only does Christianity carry the baggage of European colonialism, but resentment towards Chinese economic dominance has at times resulted in violence. In a context where American preachers such as Oral Roberts and Benny Hinn have achieved an international reputation it is easy enough for Pentecostalism to be seen as foreign import.

Pentecostal churches in both countries have answered this challenge by emphasizing their “national” status and their commitment to state goals. This is not necessarily an easy negotiation, for in certain situations P/c success in winning adherents

⁵ See, for example, the articles by Juliette Koning, “Singing Yourself into Existence; Chinese Indonesian Entrepreneurs, Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity, and the Indonesian Nation State,” in J. Bautista & F. Lim Khok Gee, ed. *Christianity and the State in Asia. Complicity and Conflict* (London: Routledge, 2009); Juliette Koning & Heidi Dahles, “Spiritual Power; Ethnic Chinese Managers and the Rise of Charismatic Christianity in Southeast Asia,” *Copenhagen Journal of Asian Studies*, 27, 1 (2009), 5-37; Juliette Koning, “Empowerment through Conversion; Chinese Indonesians and the Pentecostal-charismatic Movement.” *Inside Indonesia*, 95 (January-March 2009). <http://insideindonesia.org/content/view/1157/47/> (Accessed June 10, 2009).

⁶ Joy Tong Kooi Chin, “McDonalidization and the Megachurches: A Cast Study of the City Harvest Church, Singapore,” in Pattana Kitiarsa, ed. *Religious Commodification in Asia: Marketing Gods* (London: Routledge, 2008), 186-204.

⁷ Straits Times online http://www.straitstimes.com/Breaking%2BNews/SE%2BAsia/Story/STIStory_280655.html. September 20, 2008(Accessed June 12, 2009).

⁸ Assembly of God website, Malaysia. <http://www.ag.org.my/> (Accessed June 17, 2009).

can be viewed as a threat to national integrity. In Indonesia, for instance, the appeal of Pentecostalism among the Dani of Irian Jaya (West New Guinea) has been a major factor in a developing sense of group identity and opposition to the rising number of Muslim migrants.⁹ Given Muslim suspicions of Christian missionizing, it may be strategically necessary to downplay the influence of visiting Western evangelizers and the financial support received from Western countries. To some extent this has opened up more space for “Asian” interactions with the large centers of Pentecostal activity such as Korea and Singapore. The influential Korean Pastor David Yonggi Cho (1936-) has made several visits to Indonesia, with the most recent crusade in July 2002, and the charismatic, young and photogenic Singapore pastor, Joseph Prince, founder of New Creation Church, drew audiences of around 15,000 during his Indonesia campaign of 2008.¹⁰ At the same time, these connections strengthen interaction with an international movement that combines prescriptions for evangelical success with a global style of church organization and leadership. The cosmopolitan nature of this urban-based model and the fact that it can be easily transported may have significant ramifications in terms of the diversity that specialists have seen in Asian Pentecostalism and its ability to incorporate specifically local features.

In taking up this line of inquiry, the following discussion will focus on the Sidang Injil Borneo (the Evangelical Church of Borneo) and the Gereja Bethel Indonesia (Bethel Church, Indonesia), both of which claim to be “indigenous.” The contrast between them provides an opportunity to explore alternative manifestations of Asian Pentecostalism in two rather different contexts. On the one hand, Indonesia officially comprises around 17,000 islands and in demographic terms is the world’s fourth largest country (240,180,787). Although Islam is not the state religion Indonesia is also home to the

⁹ Charles E. Farhadian, *Christianity, Islam and Nationalism in Indonesia* (Routledge: New York and London, 2005), 117-9.

¹⁰ Anon, “A History of the Pentecostal Movement in Indonesia,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 4, 1 (2001), 322; David Cho Evangelical Mission website: <http://www.davidcho.com/NewEng/news-event/2002-indonesiapro.asp>; Joseph Prince Ministries: https://www.josephprince.org/aboutus/aboutjosephandwendy/joseph_and_wendy.htm (Accessed June 17, 2009). See also the account of Prince’s influence in the founding of the largely Chinese SIB Grace Church in Kuching. In 2001, when a new Christian bookstore opened, “many cassettes carrying sermons and bible teachings by Ps. Joseph Prince of New Creation Church, Singapore had circulated that fired a refreshing understanding of the New Covenant. This quickly became known as ‘The Grace Message’. Many who were no longer attending church or had left ministry came back to regular fellowship.” Website of SIB Grace church, <http://sibgrace.org/sibgracehistory.html> (Accessed June 24, 2009).

world's largest Muslim population. As in Malaysia, Christianity is a minority religion, estimated at around 10% of the total. Particularly striking is the fact that within this Christian population Pentecostal churches are rapidly expanding. In 2000 it was estimated that there were 6.8 million Indonesian Pentecostals, but two years later this figure had almost doubled, to around 12 million, and today there are hundreds of different Pentecostal churches.¹¹ The Gereja Bethel Indonesia, one of the fastest growing Pentecostal movements in the world, includes branches all over Indonesia and has expanded to serve Indonesian communities overseas. It is thus evident that Pentecostalism is attracting many non-Chinese away from mainstream styles of worship.

In contrast to Indonesia, Malaysia (population 25,274,132 in 2009) has affirmed Islam as its official religion, although it is not an Islamic state. The Christian percentage in the 2000 census was given at 9.1%, but the majority live in the eastern Malaysia states of Sabah (28%) and Sarawak (42.4%), where most of the adherents are non-Malay tribal peoples who adopted Christianity during the 20th century.¹² On the Peninsula, where Christians are largely of Chinese, Indian or Eurasian descent, most evangelical churches are now Pentecostal-Charismatic. In Sarawak and Sabah Methodists, Anglicans and Roman Catholics are still significant, but the Pentecostal Sidang Injil Borneo is the dominant church. In Sarawak alone it is estimated that there may be as many as 100,000 members, and churches are now being established in West Malaysia as well. Currently membership of the Sidang Injil Borneo is surpassed only by the Roman Catholics. This paper will focus on these two churches in order to address the issues that have emerged as they attempt to assert their claim to be “Malaysian” and “Indonesian” while simultaneously affirming their place in a worldwide Christian movement.

Pentecostalism in Indonesia and Malaysia

The question of whether Pentecostalism is a “new” Asian religion or simply a Western transplant is complicated by the manner in which Pentecostalism reached the region. Although historians have identified Pentecostal-style movements in various

¹¹ Hwa, “Pentecostalism and the Asian Church,” 38; Mark Robinson, “The Growth of Indonesian Pentecostalism, in Allen Anderson and Edmund Tang, ed. *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia* (Oxford: Regnum Studies in Mission, 2005), 340.

¹² *General Report of the Population and Housing Census 2000*. Putrajaya: Department of Statistics, Malaysia. 2005.

countries in the late nineteenth century, it is generally agreed that the formal origins of Pentecostalism can be traced to the emotionally-charged revival meetings held in Azusa Street in Los Angeles in 1906, with leadership that included black Americans as well as white, and women as well as men. In many respects Pentecostalism had much in common with the evangelistic Christianity from which it was derived – insisting on personal conversion and salvation by faith, the obligation to evangelize and the acceptance of the Bible as the sole authority in matters of faith.

Pentecostalism, however, takes its inspiration from the biblical description of the Day of Pentecost, when the disciples of Jesus were gathered in an upper room “and suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent, rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance (Acts 2: 2-4).” According to Mark’s gospel, there would be specific signs of “signs” that the Holy Spirit had descended. “Devils will be cast out in the name of Jesus; people will speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing it will not hurt them: they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.” (Mark 16:17-18). A sense of personal engagement has long been a feature of Pentecostal worship, and despite differences in leadership and church character, adherents have always paid special attention to the “gifts of the spirits,” signs of the presence of the Holy Spirit such as speaking with tongues and miraculous healing. As a number of authors have pointed out, these beliefs are particularly appealing in societies for whom supernatural involvement in everyday living is accepted as part of the human experience.¹³

The arrival of Pentecostalism in Indonesia is usually attributed to connections between American Pentecostals and their Dutch counterparts in the early 20th century, and their arrival in Java in the 1920s. It is thus relatively easy to write a history of Pentecostalism purely in terms of European missionizing, although even in pre-war days when Westerners were in control a substantial portion of early Pentecostal work was carried out by local evangelists. Unfortunately, little information about individuals such

¹³ Hwa Yung, *Mangoes or Bananas?*, 7, 71-6.

as S.I.P. Luimondong, Hornung, and A.E. Siwi is available, and the same holds true for indigenous evangelists in Borneo. There is an urgent need to collect information that is only available through local memory.¹⁴ We also need to appreciate that Pentecostalism assumed an “Asian face” from early times, and that the ripples from Christian revivals in India and China were also reaching Southeast Asia through the well established migrant network.¹⁵

The influence of pre-war revivalist meetings is very evident in Malaysia, where Indian and Sinhalese Christians worked among plantation workers, mainly Tamil, who were receptive to the “spirit baptisms” and other elements associated with Pentecostalism.¹⁶ In the same period a substantial number of Christian Chinese in British Malaya were also drawn to Pentecostal-style revival meetings led by the Chinese evangelist John Sung in 1935-6. Disenchanted with Western theology while a student in the United States, he had developed his own missiology methods. Although he was opposed to speaking in tongues, to the display of undue emotion, and to prophecies based on dreams and visions, Sung’s insistence on the literal meaning of the bible and the imminent second coming, his reputation for omniscience, and the belief that he could both heal and expel evil spirits struck a responsive chord in overseas Chinese communities. During his ten-day mission in Sarawak nearly 1,600 Chinese “found their way to Christ.”¹⁷

Generated by the economic disruptions of late 1920s and 1930s as well as the loosening of regulations regarding missionizing, the Netherlands Indies also witnessed a “Chinese” revival.¹⁸ In Surabaya, a Pentecostal teaching base, the Dutch-trained Ong Ngo

¹⁴ Gani Wiyono, “The Growth of Indonesian Pentecostalism,” in Allen Anderson and Edmund Tang, ed. *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia* (Oxford: Regnum Studies in Mission, 2005), 308; see also the periodic mention in Shirley P. Lees, *Jungle Fire* (London: Oliphants, 1964), especially 88-9.

¹⁵ Hwa, *Mangoes or Bananas?*, 123-45.

¹⁶ Tan Jin Huat, “Pentecostals and Charismatics in Malaysia and Singapore,” in Allen Anderson and Edmund Tang, ed. *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia* (Oxford: Regnum Studies in Mission, 2005), 282

¹⁷ Robert Hunt, Lee Kam Hing and John Roxborough, *Christianity in Malaysia: A Denominational History* (Pelanduk Publications, 1992), 171; Tan, “Pentecostals and Charismatics,” 286; Kurt Koch, *The Revival in Indonesia* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1972), 54-64.

¹⁸ For example, in 1930 a Chinese missionary, Tsang Kam Foek, was granted permission to work among the Chinese population in Bali, but Balinese were also attracted and in 1932 it was said that 266 had been baptized. Chris Sugden, *Seeking the Asian Face of Jesus: The Practice and Theology of Christian Social Witness in Indonesia and India 1974-1996* (Oxford: Regnum Studies in Mission, 1997), 46-7.

Tjwan held evangelistic meetings during the late 1920s that were attended by thousands, mostly Chinese, and were accompanied by accounts of miracle healings and the fervor of baptism. In 1939 Surabaya Pentecostals extended an invitation to John Sung, who had previously visited Medan. In the same year he returned for a two-month tour, drawing large crowds of Chinese in Java's major cities as well as in Ujung Pandang (Sulawesi) and Ambon. He was reputedly able to identify the sins committed by those who came to hear him preach, and there were reports of miraculous healings – people receiving their sight, the deaf hearing and lame people walking.¹⁹ In both Indonesia and Malaysia the growth of Christianity among Chinese received a further injection of energy after the war when China's new Communist government closed the doors to missionaries. In Indonesia another surge in Chinese adoption of Christianity followed the events of 1965, when the regime led by President Suharto declared that all Indonesians must align themselves with one of the five approved religions. It has been estimated that today around 70% of Chinese Christians are members of Pentecostal-charismatic churches.

The small group of scholars, primarily church historians, who are working on “Asian” Pentecostalism are still grappling with identifying reasons for its region-wide appeal, especially since the 1960s. Observers have pointed to improvements in communications, rising urban populations, the unsettling effects of economic and social changes and increased missionary energy. Working in the Chinese community, Juliette Koning and Heidi Dahles have concluded that ethnic Chinese business leaders have found a “global and modern identity” in Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity, which also provides material and spiritual rewards.²⁰ For theologians, however, one of the most difficult issues concerns the question of whether Pentecostalism represents a spiritual rebirth, or whether its strength draws heavily on a well-pool of pre-Christian and animist belief. As elsewhere in the Third World, they have argued that much contemporary theology in the West fails to engage the “Asian world” of spirits and the supernatural and thus fails to speak “with power” to Asian cultures. On the other hand, while some theologians have argued that Pentecostalism is a powerful force because it takes signs

¹⁹ Anon, “A History of the Pentecostal Movement in Indonesia,” 142; Robinson, “The Growth of Indonesian Pentecostalism,” 331.

²⁰ Koning and Dahles, “Spiritual Power”, 31.

and wonders seriously, they do not want to see the church as accommodating animism.²¹ Anthropologists have further debated whether Pentecostalism has assumed a universal face, or whether the adaption to local situations gives churches a truly indigenous character.²²

In contextualizing the appeal of Christianity in Southeast Asia, I have come to the topic as a historian rather than as an anthropologist, and as one who has long been interested in understanding the ways in which “outside” ideas have been adapted to local cultures. In this case I have found it useful to return to the writings of O.W. Wolters, especially his formulation of a regional “cultural matrix” that he believes helps explain the response to Hindu ideas when they began to penetrate the Southeast Asia over a thousand years ago. While vastly separated in place and time, his description of the appeal of Indian devotionalism, *bhakti*, sounds surprisingly relevant to Pentecostalism. *Bhakti* teachings, Wolters argues, were personalized and organized around teacher-inspired sects “whose members strenuously sought to participate in the grace of [the] great gods.” In this “self-Hinduizing” process, *bhakti* followers were taught to cultivate imaginative faculties “in order to strengthen their awareness of the god’s presence and tap cosmic power for personal ends.” In other words, spiritual power could be taught and attained here and now.²³

Hinduism was inseparably connected with political models, and for Wolters a second line of connection concerns the nature of leadership. This too seems highly pertinent to the present discussion, since the Pentecostal movement is characterized by fragmentation and churches typically coalesce around a particular leader. One observer has remarked that in the Gereja Pentekosta di Indonesia “the pastor is ‘Raja’ (king). He is the ‘Bapak’ (father) who, in most cases, not only rules the church but he owns it too! The church properties are in his name or under an independent board of which he is the

²¹ Hwa, “Pentecostalism and the Asian Church, 53; Hwa, *Mangoes or Bananas?*, 74 ff.

²² See further Robbins, “The Globalization of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity,” 118; David Martin, *Tongues of Fire: The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 282; Andre Cortin, ed. *Between Babel and Pentecost: Transnational Pentecostalism in Africa and Latin America* (Bloomington: Indian University Press, 2001); Ogbu Kalu, *African Pentecostalism: An Introduction* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

²³ O.W. Wolters, *History, Culture and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives*. Revised Edition (Ithaca, NY: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University; Singapore: ISEAS, 1999), 22, 111, 227.

chairman.”²⁴ The outsize stature of church leaders in Pentecostalism thus resonates with the reception given to Hindu ideas in early Southeast Asia. Devotionalism made sense in this context, Wolters believes, because although “all people were believed to be endowed with an innate spiritual property,” certain individuals, “people of prowess” stood out because of their personal achievements derived from their spiritual zeal and their ability to attract followers who in turn would benefit from their superior and potent influence.²⁵ In extending Wolter’s line of thinking, it is useful to remember that throughout the region indigenous vocabularies provide specific words for the special quality attached to these individuals, such as *sahala* in Toba Batak or *batuah* in Dayak. Their favored place in the cosmic order can be apparent in worldly success, but also manifested through their special relationship with powerful deities, who use this person as a medium for conveying messages to ordinary people.²⁶ In this state they might “speak with tongues”, a concept nicely captured in the Sumba phrase “*pahagangu*”, to talk to the spirits or be “face to face” with them.²⁷ Although men were usually favored as leaders, in many areas of the Malay-Indonesian archipelago women could also serve as intermediaries with the spirits.²⁸

Because “people of prowess” operated as a conduit of communication to the supernatural, they were also gifted with powers of divination, prophecy, and the ability to heal the sick and vanquish evil forces.²⁹ Over the centuries, in Southeast Asia as elsewhere, potential converts have been drawn to Christianity (as to other world

²⁴ Anon, “A History of the Pentecostal Movement in Indonesia,” 144; on leadership in Asian Pentecostal churches, see Hwa, *Mangoes or Bananas?*, 87-8, 230.

²⁵ Wolters, *History, Culture and Region*, 112, 169. Wolters originally termed such an individual a “man of prowess”, but in view of his interest in gender, later wondered whether he should speak of “people of prowess.”

²⁶ Johan Hasselgren, *Rural Batak, Kings in Medan: The Development of Toba Batak Ethno-religious Identity in Medan, Indonesia, 1912-1965*. Uppsala: Studia Missionalia Upsaliensia, 2000), 71; Hans Schärer, *Ngaju Religion; The Conception of God among a South Borneo People*. Rodney Needham, trans (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1963), 79.

²⁷ Webb Keane, *Christian Moderns: Freedom and Fetish in the Mission Encounter* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 265; Joel C. Kuipers, *Power in Performance: The Creation of Textual Authority in Weyewa Ritual Speech* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990) and *Language, Identity and marginality in Indonesia: The Changing Nature of Ritual Speech on the Island of Sumba* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

²⁸ Eija-Maija Kotilainen, *‘When the Bones are Left’: A Study of the Material Culture of Central Sulawesi*. Helsinki: The Finnish Anthropological Society, 1992); C.H.M. Nooy-Palm, *The Sa’dan Toraja: A Study of their Social Life and Religion*. v. 2. *Rituals of the East and West* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1979), 284.

²⁹ Matthew H. Amster, “Community, Ethnicity and Modes of Association among the Kelabit of Sarawak, East Malaysia,” Ph.D. Dissertation, Brandeis University, 1998, 289-90

religions) by its reputation as a religion of healing.³⁰ The medical missionary became a central figure in the evangelizing project, and the belief that baptism and Christian prayers could restore health when other measures had failed has been a powerful factor in asserting Pentecostalism's legitimacy. The "rediscovery" of healing and exorcism as part of the mission agenda by contemporary Pentecostals and charismatics, and at the grassroots level "signs and wonders" and power encounters have been critical in convincing potential converts of supernatural power.³¹

Pentecostalism's insistence on biblical authority and the phenomenon of the charismatic preacher also has deep cultural roots in Southeast Asia, where the very voice of the person of prowess was deemed to be "efficacious" and where the "written word possessed magical associations."³² In non-literate or semi-literate societies the individual who could translate script into sound was endowed with miraculous authority while the text from which he read was seen as sacral. In Indonesia Dutch Protestantism gave a high priority to biblical knowledge, and the ability to invoke the appropriate quotation slid easily into a culture where traditional knowledge was conveyed in proverbs and aphorisms, especially as the bible was translated into vernacular languages. Not only were sermons built around biblical verses: the bible also became a book of prophecy that could be directly related to local situations.³³ Indigenous Pentecostal literature is peppered with biblical citations, which can justify the otherwise disturbing factions and fragmentation as part of a larger plan of weeding out the undeserving. In discussing this tendency, H.L. Senduk, the founder of the Gereja Bethel Indonesia, thus refers to 1

³⁰ Amanda Porterfield, *Healing in the History of Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); see also my discussion in Barbara Watson Andaya, *The Flaming Womb: Repositioning Women in Early Modern Southeast Asia* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006), Ch. 3..

³¹ Hwa, *Mangoes or Bananas?*, 71-2.

³² Wolters, *History, Culture and Region*, 118-20.

³³ In 1817, for example, a Christian-led rebellion broke out against the Dutch in Ambon, and when one of the strongholds was taken the church bible was found open at Psalm 17: ". . . hear me, O God hide me under the shadow of thy wings, from the wicked that oppress me, from my deadly enemies, who compass me about." Anon, "Pattimura, 1817-opstand in de Molukken." *VU Magazine* 5, 3 (March, 1976), 17-28; I.H. Enklaar, *Joseph Kam, 'Apostel der Molukken,'* (The Hague: Boekencentrum, 1963), 50; Jan Baptist Jozef van Doren, *Thomas Matulesia, het hoofd der opstandelingen op het eiland Honimoa, na de overname van het bestuur der Molukken door Jacobus Albertus van Middelkoop in 1817* (Amsterdam: Sijbrandi, 1817), 106-19.

Corinthians 11:19, "there must also be sects (heresies) among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you."³⁴

From questions of leadership and demonstrations of "prowess", Wolters turns to a discussion of "present-mindedness," proposing that from early times a "remarkable propensity" for being modern was characteristic of the region "cultural matrix." Because "now" was the time that mattered, Southeast Asia societies generally accorded great importance to being up-to-date or "contemporary."³⁵ In this view he is by no means alone. In the same vein, for example, Adrian Vickers argues that the eagerness of the Balinese to be *moderen* helps explain the rapidity with which local communities have accepted and absorbed successive ideas from outside for a thousand years or more.³⁶ In central Sulawesi, says Lorraine Arragon, missionaries became emblematic of Western modernity, which was seen as linked with material wealth and proselytizing Protestantism.³⁷ The relationship between modernity, tradition and Pentecostalism is complicated and highly context-dependent,³⁸ but in the cities and large towns of Southeast Asia P/c churches have deliberately sought to present themselves as fashionable, up to date and international. This has been a major factor in attracting urban youth, who now see church attendance as a place where they can construct a modern religious identity and lifestyle.³⁹ An exemplar of this generation is Miss Indonesia 2008, an architect who graduated from the University of Western Australia, who is the granddaughter of the well-known Pentecostal pastor Alex Taneseputra, head of the Graha Bethany in Surabaya (which separated from the GBI in 2003).⁴⁰

Finally, this historical entrée to the Pentecostalism background should also invoke Wolters's notion of "localization," and his insistence that outside influences were never

³⁴ H.L. Senduk. *Sejarah G.B.I.: Suatu Gereja Nasional Yang Termuda* [Jakarta? : np, 1993?], 25.

³⁵ Wolters, *History, Culture and Region*, 114; O. W. Wolters, 'Southeast Asia as a Southeast Asian Field of Study,' *Indonesia* 58 (October 1994), 3, 11.

³⁶ Adrian Vickers, *Being Modern in Bali: Image and Change* (New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies, Monograph 43, 1996), 1, 7-9.

³⁷ Lorraine Arragon, *Fields of the Lord: Animism, Christian Minorities and State Development in Indonesia* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000), 37-8. See further Barbara Watson Andaya, "Historicising 'Modernity' in Southeast Asia," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 39, 4 (1997): 391-409.

³⁸ David Martin, *Pentecostalism: The World Their Parish* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002).

³⁹ Tong, "McDonaldization and the Megachurches," 201.

⁴⁰ Indra Harsaputra, "Sandra Angelia: Taking the road less traveled," *Jakarta Post* online, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2008/06/07/sandra-angelia-taking-road-less-traveled.html> (Accessed June 17, 2009).

adopted wholesale, but were always adapted in accordance with specific cultural context.⁴¹ As Hwa points out, the roots of Asian Pentecostalism can often be traced to indigenous revivals that are only loosely connected to the modern charismatic renewal in America and Europe. At the same time, these earlier Pentecostal-style movements were relatively short-lived, and the reasons for their impermanence may give some insight into the contemporary strength of the Sidang Injil Borneo and the Gereja Bethel Indonesia. In Malaysia, the crusade conducted by the Hong Kong actress Kong Duen Yee (popularly known as Mui Yee) in 1963 may have provided some comfort to the Chinese community in the uncertainty accompanying Singapore's departure from Malaysia, but it was relatively short-lived. Mui Yee, who had joined a Pentecostal church two years earlier, visited Kuala Lumpur, Ipoh and Penang, initially under the auspices of the Assembly of God. There were reports of impressive power encounters, when protective charms fell off mediums who challenged her condemnation of Chinese deities. However, although her New Testament Church has survived in Singapore, where ecumenical relations were maintained, in Malaysia mainstream churches were alienated by her insistence that the NTC presented the only truth, and by her extreme practices, including numerology. Her own death from cancer in 1966 undermined her reputation, since it provided grounds for some to argue that she was acting for the devil.⁴²

Around the same period Indonesia witnessed a major revival in the small upland town of Soe on the island of Timor. Though there had been previously been other small messianic movements in this majority-Christian region, the "Timor revival" is the largest and best documented. In 1964 a pastor from Roti, Johannes Ratuwalu, visited Soe and the Timor capital of Kupang, and had conducted a healing campaign.⁴³ In July of the following year a student team arrived in Indonesia from the Institut Injili Indonesia in Java. They came at a critical time, for that year the rains came early and the corn harvest failed, and the situation worsened with the massive inflation of the late Sukarno period. Between late October and early November a comet appeared in the sky, which was widely interpreted as a sign that the Second Coming was imminent, and it is possible that

⁴¹ Wolters, *History, Culture and Region*, 58-66, 174

⁴² Tan, "Pentecostals and Charismatics," 287-8.

⁴³ Though criticized by missionary for "excesses relating to pride, women and money, it would appear that Ratuwalu was acting in the same mold as the traditional "man of prowess."

even in this remote part of Indonesia ripples were already felt of an impending fall in government.⁴⁴ On September 26, 1965 as around 200 people gathered for evening prayer, they felt the “fire of God” amongst them. People began to talk in tongues, in an evangelical church, the GMIT. Throughout the revival individuals were reported to have received revelation through visions and dreams, and there were accounts of biblical parallels such as water turning into wine, miracles of healing, raising of the dead, and power to overmaster crocodiles. The “thoroughly indigenous” revival, marked by long sessions of prayer and preaching, confessions of sin, destruction of traditionally sacred objects, swept over all western Timor and quickly spread to the nearby islands of Roti, Sabu, Alor, Flores and Sumba. A group of young men also made their way into Kalimantan, South Sumatra and Irian Jaya.⁴⁵ Ultimately, however, events on Timor, located at the edge of national consciousness, exercised little influence on the Pentecostal movement in Indonesia as a whole. One authority has concluded that the impact may have been greater in the West because of the the publicity given to the Timorese preacher Mel Tori and the publication of his account, *Like a Mighty Wind*.⁴⁶ During the time I spent in Soe in 2008 there were few overt indications that this small highland town had once been the center of a great revival, despite the existence of several Pentecostal Churches and numerous charismatic prayer groups.⁴⁷

Two Churches

Although I might have said the same about the small Kelabit town of Bario in the highlands of Sarawak, Malaysia during my visit in 1999, the revivals that contributed to the growth of the Sidang Injil Borneo present a very different case.⁴⁸ Both the Brooke

⁴⁴ The military coup occurred on September 30, 1965, but connections with events in Timor have been denied. J. Edwin Orr, *Evangelical Awakenings in the South Seas* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1976), 18189, 232 n. 81.

⁴⁵ Gani Wiyono, “Timor Revival: A Historical Study of the Great Twentieth Century Revival in Indonesia,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 4, 2 (2004), 269-93; Orr, *Evangelical Awakenings in the South Seas*, 189-91, 206, discusses the alleged miracles. An account of the revival, from a missionary perspective, including descriptions of visions and miracles, is given by Koch, 121-64. *The Revival in Indonesia*, 1972

⁴⁶ Wiyono, “Pentecostalism in Indonesia,” 314; Mel Tari with Chris Dudley, *Like a Mighty Wind* (Green Forest, AR: New Leaf Publishing Group, 1991).

⁴⁷ Wiyono, “Timor Revival,” 292

⁴⁸ An important contribution, which I have not yet read, is Tan Jin Huat, “The Borneo Evangelical Mission (BEM) and the Sidang Injil Borneo (SIB), 1928-1979: A Study of the Planting and Development of an Indigenous Church” Ph.D. Dissertation, Oxford Centre for Mission Studies (Univ. of Wales), 2008.

regime in Sarawak and the North Borneo Chartered Company in present-day Sabah were wary of attempts to Christianize local populations. Although several mainstream denominations – Anglican, Catholic and Methodist – were permitted to establish schools and mission posts, the primary target of their activities was urban Chinese and some Iban groups. Prior to World War Two missionizing among other tribal communities was limited, but in 1927 the Borneo Evangelical Mission (BEM) was inaugurated in Melbourne, and two years later three evangelists⁴⁹ arrived in Sarawak. Aware that they would face competition in the cities, they concentrated on interior rural areas and settled near the fringes of the Murut (Lun Bawang) area. In 1937 the BEM extended its work to British North Borneo. Sarawak's border areas were also exposed to influences from American missionaries in Dutch Borneo and most of the Murut (Lun Bawang) groups became Christian through interaction with their kinfolk, indigenous converts on the other side of the international boundary.⁵⁰

The first missionaries to visit the Kelabit highlands in the Sarawak interior arrived in 1939,⁵¹ but the internment of Europeans during the war opened the door to indigenous leadership. When missionaries returned to the highlands in 1947 they found that the Murut church had survived and that most Kelabit had accepted Christianity through the activities of indigenous converts, including a pastor from Timor, Guru Paul, also known as Nimang Tepun.⁵² Strongly committed to developing an indigenous leadership, the BEM established a bible school in the Sarawak town of Lawas for training teachers and deacons, and translating the bible into the Borneo languages was made a priority. By 1958 an important symbolic step was made when it was decided to change the name of the mission to the Malay "Sidang Injil Borneo" (Borneo Evangelical Assembly).⁵³ With the emphasis on training married couples to extend mission work and Kelabit out-migration to the oil-fields of Miri and elsewhere in search of employment and education,

⁴⁹ The missionaries were Hudson Southwell, Frank Davidson (British) and Carey Tolley. Amster, "Community, Ethnicity and Modes," 38. See Ghazali Basri, *Gerakan Kristian* (Bangi: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 1999), 76.

⁵⁰ Amster, "Community, Ethnicity and Modes," 38.

⁵¹ They were C. Hudson Southwell, the founder of the Borneo Evangelical Mission, and Frank Davidson.

⁵² Amster, "Community, Ethnicity and Modes," 39-40

⁵³ Lees, *Jungle Fire*, 76.

the SIB spread through Sarawak.⁵⁴ Although there was a strong Chinese component in the urban areas, most SIB members were tribal peoples. Local leadership played an important role in the conversion process; in later years, for example, Amin Gomboting, a forest ranger who was stationed in various places in Sabah, established an SIB church wherever he went.⁵⁵

From 1972 the “Pentecostal” aspects of the SIB became more evident, with an “awakening” among bible school students in Lawas generated simply by hearing English tape recordings of the British evangelist David Pawson talking about the Holy Spirit. In the same year the influential Indonesian minister Dr. Petrus Octavianus (from the island of Roti), who had been a close observers of the Timor revival, was also invited to preach in Lawas.⁵⁶ During his visit demons were exorcised and items associated with indigenous beliefs destroyed. In the Kelabit highlands October 1973 marks the beginning of the “Bario revival,” which erupted when a group of secondary school students in fervent prayer experienced the descent of the Holy Spirit. Soon the whole village was involved. In the past SIB members had periodically reported incidents such as encounters with the devil, but now prophecy, speaking in tongues, miracle healing and deliverance from demonic powers became common occurrences. From 1973 to 1975 there were prayer meetings every night, inspiring the dispatch of mission teams of schoolteachers, young people, church elders, district and village chiefs to other parts of Sarawak, many using the new airlines which now connected previously isolated areas. Petrus Octavianus returned again to preach at several Borneo locations, and in a meeting at Kota Kinabalu in Sabah attracted three thousand tribal peoples.⁵⁷ The first SIB church in Sabah was established in Kota Kinabalu in 1976, and in Brunei most Lun Bawang joined.⁵⁸

In 1984-5 Ba Kelalan, a Lun Bawang area on Sarawak’s border with Indonesia, became the centre for a renewed Pentecostal-style movement with reports of a series of spectacular signs and wonders. A principle figure was the charismatic Lun Bawang

⁵⁴ Lees, *Jungle Fire* gives a missionary description of this period; Amster, “Community, Ethnicity and Modes,” 39-40; Basri, *Gerakan Kristian*, 76; Mat Zin bin Mat Kib, “Christianization in Sabah and the Development of Indigenous Communities: A Historical Study,” *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 77, 1 (June 2004), 53-65

⁵⁵ Basri, *Gerakan Kristian*, 85 n.1.

⁵⁶ Orr, *Evangelical Awakenings*, 190-1.

⁵⁷ Orr, *Evangelical Awakenings*, 184-5; Tan, “Pentecostalism and Charismatics,” 299.

⁵⁸ Basri, *Gerakan Kristian*, 76, 105

leader Agung Bangau (d. 1992), who had been “baptized in the spirit” in 1974 following the Bario revival. It was thought that God had given him special gifts, such as the ability to turn water into oil and rice grains into flour, and his following included many SIB members. His center of worship was the nearby Mount Murud, the tallest mountain in Sarawak, which has now become an annual pilgrimage site for Borneo Christians; from 1990 a church has been maintained near the summit.⁵⁹ As Matthew Amster has emphasized, the religious revival in the Kelabit Highlands in the 1970s and the charismatic movement surrounding Agung Bangau’s teachings in the 1980s have become identified in local memories as marking a new chapter in the experience of “being Christian”. Because the SIB has drawn adherents from both sides of the Malaysia-Indonesia border, these movements have also helped shape a pan-ethnic Christian identity in this part of Borneo.⁶⁰

Supported by teaching institutions and ongoing church-planting, SIB membership, reckoned at around 1000 in 1962, rose to 75,000 in 1993, and some interior churches can now accommodate as many as 3000 worshippers.⁶¹ The SIB is also well established in urban centers, notably Lawas, Limbang, Miri, Kuching, Sandakan and Kota Kinabalu whence many interior people have migrated in search of work.⁶² Even more significant in terms of the SIB future is the formation of new branches in the peninsula. In 1993, a small group of East Malaysian Christians (largely Chinese) began meeting in Kuala Lumpur and SIB Semenanjung (Sidang Injil Borneo n the Peninsula) was inaugurated in November of that year. In Kuala Lumpur the SIB’s English congregation grew from 15 people in 1994 to around 130 in 1998. In 2006, SIBKL rented out three floors in a downtown building and currently three worship services are held each Sunday to serve over 1500 people. The goal is to increase membership to 2000. According to the SIBKL

⁵⁹ Tan, “Pentecostalism and Charismatics,” 300; It is unclear whether Agung Bangau’s movement was related to the “Prayer Mountain” retreat established by David Cho in 1973, although this has been denied by some. See further Matthew Amster, “New Sacred Lands: The Making of a Christian Prayer Mountain in Highland Borneo. In: Ronald A. Lukens-Bull (ed.) *Sacred Places and Modern Landscapes: Sacred Geography and Social-Religious Transformations in South and Southeast Asia*. Southeast Asian Studies Monograph Series, Program for Southeast Asian Studies, Arizona State University, 2003), 131-160.

⁶⁰ Amster, “New Sacred Lands”, 131-160

⁶¹ *Berita Gereja* (Newsletter of Wesley Methodist Church, Melaka, December 2008), 10.

http://www.angelfire.com/pro/wesley/Berita_Gereja_Dec2008.pdf
(Accessed June 16, 2009); Basri, *Gerakan Kristian*, 77.

⁶² Basri, *Gerakan Kristian*, 83; Amster, “Community, Ethnicity and Modes of Association,” 306.

website, there are now 31 congregations in West Malaysia (29 Bahasa Malaysia, 1 Chinese and 1 English), including missions among Christian Orang Asli in Jerantut.⁶³ An intriguing development is the SIB expansion to Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Papua New Guinea and the southern Philippines, where local churches are tapping its experience in working with tribal peoples.⁶⁴

Gereja Bethel Indonesia

The Gereja Bethel Indonesia (Church of God in Indonesia), with 5,200 congregations and an estimated membership of 2.5 million, is among the largest of Indonesia's Pentecostal denominations. There are branches in all Indonesia's provinces, and the National Synod in 2008 was said to be attended by representatives of 600 ethnic groups.⁶⁵ In its public claim to be not merely indigenous but also "national," the GBI is thus rather different from the SIB. Its history also presents a contrast. In the first place, the GBI owes its origins to a specific individual, H.L. Senduk (1917-2008), who broke away from older Pentecostal organizations. In borrowing a metaphor often used by the Korean Pentecostalist David Yonggi Cho, Senduk compared the GBI to a child born in 1970 after a gestation period of eighteen years.⁶⁶ In the second place, the GBI originated in an urban environment. Born as Ho Liong Seng in Ternate in 1917, Senduk came from a middle-class Indonesian-Chinese family. His father was a prosperous trader from Singapore who moved to Ternate and later to Manado, where he became head of the Chinese community. His mother, also of Chinese descent, was said to be related to the ruling family of Ternate.⁶⁷ Senduk was sent to the Dutch school in Manado and at the age of sixteen he started to work for a Dutch company in Ambon. Here he became a member of the local Pentecostal Church (Pinkster Gemeente) and was baptized in April 1935. The following year he left to study at the Netherlands Bible Institute in Surabaya, where he

⁶³ SIBKL website.

http://www.sibkl.org.my/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=30&Itemid=4 (Accessed June 16, 2009).

⁶⁴ NECF Website <http://www.necf.org.my/newsmaster.cfm?&menuid=2&action=view&retrieveid=120> (Accessed June 25, 2009).

⁶⁵ James Culpepper, "Forward Together in Changing Times," *Evangel* (June 2009), 6-7; <http://content.yudu.com/A18aeb/JUNE09/resources/13.htm> (Accessed June 17, 2009).

⁶⁶ Senduk. *Sejarah G.B.I.*, 22.

⁶⁷ Amos Hosea, "Seluk Beluk Dasar Pengembangan Kepemimpinan Om Ho," in Ferry H.A. Lembong, ed. *Buku Hanya oleh Anugerah: Aku Jadi Seperti Aku Sekarang* (Jakarta: Gereja Bethel Indonesia, 1998), 21-5.

lived with his teacher, the Dutch evangelist Gerald van Gessel, who had been a key figure in the Pentecostal movement of the 1920s. Until 1942 Senduk worked in an export-import company, but after the Japanese invasion, he made a living through small trade while continuing as an active member of the Gereja Pentekosa di Indonesia (GPDI), Indonesia's first Pentecostal denomination.⁶⁸

The post-war situation was a difficult time for the Pentecostal movement. Mainstream churches regarded evangelists as “poachers”, and in the 1950s some Christian Bataks even regarded Pentecostals as heretics.⁶⁹ There were also divisions within the leadership of Pentecostalism itself, and at least one writer suggests that Senduk's decision to ally with Van Gessel and form a new church, the Gereja Bethel Injil Sepenuh (GBIS) in 1952 was in part due to discrimination towards those of Chinese descent. It is indicative that he subsequently changed his name to Ho Lukas Senduk.⁷⁰ By the late 1960s Senduk was facing further opposition from within GBIS ranks, in part because of his proposal to collaborate with the Church of God in Cleveland, Tennessee, one of the world's largest Pentecostal denominations, which critics said could lead to foreign domination. In 1970, after several years of bitter dissension, Senduk and his supporters established a new church in Surabaya which they called Gereja Bethel Indonesia (GBI). In 1972 it was recognized by the Indonesian government as a legal Church, with the right to own property and receive tax-free donations from overseas.⁷¹ Citing biblical instruction (Math 28:20; Mark 16: 15), Senduk promoted the idea that each GBI church should establish a new community every year. By 2000 it was estimated that the GBI had 700,000 members, and the numbers have continued to grow.⁷² Until his death in 2008, Senduk maintained that his goal was the establishment of ten thousand GBI churches that would minister not just to Indonesians within the country, but to Indonesians living overseas as well. Over the last decade the Indonesian diaspora has

⁶⁸ Kakiay, *H.L. Senduk Bapa Rohani GBI*, 15-19.

⁶⁹ Hasselgren, *Rural Batak, Kings in Medan*, 384.

⁷⁰ Thomas Bimo, “Tahap Pengembangan Ketiga: Pendewasaan Pelayanan,” in Ferry H.A. Lembong, ed. *Buku Hanya oleh Anugerah: Aku Jadi Seperti Aku Sekarang* (Jakarta: Gereja Bethel Indonesia, 1998), 86.

⁷¹ Senduk. *Sejarah G.B.I.*, 66.

⁷² Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 131.

transformed the GBI into a global church, with branches established in Australia, Canada, the United States, the Netherlands, Germany Taiwan and recently Dubai.⁷³

For a historian, one of the more significant differences between the SIB and the Gereja Bethel Indonesia is the availability of written sources that express the view of key players, with the standard set by the publication record of Senduk himself. Indonesian commentators may complain of the lack of translations of Western material on Pentecostal theology,⁷⁴ but individual autobiographies and testimonies by Indonesians themselves are invaluable in illuminating the ways in which Pentecostalism “makes sense” in the local environment.⁷⁵ For example, Alex Tanuseputra is the Chinese-Indonesian pastor of the Bethany synod in Surabaya, which separated from the GBI in 2003. In his autobiography he makes frequent mention of the dreams, visions, fasting, prayers and divine intervention that helped him achieve both material and spiritual success. It is this connection to the Holy Spirit, he says, that explains his achievements including the completion of a “Mega Church” in 2000 which has a capacity of 20,000 and is considered the largest church building in Southeast Asia.⁷⁶ At the same time, references to his educational attainments in Australia, Korea and America are a reminder of his links to a much wider Pentecostal community. In developing his church, Tanuseputra makes specific reference to the inspiration he received after reading the writings of David Cho, claiming that these have enabled him to build a flourishing ministry that is also financially viable: “From him I was confirmed in my teaching of the principle of blessings through tithing.”⁷⁷

⁷³ Larry G. Hess, “H.L. Senduk - The Spiritual Father of Gereja Bethel Indonesia” in M. Ferry H. Kakiay, H.L. *Senduk Bapa Rohani GBI. Sejarah, Kepimpinan, Teologi, Visi dan Misi* (Jakarta: Gereja Bethel Indonesia, 2001), ix; Website of Gereja Bethel Indonesia, Taiwan. <http://gbitaiwan.tripod.com/> (Accessed June 25, 2009); Andrew Tommy Smith, Jr., “Center of the Wind,” *Evangel* (June 2009), 10. <http://content.yudu.com/A18aeb/JUNE09/resources/13.htm> (Accessed June 17, 2009).

⁷⁴ Tupamahu, “The Crisis of Theological Reflection.”

⁷⁵ For a straightforward list of the fourteen basic teachings of the GBI, see Senduk. *Sejarah G.B.I.*, 55-6. These are 1. Acceptance of the Bible as the Word of God. 2. Belief in the Trinity. 3. Jesus Christ as the living son of God. 4. Sinners must repent. 5. Salvation requires being born again. 6. Baptism in water. 7. Rebirth leads to a purified life. 8. The principle of purity. 9. Baptism in the Holy Spirit; 10. The sign of baptism is speaking with foreign tongues. 11. Visit of the Holy Spirit. 12. Healing through faith. 13. The Second Coming. 14. All individuals will rise from the dead and be judged.

⁷⁶ Abraham Alex Tanuseputra, *Iman yang Memindahkan Gunung Harap yang tak Tergoncakan Kasih yang Sempurna* (Jakarta: Armageddon, 2000), 46 ff

⁷⁷ Tanuseputra, *Iman yang Memindahkan*, 122.

As yet no study has tracked the influence of Korean Pentecostalism in Indonesia, but these links are highly significant, given that David Cho is probably “the most well-known Pentecostal minister in the world today” and arguably the most influential in Asia.⁷⁸ To a combination of evangelical tradition and a distinctively Pentecostal emphasis on signs and wonders, Cho has added the message of the “triple salvation” – spiritual salvation, physical health, and material blessings. Since the spiritual world can be accessed by good and bad alike in order to influence the physical world, it is incumbent upon Christians to “incubate” their faith in order that their prayers will bring about the “triple salvation.”⁷⁹ Perhaps even more important has been the guidance that Cho has given other Asian leaders in terms of church-building, particularly the development of lay leadership, including women, and the use of cell groups to maintain and extend evangelizing initiatives.⁸⁰

The influence of Cho’s theology is very evident in the life history of another prominent Indonesian Pentecostal minister, Jacob Nahuway, pastor of GBI Mawar Saron (Rose of Sharon) in Jakarta. A prolific author, his “success story” recalls the themes found in many traditional tales. He was born in the village of Titiawaii on the island of Nusa Laut in central Maluku, where his parents made their living by fishing and subsistence farming. His biographer explicitly states that Nahuway’s escape from drowning as a boy shows that there were already divine plans for his future.⁸¹ Although his mother was illiterate, at the age of fourteen it became possible for him to go to school in Jakarta. At that point, however, he had already decided that he wanted to be a minister. While living with his elder brother in Jakarta he was attracted to a Pentecostal church, where he was baptized. As a seminary student he became a protégé of H. L. Senduk, who arranged for him to attend a seminary in Seoul. Here he met David Cho, who for many years has been his patron and mentor. Senduk appointed Nahuway pastor at the small Mawar Saron church in 1978, and it has since grown from a small congregation of only 40 people to its current membership of round 10,000. At present Mawar Saron has 20 full

⁷⁸ Hwa, *Mangoes or Bananas?*, 206. On Cho, see further Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 137-8, 221-2, 232-3, 265-6.

⁷⁹ Hwa, *Mangoes or Bananas?*, 206-8

⁸⁰ Hwa, *Mangoes or Bananas?*, 208.

⁸¹ Piet Tuwanakotta, *Anak Desa Jadi Pendeta: Perjalanan Hidup Pdt. Jacob Nahuway, MA* [A Village Boy Becomes a Pastor] (Jakarta: Surya Grafika, 1993), 17-23.

time members, a lay ministry staff of over 100, and holds four services on Sunday, each congregation consisting of around 2000 people. David Cho preached at the dedication of the current Mawar Saron church and has provided a substantial contribution to a new sanctuary now under construction, planned to seat 10,000.⁸² The greatest attraction is undoubtedly the daily healing service, where following biblical instructions,⁸³ anointing oil (*minyak urapan*) and prayer sessions are said to result in daily miracles.⁸⁴

Nahuway's personal connections with a congregation that includes a large number of Chinese have been strengthened by his marriage to a Chinese Indonesian.⁸⁵ He is currently chairman of the synod of Gereja Bethel Indonesia and receives frequent invitations overseas as a speaker and conference participant. He has a strong "Asian" profile because he is chairman of the Asian Mission Association, and a Board Member of the Seoul-based Church Growth International, founded by David Cho in 1976 to promote methods that had proved successful at Yoido Church.⁸⁶ Since links between Pentecostals in Malaysian Borneo and Indonesia have always been close, Nahuway is well known in Sarawak and Sabah. However, although international connections are a hallmark of the modern P/c evangelist, Nahuway has also presented himself as a "national" figure through his many revival meetings on football fields and in local halls that reach from northern Sumatra to Timor and Maluku. Perhaps the greatest evidence of his interaction with other Indonesians is his Facebook page, with its pictures of rallies, international visits, news of forthcoming events, and links to other sites, including the Mawar Saron church. This is above all a domain dominated by the young, allowing "fans" to sign up and eliciting comments like this: "Syalom Uncle Jacob, you are scattering the love and goodness of Lord Jesus through all Indonesia, from Sabang to Merauke, from Timor to Sanggiri."⁸⁷ Occasionally Nahuway himself will post a reply to letters or videos sent to him.

⁸² James E. Cossey, "Jacob Nahuway: Overseer/Pastor of Gereja Bethel Indonesia," *Evangel* (June 2009), 13. <http://content.yudu.com/A18aeb/JUNE09/resources/13.htm> (Accessed June 17, 2009).

⁸³ James 5: 14-16. "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord."

⁸⁴ Cossey, "Jacob Nahuway," 13.

⁸⁵ Tuwanakotta, *Anak Desa Jadi Pendeta*, 74.

⁸⁶ Hwa, *Mangoes or Bananas?* 207.

⁸⁷ "Syalom Om Jacob, Taburi bumi indonesia ini,dari sabang sampai merauke, dari timur sampai sanggiri dengan kasih & kebaikan Tuhan Yesus." Posted May 7, 2009. <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Jacob-Nahuway/56329319551> (Accessed June 18, 2009).

Despite its phenomenal growth over the last thirty years, the GBI future is unclear, since the history of Pentecostalism has shown that with growth comes fragmentation. In 2003 and 2004, for example, two churches, Bethany and Tiberius, broke away from the GBI to form independent synods. The disparity in congregation size, even within Jakarta, suggests that the appeal of individual churches is heavily dependent on the style of the leader. This has been a typical feature of Pentecostalism generally, but personality-centered churches appear to be more common in Indonesia than in Malaysia, presumably encouraged by the tendency to fragment and by the GBI preference for church autonomy. The emphasis on charismatic leadership may be problematic. Although a recent biography of H.L. Senduk celebrates his stature in GBI history by placing him in a company of “spiritual fathers” that includes Joseph, Moses and Paul, Wolters’ admonition that “prowess” cannot be transmitted simply to maintain the existence of a particular *mandala* of authority seems especially relevant.⁸⁸

Thinking comparatively

The history of the Sidang Injil Borneo and the Gereja Bethel Indonesia provides an opportunity to compare Pentecostal Christianity in two different contexts. In the first instance, such a discussion raises the question of the extent to which Pentecostalism has drawn on elements of a pre-existing “cultural matrix” like that described by O.W. Wolters. In the second place, however, the comparative approach invites us to think about the ways in which the expression of Pentecostalism in Southeast Asia has responded to different social and economic contexts. Most observers would agree that Pentecostalism is more attuned to the cultural underpinnings of the “Two-Thirds” Christian world than is Western theology. The “unbookish” devotionism which Wolters believes accounted for the appeal of *bhakti* worship in early Southeast Asia threads its way through Southeast Asia’s subsequent religious history, whether we are talking of trance dancing in Hinduized Bali, group meditation among Sufi mystics or emotional Marianism in the Philippines. The idea that any individual can be “possessed of the spirit” continues to arouse wonder, and when otherwise ordinary people fall to the ground or speak in an unknown language a powerful message is conveyed about the presence of supernatural

⁸⁸ Kakiay, H.L. Senduk 911-102. Wolters, *History, Culture and Region*, 112.

powers.⁸⁹ Pentecostalism thus resonates with many indigenous beliefs, including the belief in divine healing and other “signs and wonders” as well as the reality of Satan and the significance of “power encounters.” The raising of hands, the group dances and songs, the cacophony of voices in personal prayer all contribute to a heightened state of emotion that bears many similarities to indigenous rituals.⁹⁰

By the same token, Wolters has argued that the “person of prowess” as the generator of social action has a central position in regional history. The history of Southeast Asia is peppered with individuals whose gifts of oratory and reputation for extraordinary powers have affirmed their position of leadership. These individuals stand out from their fellows because they are the recipients of divine favor, evidenced by their ability to communicate with supernatural powers, to foresee the future, to heal in miraculous ways and by the blessings they have personally received, such as material wealth, good health and longevity. Their loyal and devoted followers will be the beneficiaries of their spiritual largesse and like them be included among the privileged. Senduk’s biography makes the point explicitly. The success he enjoyed was a gift from God, but it was intended for the benefit of all. “In other words, God’s servants who are successful are those who experience success together with the people they lead.”⁹¹

Despite these arguments, it is important to emphasize that Asian Pentecostalism has been intensely antagonistic to many indigenous practices, notably the propitiation of “heathen” spirits and the persistence of “immoral” practices. Among the Kelabit, for instance, SIB teachings have brought about a radical change in lifestyle because of prohibitions against drinking and even the chewing of betelnut. Furthermore, while many “pre-Christian” elements are evident in Pentecostal-style movements like Timor in 1965 or Bario a few years later, they are less evident in the new city churches. Indeed, a recent history of Christianity in Indonesia remarks that it is difficult at times to distinguish Pentecostal from Evangelical churches.⁹² This raises the question of what happens when Pentecostalism transitions to or evolves in an urban environment, given the argument that

⁸⁹ As one young Kayan man put it, “Jesus is more powerful [than indigenous spirits]” “because when Christians ignored omens they did not come to any harm. Lees, *Jungle Fire*, 38, 42, 48.

⁹⁰ Amster, “Community, Ethnicity and Modes of Association,” 299-300.

⁹¹ Kakiay, *H.L. Senduk Bapa Rohani* GBI, 80.

⁹² Jan Sihar Aritonang and Karel Steenbrink, ed. *A History of Christianity in Indonesia* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 892.

a desire to be “modern” has long been a feature of Southeast Asia generally, notably among the elite.⁹³ As Wolters has pointed out in relation to the influence of Hinduism, it was the elite who gained the greatest advantage from the appropriation of new ideas, especially in societies where there was “chieftain potential” and where lineage was not especially privileged.⁹⁴

Southeast Asia’s contemporary elites are city dwellers, and it is here that Pentecostal and Charismatic churches are growing most rapidly. As one might expect, there are distinct differences between worship styles in urban and rural congregations. For example, communal prayer for the sick plays a central role in village life, since there is limited access to medical care and hospitals are far away. Since the demands of salaried or wage work are less pressing, people spend more time attending prayer gatherings than in the cities, and sermons dwell heavily on personal experiences of miracle healing. Church services, often lasting several hours, are held early in the morning or in the late evening to allow villagers to work in their rice fields.⁹⁵ In this environment one is more likely to find echoes of pre-Christian practices. In one Lun Bawang church in Brunei, for example, Ghazali Basri noted that honey was mixed with red coloring as a substitute for communion wine and that the intoning of prayer alternated between men and women in a manner that recalls the pattern of traditional recitation.⁹⁶

In the city, by contrast, church-going is normally a Sunday affair, although at other times during the week there may be involvement in other meetings such as women’s groups or youth fellowships. In city environments adjustments to different language groups are more necessary, and these adjustments may also mean shifts in style. In Miri, for example, there has been considerable debate about the extent to which practices characteristic of rural revivals should be maintained. One member of an English-language SIB church even told Amster that “we don’t believe in charismatic preaching at our church. We don’t believe in speaking in tongues, raising up hands or

⁹³ Wolters, *History, Region and Culture*, 210.

⁹⁴ Wolters, *History, Culture and Region*, 112.

⁹⁵ Amster, “Community, Ethnicity and Modes of Association,” 303-4, 306; see also Basri, *Gerakan Kristian*, 85; *Berita Gereja* (Newsletter of Wesley Methodist Church, Melaka, December 2008), 10. http://www.angelfire.com/pro/wesley/Berita_Gereja_Dec2008.pdf (Accessed June 16, 2009).

⁹⁶ Basri, *Gerakan Kristian*, 109.

faith healing.”⁹⁷ The same pattern holds in Sabah, where Ghazali Basri remarked that the Kota Kinabalu congregation attending the largest English-language SIB church, was relatively subdued; largely professional and educated, they displayed few “charismatic” signs and even the raising of hands was muted.⁹⁸ In a similar mode, the SIB leadership, products of bible school training, was “not entirely comfortable” with endorsing Agung Bangau's apparently supernatural feats, one of which involved the spontaneous combustion of a clump of damp moss.⁹⁹ By contrast, between 1992 and 1997 the Lun Bawang marshaled their “Christian” powers through prayer meetings and ritual services in order to evict a hostile spirit, Putri Rumba and her daughter, said to be living in a cave not far from Mount Murud church.¹⁰⁰

The role of two Lun Bawang women charged with evicting these spirits also suggests that the attributes of the Pentecostal “person of prowess” may differ both over time and place. In the 1980s the charismatic leader Agung Bangau could “indigenize” Christian teachings through alleged visions of an angel who looked like “the tribal people,” and like him, people in the Ka Belalan region still claim to see “fire in the sky” as a sign of the Holy Spirit.¹⁰¹ In the urban environment the miracle of prayer-healing remains central, but one does not expect to hear stories of popular speakers like Jacob Nahuway overmastering crocodiles. Instead, the “modern” charismatic evangelist holds crusades and speaks on radio and television. Recovery from illness is the most publicized “sign” of the presence of the Holy Spirit, and there are accounts of miracles after listening to Nahuway’s radio sermons.¹⁰² Other testimonies to God’s intervention in ordinary lives are more likely to concern success in a business deal or assistance finding a stolen van.¹⁰³ Officially speaking in tongues (*berkata-kata dengan berbagai bahasa asing*) is good, a sign that the Holy Spirit has descended, but city preachers are less likely

⁹⁷ Amster, “Community, Ethnicity and Modes of Association,” 307.

⁹⁸ Basri, *Gerakan Kristian*, 80.

⁹⁹ Amster, “New Sacred Lands,” 142.

¹⁰⁰ Amster, “New Sacred Lands,” 146-7. Two Lun Bawang women “bombed” the entrance of the cave with salt, and since that time no problems have been reported.

¹⁰¹ <http://www.eaglevision.com.my/h3angels.htm> (Accessed June 4, 2009); Tan, “Pentecostals and Charismatics,” 300; Amster, “Community, Ethnicity and Modes of Association,” 305; *Berita Gereja*, 10.

¹⁰² Tuwanakotta, *Anak Desa Jadi Pendeta*, 120.

¹⁰³ Website of SIB Grace, Kuching. <http://sibgrace.org/van.html> (Accessed 23 June 2009).

than rural leaders to issue prophecies, interpret omens or predict a time for Christ's Second Coming for fear of government repercussions.¹⁰⁴

Probably the feature that most sets the large city churches apart from their rural counterparts is their access to technology and e-marketing and the social networks thus created. Individual decisions about which church to attend can be influenced by many factors, but for young "consumers" entertainment, and cohort companionship is arguably as important as the theological message. "Photo galleries" on websites, access to YouTube, and audio-visual media provide an opportunity to relive past events, publicize future occasions, and attract new participants. Music, singing, dancing can generate emotional intensity in the simplest of churches, but in the larger urban centers the fervency of prayer and worship is enhanced by sophisticated musical presentations, well-orchestrated praise-dancing, performances by well-known soloists and robed choirs, and the exhortations of popular preachers. While hardly unique to Southeast Asia, the opportunity to "make music" has been highly influential in the history of Southeast Asian Christianity, and in Pentecostalism is believed to carry "tremendous power."¹⁰⁵ The SIBKL has even produced a musical version of *Drunk before Dawn* by Shirley Lees, the story of the SIB beginnings in Borneo.¹⁰⁶

Without the incorporation of the internet into the Pentecostal mission it is doubtful whether churches could have reached their current size, either in membership or resources. Websites that emphasize missions, sermons, speakers, healing and allow for blogs, chat rooms, photos in a "facebook", the provision of download facilities for sermons and prayers and on-line sales of gifts, books, sermons, videos DVDs etc have become an indispensable tool in the Pentecostal self-representation as "modern." More research is needed about the models for website design, and the inspiration for including items such as leadership programs, health advice, family counseling, children's camps, international tours, and election seminars. At the same time, the expanding use of electronic communication raises questions about the intended audience. Websites of the

¹⁰⁴ Senduk, *Sejarah G.B.I.*, 56. Artonang and Steenbrink, *A History of Christianity in Indonesia*, 892 n. 63.

¹⁰⁵ Wiyono, "Pentecostalism in Indonesia," 327 n. 53. (Citing Biworo G. Adinata, "Mission Strategy of the Gereja Bethel Indonesia in the context of Islam and Christian encounter in Indonesia," TH.M Thesis, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1993, 93).

¹⁰⁶ Website SIBKL:

http://www.sibkl.org.my/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=48:drunk-before-dawn-i&Itemid=94&layout=default (Accessed June 17, 2009).

Gereja Bethel are in Indonesian with a smattering of English and even Japanese. On the other hand, the SIB sites are in English, presumably because of the English-educated elite prominent in urban congregations and in church leadership.

For the most part, Pentecostal churches in Asia have refrained from overt involvement in politics or endorsement of particular parties or politicians, but an examination of the Malaysian and Indonesian environments points to several significant differences. In Indonesia, with depressing numbers of urban poor, the GBI places a high priority on charitable operations such as food kitchens, especially in Jakarta. Such activities are less publicized in more prosperous Malaysia, although in Kuala Lumpur there has been some outreach to Orang Asli, the country's most economically deprived group. Another difference concerns national reach. Indonesia includes several provinces north Sumatra, Ambon, and Manado that are home to large Christian ethnic groups who provide evangelists with a receptive audience. This does not hold for Peninsular Malaysia, where virtually all Malays are Muslim and where Christians are overwhelmingly non-Malay. The SIB has not undertaken country-wide crusades, although there are mission activities among Christianized tribal peoples, including health care. Alert to the sensitivities of Muslims as well as their fellow Christians, the SIBKL has been careful to co-operate with other churches (for example, in the Global Day of Prayer) and has refrained from criticism of traditional Chinese customs. Church leaders have also maintained a low profile in the current confrontation between the Malaysian government and SIB Sabah following official confiscation of Christian educational material from Indonesia that uses "Allah" for God. Yet because of its roots in Kelabit-Lun Bawang society, the Sidang Injil Borneo can claim to be an "indigenous" church; although Chinese SIB members are closely networked with Singapore, foreign support is relatively muted.¹⁰⁷ The combination of a system of "cells" in the style promoted by David Cho with state funds and tithing (one tenth of income) has been relatively successful. By 1992, for example, no foreign funds were needed to pay for the salaries of pastors in Sabah, although subsidies are now being received from the SIB congregation in Kuala

¹⁰⁷ In 1985, for example, there was an agreement for co-operation with Faith Methodist Church, Singapore, Website of Faith Methodist Church, Singapore http://www.faithmc.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=21&Itemid=44. See also the "History of SIB Grace" in Kuching, commissioned in 2004 with help from Singapore. <http://sibgrace.org/sibgracehistory.html>

Lumpur.¹⁰⁸ In stressing their Borneo origins, participants in official meetings typically wear their distinctive ethnic dress, and as an affirmation of this indigenous image, the SIB Sabah website states,¹⁰⁹

The Sidang Injil Borneo or SIB is a Malaysian church. It was founded and developed in Sarawak and Sabah. In the late nineties the ministry was expanded to the Peninsular. It does not have its origin in other countries, and is not dependent on financial aid from overseas. It has no formal organizational links outside Malaysia, but fosters links of prayer and fellowship with other churches both within Malaysia and overseas. Its common language is Bahasa Malaysia, which is widely used in conferences, Bible schools and correspondences.

The Gereja Bethel Church, begun in Surabaya under Chinese-Indonesian leadership, has also promoted itself as “indigenous.” Senduk’s words mirror the pronouncement of the SBI, “GBI is not a local church, and it is not a regional or ethnic church. It is a national church. Its members and officials come from all the peoples of Indonesia, from Sabang to Merauke, from Rote to Miangas. This is a Church of ‘Unity in Diversity.’ It is not a branch of a foreign church, but is the church of Indonesia citizens . . . free from foreign influence.”¹¹⁰ Despite the prominence of Chinese in Indonesian Pentecostalism, the involvement of ethnic groups known for their education and cosmopolitan leanings, such as the Rotinese, and leadership of a Malukan like Jacob Nahuway, has strengthened its claim to be “national.” It remains to be seen whether the association of Christianity with opposition groups like the Papuan liberation movement will damage this national claim.¹¹¹ Although Pentecostal churches have traditionally remained aloof from politics, the GBI is now venturing into the minefield of political debate by organizing forums for discussion of issues prior to the 2009 elections.¹¹²

The roots of Western Pentecostalism are urban, but in Indonesia and Malaysia the idea that individuals can directly engage the Holy Spirit and prepare for an imminent Second Coming has been especially compelling in rural societies with their histories of

¹⁰⁸ Basri, *Gerakan Kristian*, 83; Website of SIBKL http://www.sibkl.org.my/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=233:quarterly-report-on-sabah-project-december-2008-&catid=70:sabah-project&Itemid=167 (Accessed June 24, 2009).

¹⁰⁹ Website of SIB Sabah. <http://www.sibsabah.org.my/eng/> (Accessed June 9, 2009)

¹¹⁰ Senduk, *Sejarah G.B.I.*, 79.

¹¹¹ Farhadian, *Christianity, Islam and Nationalism in Indonesia*, 121.

¹¹² “Pilih Siapa?” (Choose Whom?) Website of GBI Synod. <http://www.sinodebgbi.orag/home/> (Accessed 16 June 2009).

recurring messianic movements. Today, the strength of “Asian Pentecostalism” is in cities and towns, where a more cosmopolitanism environment is contributing to a lessening of the local distinctiveness that gave Pentecostalism its original appeal. On the other hand, there will still be an ongoing process of “contextualization” because of the specific political and cultural environment in which Christianity and specifically Pentecostalism operates. The SIB in Malaysia has managed to avoid the schisms so typical of Indonesian Pentecostal churches, and in 1989 issued an official statement affirming a policy of inclusiveness that would accept different styles of worship.¹¹³ This policy was effective as long as the SIB remained in Borneo, but whether it will survive expansion to a more Chinese environment in Peninsula cities and towns, or even overseas, is open to debate. Malaysian Christians must remember, too, that they will remain a religious minority. In a country where Islam is the de facto state religion, any perception that Christians are stepping beyond accepted boundaries of accommodation always have the potential to generate confrontation. The same holds true in Indonesia, despite official policies of religious tolerance, as demonstrated by the violent backlash against Christian (especially Pentecostal) churches in East Java in the 1990s. The “conspicuous display” of very large Pentecostal buildings and involvement in construction projects like the Jakarta Tower feeds resentment of Chinese wealth while fostering apprehension of a potential Christian “take-over” of Indonesian society. In this climate it has become critical for Pentecostal churches to present themselves as “indigenous.” A key element in this inculturation may be the degree to which Pentecostalism can tap deeply embedded cultural attitudes while aligning itself with government objectives so that it is seen as simultaneously “national,” modern, and a global participant in a world where Asia is increasingly dominant.

¹¹³ Amster, “Community, Ethnicity and Modes,” 308.