

# STUDIA ISLAMIKA

INDONESIAN JOURNAL FOR ISLAMIC STUDIES

Volume 8, Number 1, 2001



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THE *ULAMA* IN ACEH:  
A BRIEF HISTORICAL SURVEY  
**Yusny Saby**

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A SUDANESE SCHOLAR IN THE DIASPORA:  
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Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies

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STUDIA ISLAMIKA (ISSN 0215-0492) is a journal published quarterly by the Center for the Study of Islam and Society (PPIM), IAIN Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta (STT DEPPEN No. 129/SK/DITJEN/PPG/STT/1976) and sponsored by the Department of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. It specializes in Indonesian Islamic studies, and is intended to communicate original researches and current issues on the subject. This journal warmly welcomes contributions from scholars of related disciplines.

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STUDIA ISLAMIKA has been accredited by The Ministry of National Education, Republic of Indonesia as an academic journal.

## The Ulama in Aceh: A Brief Historical Survey

**Abstraksi:** *Ulama menduduki tempat yang sangat penting dalam kehidupan kaum Muslim. Mereka memiliki peran menentukan tidak saja di bidang keagamaan, sebagai penafsir yang sah atas doktrin-doktrin Islam, dan selanjutnya menentukan corak keagamaan suatu masyarakat, tetapi juga di bidang sosial-politik dan budaya. Para ulama umumnya adalah elit sosial untuk masyarakat sekitar, yang disandang sejalan dengan perannya di bidang keagamaan. Melalui lembaga-lembaga sosial-keagamaan yang dipimpin, seperti pesantren dan tarekat, mereka menanamkan pengaruhnya yang besar dalam kehidupan Muslim.*

*Pentingnya posisi ulama di atas selanjutnya membuat mereka memiliki peran penting dan menentukan dalam setiap perubahan dan perkembangan politik kaum Muslim. Dinamika politik yang berlangsung di pusat-pusat kekuasaan Islam senantiasa melibatkan para ulama. Pengalaman kerajaan-kerajaan Islam di Nusantara memberikan bukti yang jelas tentang pentingnya peran politik ulama. Mereka menempati posisi strategis dalam struktur kekuasaan di kerajaan, yang berperan sebagai penasihat spiritual dan politik bagi penguasa.*

*Artikel ini menghadirkan satu pembahasan tentang peran ulama di Nusantara, dengan fokus perhatian pada sejarah masyarakat Aceh. Sebagaimana diketahui, untuk konteks Nusantara, pengalaman sejarah masyarakat Aceh menunjukkan pentingnya peran ulama. Pembentukan dan perkembangan sistem sosial-politik dan budaya masyarakat Aceh terjadi sebagian atas kontribusi para ulama. Dalam setiap periode penting sejarah Aceh, para ulama senantiasa tampil sebagai satu kekuatan yang memberi landasan etis-keagamaan bagi setiap perubahan sosial-politik, dan selanjutnya bertindak sebagai perumus corak keagamaan yang berkembang di masyarakat Aceh.*

*Pembahasan artikel ini dimulai dengan peran ulama di kerajaan Samudra Pasai pada abad ke-13, kerajaan Islam pertama di Nusantara yang terle-*

tak di wilayah Aceh. Berdasarkan sumber-sumber sejarah yang tersedia, baik dari catatan para pengembara Eropa maupun dari tradisi masyarakat—seperti Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai dan Sejarah Melayu—para ulama telah memberi sumbangan penting dalam perkembangan Samudra Pasai menjadi kerajaan Islam terkemuka di Nusantara abad ke-13. Mereka terutama telah berjasa menjadikan kerajaan tersebut sebagai basis bagi proses islamisasi di dunia Melayu, dan Aceh khususnya. Bersama para penguasa, para ulama telah mendirikan pusat pembelajaran Islam (Islamic learning) di lingkungan kerajaan.

Posisi dan peran ulama ini jauh lebih besar pada masa kerajaan Aceh, terutama pada abad ke-17, ketika kerajaan tersebut mencapai puncak kejayaannya. Pada abad itu, kerajaan Aceh menjadi pusat lahirnya ulama terkemuka Nusantara, di antaranya adalah Hamzah al-Fansûrî dan Shams al-Dîn al-Sumatrânî dengan pemikiran sufisme waḥdat al-wujûd, disusul Nûr al-Dîn al-Rânîrî dan ‘Abd al-Ra’ûf al-Sinkîlî yang memperkenalkan pemikiran neo-Sufisme. Melalui karya-karya intelektual yang dihasilkan, mereka telah berjasa dalam perkembangan tradisi intelektual dan pemikiran Islam di Nusantara.

Lebih dari itu, ulama pada masa kerajaan Aceh juga menduduki posisi penting dalam struktur kerajaan. Posisi Shaikh al-Islâm, misalnya, adalah satu bukti yang paling terkemuka dari posisi politik ulama di kerajaan. Posisi tersebut, yang pernah diduduki ulama Aceh terkemuka—yakni Hamzah al-Fansûrî dan Nûr al-Dîn al-Rânîrî—berada setingkat di bawah sultan. Melalui lembaga tersebut, para ulama menjadi pendamping raja yang ikut menentukan setiap keputusan penting dan strategis di kerajaan.

Peran politik ulama ini bahkan semakin menonjol pada periode kemudian, ketika masyarakat Aceh berperang melawan penjajahan Belanda. Para ulama menjadi peletak dasar ideologi perjuangan, yang dirumuskan dalam konsep jihâd (perang di jalan Allah). Para ulama—juga dikenal sebagai “ulama perang sabil”—tidak hanya mendukung, tapi juga memberi landasan ideologi-keagamaan bagi masyarakat Aceh untuk berperang melawan kolonial atau kaum kafir (kaphe). Jadi, ulama dalam konteks ini menjadi perumus dan pemberi makna perjuangan masyarakat dalam terma-terma Islam.

Demikianlah, posisi ulama seperti di atas terus berlangsung di masyarakat Aceh. Memasuki awal abad ke-20, ketika modernisasi mulai memasuki kehidupan masyarakat Aceh, para ulama bertindak sebagai agen pembaharuan Islam. Melalui lembaga yang mereka dirikan, Persatuan Ulama Seluruh Aceh (PUSA) pada 1938, para ulama berjuang bagi pemberdayaan dan pengembangan umat Islam Aceh. Ulama adalah bagian penting yang tidak terpisahkan dari dinamika kehidupan masyarakat Aceh.

## The Ulama in Aceh: A Brief Historical Survey

خلاصة: كان العلماء لهم مكانة هامة في حياة المسلمين لأن لهم دورا حاسما إما في المجال الديني — حيث كانوا مفسرين ذوي سلطة لكثير من التعاليم الإسلامية بل هم يحددون الطراز الديني في المجتمع — وإما في المجال الاجتماعي والسياسي والثقافي. فالعلماء، على وجه العموم، هم الكبراء للمجتمع لديهم وفقا لدورهم في المجال الديني. فبوسيلة المؤسسات الاجتماعية والدينية كممثل المعاهد التراثية (*pesantren*) تحت قيادهم، يغرس العلماء نفوذهم ذا سلطة في حياة المسلمين.

علاوة على ذلك، توجه تلك المترلة الرفيعة امتلاك العلماء إلى الدور الهام الآخر وهو التعيين في كل من التغيرات والتطورات السياسية لدى المسلمين حيث كانوا متورطين في عدد من الديناميكيات السياسية في مراكز السلطنة الإسلامية في ملايو-الأرخبيل (Melayu-Nusantara)، بنفوذهم إما قاضيا أم مرشدا دينيا وسياسيا للسلطان.

وتحاول هذه المقالة أن تقدم البحث عن دور العلماء في ملايو-الأرخبيل وخاصة عما كان يجري في تاريخ مجتمع أتشيه (Aceh). ومن المعترف به من الناحية التاريخية أن تجربة أتشيه من حيث مجتمعتها قد دلت إلى أن العلماء لهم دورا هاما بل حاسما دينيا كان أم اجتماعيا وسياسيا، بل كان تكوين النظام الاجتماعي والثقافي والسياسي في مجتمع أتشيه من بعض نفوذ علمائهم.

وفي البداية، يتعرض البحث لدور العلماء في سلطنة باساي (Pasai) في القرن الثالث عشر، وهي أول سلطنة في الأرخبيل تستقر في منطقة أتشيه. فالعلماء، — وفقا للمصادر التاريخية الموجودة، تصدر من الرسائل للمتجولين الأوروبيين كانت أم من التقاليد الاجتماعية كممثل *Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai* (حكاية ملوك باساي) و *Sejarah Melayu* (تاريخ ملايو) — لهم دور حاسم في تطوير باساي حتى أن كانت أشهر السلطنات الإسلامية في الأرخبيل في ذلك

القرن، فهم، على وجه الخصوص، كانوا يسهمون في تكوين سلطنة باساي مركزا لعملية نشر الإسلام في العالم الملايوي وخاصة في منطقة أتشيه، بل يشتركون مع السلطان في إنشاء المراكز لتعلم الإسلام (Islamic Learning) حول المملكة.

ويزداد العلماء دورا ومنزلة في عصر سلطنة أتشيه وهو في القرن السابع عشر حينما نالت هذه السلطنة عصر ازدهارها الأعظم (golden age) حيث كانت مركزا للظهور كثير من العلماء الخبراء كمثل حمزة الفنصوري وشمس الدين السمطري ونور الدين الرانيري وعبد الرؤوف السنكيلى. فمن أيديهم برزت الأفكار المتعلقة بالتعاليم الصوفية كمثل "وحدة الوجود" و"التصوف الجديد" (neo-sufism). فهؤلاء العلماء، بوسيلة مؤلفاتهم، كانوا يسهمون في تطوير إقليم التعقلية الإسلامية، وخاصة في منطقة ملايو-الأرخبيل.

وبالإضافة إلى ذلك، يستقر العلماء في عصر سلطنة أتشيه في منزلة رفيعة لدى النظام السلطاني. فمرتبة "شيخ الإسلام" على سبيل المثال هي مرتبة دلت دلالة على منزلة العلماء الرفيعة دينية كانت أم سياسية لدى السلطة، فهذه المرتبة — التي استقر فيها حمزة الفنصوري ونور الدين الرانيري — تكون في الترتيب الثاني بعد السلطان بنفسه، ولذلك كان هؤلاء العلماء "زملاء" للسلطان حيث يشتركون في تعيين كل من القرارات الهامة والاستراتيجية في السلطة، وكذلك منزلة "قاضي ملك العادل" التي استقر فيها عبد الرؤوف السنكيلى في الفترة الثانية من القرن السابع عشر.

بل يشد دور العلماء هذا سياسية بعدئذ حينما يحارب مجتمع أتشيه ضد استعمارية هولندا، حيث أنهم يضعون إيديولوجيا أساسيا للقتال يعني ما يقال بكلمة "الجهاد" أي القتال في سبيل الله، فعلمائهم مشهورون كالعلماء في معركة السبيل (Ulama Perang Sabil). إذا، ففي هذا الصدد، يعتبر العلماء مستنبتين صيغة لإعداد روح الجهاد لدى المجتمع بوسيلة المواد الدينية الإسلامية.

وهكذا يمتد دور العلماء ومزلتهم في مجتمع أتشيه كما هو المذكور إلى أوائل القرن العشرين متطابقا بظهور التحديث والتجديد لديهم، فكل من العلماء في هذا العصر يدور وكيلا لما يقال بتحديد الإسلام. وفي ١٩٣٨م، قد بنى العلماء منظمة تسمى باتحاد العلماء شامل أتشيه (Persatuan Ulama Seluruh Aceh/PUSA)، فبوسيلة هذه المنظمة يحاول العلماء أن يرفعوا منزلة المسلمين ومرتبهم في أتشيه. فالحاصل، كان العلماء بعضا لا يتجزأ عن ديناميكا الحياة لمجتمع أتشيه بل إلى عصرنا الآن.

Since the introduction of Islam to the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago, the *ulama* (Muslim scholars) have played a major role, both in the everyday life of Muslim society and in the exercise of political authority. Their mastery of Islamic knowledge led the *ulama* to become members of a social elite who set the spiritual pattern for the whole society. The masses looked to them for guidance, while the rulers tried to use them as their source of legitimization. Thus, their presence in the society has been of considerable importance. The *ulama* are regarded as having the responsibilities of upholding Islamic values and teaching religion.

This article is a survey primarily concerned with the social and political roles of some leading *ulama* in Aceh, one of the most important areas for the development of Islam in the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago. As the work of Azyumardi Azra argued,<sup>1</sup> Aceh emerged as the leading center of Islamic learning in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Malay-Indonesia; The leading *ulama* originated from Aceh and Islamic thought mainly developed there. Ḥamzah al-Fanṣūrî and Nûr al-Dîn al-Rânîrî —to mention but a few—were among the Acehese *ulama* who contributed to the Islamic intellectual development during the periode concerned. They were responsible for the spread of, respectively, heterodox sufisme *waḥdat al-wujûd* and neosufisme in Malay-Indonesian Islam.

### Islamic Kingdoms: Political Base of the *Ulama*

Situated on the northern tip of Sumatra, Aceh was one of the first areas that experienced Islamization, simultaneous with the development of a trading network in thirteenth century Southeast Asia. The Acehese history recorded that this area was ruled by many Islamic kingdoms. The most prominent kingdoms were Samudra Pasai and the Sultanate of Aceh Darussalam that ruled a major part of the western Archipelago.<sup>2</sup>

Precisely when Islam came to Aceh is not known. Historians differ considerably on this issue. Some hold the view that Islam may have come there as early as the first century of the Hijr calendar, that is, as early as the 8<sup>th</sup> century CE. Others assert that Islam came to Aceh in the 13<sup>th</sup> century CE. This difference is due to the fact that the historical records available are so sketchy and insufficient. Travellers' accounts and local narratives are in themselves inconclusive. Each needs interpretation. This is especially true when dealing with

the early coming of Islam to Aceh and the development of a Muslim community from the time of the advent of Islam to the twelfth century, for which there is little evidence.

Nevertheless, one thing is sure. A prosperous Islamic kingdom of Samudra Pasai, near the coastal areas of the northern part of the present-day Aceh was already existence in the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Historical sources available, such as travellers' accounts, tombstone inscriptions, local annals —*Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai*— and oral traditions, have shed some light on the existence of Samudra Pasai as the first Islamic kingdom in the Archipelago.

The next era is of Aceh Darussalam. The list of names include thirty one rulers of the kingdom beginning with Sultân 'Alâ al-Dîn 'Alî Mughayyat Shâh (1511-1530) and ending with Sultân 'Alâ al-Dîn Muḥammad Dâwûd Shâh (1874-1903). It was Sultân 'Alâ al-Dîn 'Alî Mughayyat Shâh who unified the scattered kingdoms in the Aceh region and put them under his own sovereignty. He is the founding father of what was then popularly known as the kingdom of Aceh Darussalam with its capital city of Bandar Aceh.<sup>3</sup> Anti-Portuguese sentiment, religious zeal, desire for power, and economic control precipitated the unification. He ruled the country for eighteen years and died in 1530 CE (994 AH). The last sultân, Muḥammad Dâwûd, was captured by, yet never surrendered his power to, the Dutch.

Among all the eras in Acehnese history there are a couple of kingdoms worthy of discussion here. One is Samudra Pasai and the other is Aceh Darussalam. Samudra Pasai was established by Meurah Silu who later died as Malik al-Şâliḥ (1297 CE). Aceh Darussalam was initiated by Sultân 'Alâ al-Dîn 'Alî Mughayyat Shâh (1511-1530 CE).

As far as the kingdom Samudra Pasai is concerned, according to *Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai*, the king was Islamized by an Arab Shaykh 'Abdullâh 'Arif who came from the Middle East. The *Hikayat* tells us through legend of this Islamization. A description of the kingdom and its surroundings were recorded by a Venetian traveller Marco Polo during his historic journey to and from China. Polo stated that the kingdom was prosperous and the king was pious to religious observance. On Friday he walked to the mosque and attended the religious circle directed by a leading member of the *ulama*.<sup>4</sup>

Aceh Darussalam under the reign of Sultan Iskandar Muda (1607-1636) and a few years afterward is significant since he was the most ambitious king in Acehnese history. Beside his territorial expansion to other parts of the archipelago, he was the only serious contender



in the region challenging the European traders. Aceh's popularity reached its apogee during his time. The port was wide open as an international center of trade. The trading ships were protected from pirate attack. He was also respected as the founding father of Acehese institutions. The *Adat Meukuta Alam* was stipulated under his sovereignty. This book is very much like the constitution of the kingdom. This Adat was followed later by kings and queens. In addition, he also attached himself and his kingdom to the consultation of the *ulama*. The most popular among them were Ḥamzah al-Fanṣûrî and Shams al-Dîn al-Sumatrânî. His execution of his only male progeny, the takeover by his foreign successor, and the women kings, approved by the great *ulama* afterward, were important moments in Acehese history in particular and in that of the archipelago in general.

Proud of his strength and success, the Sultan expanded his territory to other parts of Sumatra and to Malaya. His main purpose in this expansion seems to have been to secure his trading power by controlling the pepper source in the region. In order to gain more revenue he levied a tax on the traders both local and foreign. He monopolized the pepper trade by controlling the price. From every single transaction he got a certain percentage of the sale. During his thirty years of reign the most serious challenge to his sovereignty came from the Portuguese, whom he fought until his naval power was exhausted.

His success in regional trade caused Aceh to be known in foreign countries. China, the Middle East, Gujarat, Malabar, Coromandel and Bengal traded with Aceh. Portugal, Britain, Turkey, and the Netherlands followed suit. This commerce made Aceh a melting pot. Whatever commodities were on the market could be found in Aceh. To facilitate trading activities, the sultan provided market space. In the city of Aceh alone (it was then called *Bandar Aceh*, meaning the port city of Aceh) there were three trading centers.

As his popularity increased and his power grew, he had to face many enemies. They were European traders who arrived supported by modern military equipment. The sultan built warships and trained horsemen and elephant troops. He exercised his strength in the neighboring areas and succeeded in conquering the adjacent kingdoms. Almost all of the west coast of Sumatra had been subdued in addition to Deli (Aru) on the east coast by 1612. In 1613 he headed for the Malay peninsula, and Johor and Batu Sawar were defeated. In many cases the conquests were not aimed at occupation, but rather politi-

cal cooperation. For example, Johor was rebuilt by Acehnese workmen who did the renovation. Furthermore, although the sultan had expanded his territories, the dependencies were at no time under any central administration. The traditional chiefs remained in power and the citizens simply paid a yearly tribute to Aceh. As such, most of the dependencies remained virtually independent in their own territories. The defeated chiefs were military commanders and judges in their own arand continued to perform their traditional roles as usual. Whatever his motivations, his actions show that he was an uncontentedly ambitious ruler in the Archipelago. As a result he became one of the richest kings in South East Asia.<sup>5</sup>

Why did he do all of these military exercises when at the same time he had to face his real enemy, the European powers? It was done to establish additional allies in order to prevent the expansion of the Portuguese who had occupied Melaka in 1511. The Portuguese were Aceh's worst enemy. With this in mind the Sultan expanded his influence through conquest to the surrounding kingdoms up the Malayan peninsula. That is why Pahang was conquered by 1618. Kedah and Perak were taken in 1619 and 1620 respectively. In 1621 a naval expedition was sent to Tiku in central Sumatra to suppress a rebellious chief. The King's dominion extended more than 1,000 miles to the south. In 1624 the island of Nias off the west coast of Sumatra was conquered. Iskandar Muda tried to liberate Melaka from the Portuguese, who had occupied it more than 100 years earlier, but failed. He tried again repeatedly, with his last attempt being in 1629, but even with his largest fleet he was again defeated. The Portuguese drew support from Goa, India, which had been under Portuguese occupation since 1510. This last blow caused a great loss of Acehnese ships and manpower. These losses prevented Iskandar Muda from further serious military aggression. Still suffering from all of his ambitious expansions, the sultan turned his attention to doing business.

Actually only a few things concerned the sultan at this time, economics, politics and religion. Military might was the means of achieving them all. At one time he succeeded in allying himself with the British to combat the Portuguese and the Spaniards. Although the British were the real winner in the deal, the sultan's desire was also fulfilled to a certain degree. Economic interest was always of primary importance. Consequently even what was called a "holy war" was occasionally precipitated by business strategies. In order to

strengthen his political position, Iskandar Muda, the king of Aceh Darussalam, sent his ambassadors to Holland. Their goal was to obtain accurate information about the political situation in that part of the world. They were well received by the court. The ambassadors were the first Indonesian representatives to visit Holland. Unfortunately one of them died and was buried there with a great display of official mourning.<sup>6</sup>

One of the benefits of a knowledge of European politics was that the sultan of Aceh became aware that the European traders were rivals. The Portuguese competed with the Dutch, the British, etc. to whatever cost each had to pay. This competition was manipulated by the sultan for his own benefit. He priced his merchandise to his own liking, knowing one or the other would take it. He was friendly to good merchants and hostile to the others. In this political fashion Aceh became a trading partner with the Europeans, and Aceh and the Europeans at one time were ranked on an equal footing in business and politics. That is why "in many of the transactions between Aceh [sic] and the Europeans the former dictated the terms and the latter had to conform."<sup>7</sup>

The most important commodity in the East Indies then was the spices produced in Aceh and on the Moluccas [Maluku], in eastern Indonesia. Knowing the great value of these commodities the sultan ordered his subjects to grow pepper throughout Aceh and its surrounding dependencies. Beside pepper, Aceh also traded with silk, camphor, benzoin and gold. The commodities which the European traders were chiefly interested in and which were available in the Aceh market were: pepper, silk, benzoin, pitch, linaloes, camphor, sulphur, saltpeter, petroleum, gold, tin, lead and elephant's tusks. There were also some commodities of non-Acehnese origin found there. They included cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg, mace, sandalwood, Indian cloth, Chinese porcelain, etc. This great variety of commodities made Aceh one of the most important international trading centers in Southeast Asia.

So important was the dominion of trade that Aceh and the other regional powers struggled to secure a trading monopoly with European powers on the export of spices. Nobody could make huge profits unless the middlemen were eliminated and the spices brought directly to Europe. Because of this huge potential profit so many innocent people, in one way or the other, were sacrificed.

From the beginning, knowing his limitations in defending the

kingdom and in protecting the trading monopoly from multiple European rivals, the sultan tried to get help through the Islamic link. He established connections with Turkey by sending pepper in exchange for guns and advisors. The Acehnese were aware of the difficulties faced by European traders who felt that Turkish power was still dominant. At the same time the Turks were struggling with the Europeans for control of trading routes in the Mediterranean. The Sultan of Aceh asked the Sultan of Turkey for protection, offering him overlordship over his country. Turkey sent military advisors, guns, artisans, and experts in shipbuilding and weapons manufacturing. It was through this connection that Aceh's military power was built up.

Economic and political interests that put Aceh, at one time, at the center of the trading activities, later brought it into decline because of its political ambitions. Attempts to crush the Portuguese and other European traders drained Aceh's manpower and resources. Europeans were not just businessmen but also well-trained soldiers equipped with modern weaponry and imbued with missionary zeal.

The Europeans, learning from the painful past, set aside their animosities to present a united front to face the divided natives. The Islamic link with Turkey utilized by the Sultan never satisfactorily worked out because of the great distances from the Sultanate of Aceh and because of the internal problems being faced in the Middle East. Ironically, all Islamic Sultanates and native powers in the region were in conflict with each other and rarely united. Often they collaborated with the Europeans to crush their neighbors. Surprisingly, the Chinese were never a threat to the region.

The death of Iskandar Muda in 1636 caused a change in politics and business in Aceh and the surrounding areas. European powers then had a better chance to manipulate the situation for their own greater profit. The sultan's successor was not like him.

Iskandar Muda was replaced by Iskandar Thâni, his son-in-law who was of Pahang origin. Iskandar Thâni was not the first "imported" king. He was preceded by 'Alâ al-Dîn Manşûr Shâh of Perak (1579-1585 CE). Both of them were Malaysian natives. The foreign origin of some kings of such a large kingdom as Aceh Darussalam warrants some discussion. Iskandar Muda, in fact, had his only son executed just fourteen days prior to his death. Although Iskandar Thâni ruled for a short period of four years, three months and six days (1637-1641 CE), he left behind the legacy of a well known *'âlim*,

Nûr al-Dîn al-Rânîrî, who came to the region from India at the king's request. He was the *'âlim* who functioned as the *Qâdî Malik al-'Âdil* during the reign of Iskandar Thânî as well as for a few years after Iskandar's demise. He became one of the models for the Acehnese interpretation of religion. The reign of Iskandar Thânî marked a great change in international policy, especially with regard to dealing with the foreign traders.<sup>8</sup>

The untimely death of Iskandar Thânî shocked the kingdom. Since the late king did not leave any legitimate heir, the council of the nobles decided to install the king's widow to rule the country. The widow, Iskandar Muda's daughter, assumed power and reigned uninterruptedly for 35 years (1641-1675). This queen who assumed the title Sri Sultan Tâj al-'Âlam Şafiat al-Dîn was the first of four female rulers in the Kingdom of Aceh, and she was one of the most successful queens in Acehnese history. Although she faced strong opposition from certain religious groups, she was able to cope with the situation with the help of the court *ulama*, such as Nûr al-Dîn al-Rânîrî, Shams al-Rijâl and 'Abd al-Ra'ûf Shiyah Kuala. The last lived to serve the four queens consecutively until his death in the year 1695 CE.<sup>9</sup>

After the death of queen Şafiat al-Dîn, there were three more queens who ruled Aceh continuously, until the end of the seventeenth century. They are queen Nûr al-'Âlam Naqiyat al-Dîn (1675-1678). After her death queen 'Inâyat Shâh Zakiyat al-Dîn assumed the throne (1678-1688), and the last one was queen Kamâlat al-Dîn Shâh who reigned for ten years before she was deposed by the Council of Nobles in 1699.

The most striking feature of the reign of the female sultans is that although they were de-stabilized by the opposition to a woman being monarch, they survived the challenge due to the support of the authoritative *ulama*. The *ulama* acted to quell the opposition. The successful dethronement of Queen Kamalat al-Dîn Shâh occurred largely because the supportive *'âlim* 'Abd al-Ra'ûf Shiyah Kuala had died by 1695 within four years of his death she was replaced by yet another male king of Arab origin.<sup>10</sup>

All of these female rulers assumed their power against the strong opposition of people with extreme religious sentiments. At the same time all these rulers were appointed with the approval of and the authority of the *ulama*. There were at least three authoritative *ulama* patronizing the queens who most of the time overcame the challenges

and rejection of certain others. Beginning with Nûr al-Dîn al-Rânîrî and ending with 'Abd al-Ra'ûf Shiyah Kuala, these men were well respected and have become models of the Indonesian-Malaysian *ulama* even to the present.

### The Acehese *Ulama* in History

The Acehese *ulama* to be discussed here will be those who stand out for their lasting contributions in shaping the religious and cultural values of the Acehese society. They are in chronological order—the *ulama* of Pasai; of Aceh Darussalam; of the *Perang Sabil* [Jihad Struggle]; and the reformist *ulama* of PUSA (Persatuan Ulama Seluruh Aceh = All Aceh *ulama* Association).

### The Pasai *ulama*

Let me begin with the Acehese *ulama* from the Pasai era.<sup>11</sup> The *Hikayat Raja-Pasai* [Pasai Chronicles]<sup>12</sup> and the *Sejarah Melayu* [Malay Annals]<sup>13</sup> provide ample records of the names, functions, actions, and connections of the *ulama* within the country and throughout the region. Most of the Pasai *ulama* came from “foreign” countries, either from the Middle East, Persia, or India. This can be observed from the fact that their names bear specific titles such as Makhdûm Sadar Jahân, Tun Makhdûm Mua, Tun asan, or refer to their place of origin, such as *Shaykh* Ismâ'îl of Makkah, The *Faqîr* of Ma'abrî, Amîr Dawlasi [Dawlat Shâh?] of Delhi, Qâdî Amîr Sayyid from Shîrâz, Faqîh Tâjuddîn of Isfahân and others.<sup>14</sup>

Since these *ulama* came mostly from the Middle East, Persia, or India, they obtained their religious training from the centers of Islamic learning there, particularly from the cradles of Islam, Makkah and Madînah. They had a high level of mastery of the Arabic language, and that gave them great prestige, both in the country and abroad. Although they came from different centers, they taught the religion according to the school of Shâfi'î. This was because the kings of Pasai were well-known as followers of the Shâfi'î *madhhab*.<sup>15</sup> The predominance of the Shâfi'î school in Pasai is attributable to the fact that Gujarat-trained *ulama* were most prevalent among them: Gujarat was known to have established a Shâfi'î school on the west coast of the Indian subcontinent, and these *ulama* conducted religious propagation right up to the archipelago.

According to both *Hikayat* and *Sejarah Melayu*, it was *Shaykh* Ismâ'îl of Makkah who was responsible for the Islamization of Meurah Silu,

the King of Pasai.<sup>16</sup> This *Shaykh* later conferred on the king the Islamic title *Malik al-Sâlih* [the pious king], on behalf of the ruler of Makkah. Accompanying the *Shaykh* of Makkah on his journeys was the *Faqîr*<sup>17</sup> of Ma'abrî (Mengir), southern India, who continued to work to spread the religion. From this seed, Pasai later developed into a full-fledged Islamic kingdom, from which Islam branched out to the rest of south-east Asia. The reputation for erudition among the *ulama* of Pasai had, on many occasions, caused the *ulama* of Melaka<sup>18</sup> to refer to the former for consultation on serious theological issues. For this reason, there are at least three notable events on account of which the names of Pasai *ulama* were recorded.

Once an *'âlim* named Mawlânâ Abû Bakr, came to Melaka and brought with him a book entitled *Durr Manzûm*. The Sultan of Melaka, Manşûr Shâh, was very eager to learn from the book, and studied it attentively under the direction of the Mawlânâ. Since the book was written in Arabic and the Sultan wanted to more thoroughly explore the exegesis of its doctrine, he ordered that the book be taken to Pasai for a full exposition. Makhdûm Pematakan, a well known *'âlim* of Pasai, was chosen to do this work. The outcome apparently satisfied both the Mawlânâ and the Sultan of Melaka.<sup>19</sup>

On another occasion, it is reported that the king of Melaka sent an envoy to the *ulama* of Pasai to ask: "Do those in heaven abide there for ever? And do those in hell abide there for ever?"<sup>20</sup> This question was answered by Tun Makhdûm Mua and his disciple Tun Hasan in the presence of the Sultan of Pasai and all the court dignitaries. The answer, though unrecorded, apparently satisfied both the Sultan of Melaka, and the *ulama* there, as they were richly rewarded.<sup>21</sup>

At another time, news came to the Sultan of Melaka about a dispute between the *ulama* of "the country beyond the river"<sup>22</sup> and the *ulama* of Khurâsân and 'Irâq. The issue was two widely divergent theological statements. The first is: "*man qâla inna Allâha ta'âlâ khâliqun wa râziqun fî al-azali fa qad kafara,*" that is to say, "Whoever declares that God was Creator and Provider from eternity is verily an infidel." The second says: "*man qâla inna Allâha ta'âlâ lam yakun khâliqan wa râziqan fî al-azali faqad kafara,*" that is to say, "Whoever declares that God was **not** the Creator and Provider in pre-eternity [azal] is verily an infidel."<sup>23</sup> Regarding this as a crucial theological issue, the Sultan sent an envoy to get guidance from the *ulama* of Pasai, but no *ulama* of Pasai dared to provide a resolution. Consequently, the Sultan of Pasai himself responded to the question which,

it is said, satisfied the envoy of Melaka.

Thus, the *ulama* had apparently been successful in their mission to bring the sultans into the circle of religious scholars. The Sultan of Melaka studied under the Mawlânâ and the Sultan of Melaka posed theological initiated questions and sent them to Pasai. It was the Sultan of Pasai who hosted the discussion and on at least one occasion gave the clarification on a religious issue. Because of the *ulama*, the Sultans of both Pasai and Melaka were able to transcend the boundaries of their “worldly” kingdoms and enter the realm of serious religious thought. This partnership between the *ulama* and the Sultan made the Sultanate of Pasai the first center of Islamic learning in the archipelago.

The *ulama* were accorded a high position of respect in the royal court. In any religious discussion, the *ulama* were summoned, and were seated beside the sultan.<sup>24</sup> In addition to deference and respect, the *ulama* were also granted material rewards. They were regarded as an essential element of the kingdom.

Through the efforts of the *ulama*, Pasai, Melaka, Demak, and East Java all acquired Islamic identities. The presence of *ulama* with different ethnic origins transcended the boundaries of kingdoms and peoples. They were involved with the local kingdoms but had a regional, and even an international, vision.

The ability of the *ulama* to instill Islam into the heart of the sultanate had another consequence. The first golden coins in Southeast Asia bore the Quranic inscription *al-Malik al-‘Âdil* [The Just King]. This title had far implications than the former *Malik al-Şâlih* [The Pious King]. The new title conveyed the qualities of prestige, commitment, action, as well as piety.<sup>25</sup> The idea of Quranic justice had penetrated into the system of the kingdom, at least as far as official symbols go.<sup>26</sup> This tradition of “the Just King” became a model for future Islamic kingdoms in the archipelago.

Beside their teaching activities, the *ulama* of Pasai were also active in introducing Islam to the Malay Peninsula and Java. Mawlânâ Ishâq, one of the most renowned *ulama* of Pasai, was sent to Blambangan, East Java to spread the faith.<sup>27</sup> Even when Pasai was invaded by Majapahit in the middle of the fourteenth century CE, the work of propagating Islam never ceased. There is strong evidence that some of the Pasai captives who were brought to Java by Majapahit rulers included some of the *ulama*.<sup>28</sup>

The report of an *‘âlim* named Sunan Gunung Jati provides an illustration of the dedication of some *ulama*. Upon returning from



Makkah, he found that Pasai was under Siege by the Portuguese. He thereupon escaped to Demak, in north central Java. There he married into the royal family, and soon had established himself in the Demak kingdom. From here, he moved to Banten in West Java, and continued to propagate the faith in the Kingdom of Pajajaran. He then became the first Sultan of the new Islamic Kingdom of Banten, and died there some time before 1570.<sup>29</sup>

The *Hikayat Raja Pasai* is the written legacy of the court *ulama* of the Pasai era. In it, many religious terms, phrases and concepts are cogently articulated, and the writing, in *Jawi*, demonstrates a sound knowledge of both Arabic and Islamic heritage. Many foreign words and phrases are found in it, including —besides Arabic— Persian, Sanskrit, Javanese, and Acehese. In addition, the author or authors included —or better, concocted— a ḥadīth referring to the existence of Samudra Pasai, and attributed it to the Prophet Muḥammad, as if to demonstrate that the Prophet had already predicted the existence, and destiny, of the country from which so many *ulama* would emerge.<sup>30</sup> The naming of the kingdom as *Dâr al-Islâm* [the Abode of Islam], and the titling of the kings as *Malik al-Ṣâliḥ* or *Malik al-ʿÂdil*, is yet another proof of the *ulamas*' influence in the royal court.<sup>31</sup>

In conclusion we can say that the *ulama* of Pasai, many of whom came from overseas, played a major role in the kingdom and became an integral part of it. Their erudition, ability to exercise their profession, and the strategy they employed in approaching the rulers, enabled them to shape the kingdom in the Islamic mold. In addition, the missionary activities they carried out were instrumental in the spreading of Islam in both the country and the archipelago.

### The Aceh Darussalam *ulama*

The era of Aceh Darussalam [ca. late sixteenth to nineteenth centuries CE] marked a shift, not only in power relationships but also in religious matters in the archipelago. During the late-sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries alone, there were at least four well-known *ulama* present in the kingdom, recognized not only in Aceh but also in the archipelago: Ḥamzah al-Fanṣûrî, Shams al-Dîn al-Sumatrânî, Nûr al-Dîn al-Rânîrî and ʿAbd al-Raʿûf al-Sinkîlî among others.<sup>32</sup> Although they might have disagreed on certain religious issues, their legacy to the archipelago has been lasting. These are the *ulama* who shaped the religious image of Aceh.

Ḥamzah al-Fanṣûrî was probably from Pansur, which is Barus, on

the west coast of northern Sumatra, south of the Aceh region.<sup>33</sup> Al-Fanşûrî lived during the second half of the sixteenth century until the beginning of the seventeenth century. Hence he was active when Sulţân ‘Alâ al-Dîn Ri’âyat Shâh Sayyid al-Mukammal was on the throne (1588-1604).<sup>34</sup>

Prior to settling in Aceh, al-Fanşûrî travelled quite extensively in the pursuit of knowledge, engaged in a spiritual quest. In his search he visited Banten, Kudus, Pahang, Siam (Ayuthia), Jerusalem, Makkah, and Baghdad,<sup>35</sup> where he obtained his initiation in the *ṭarîqah*.<sup>36</sup> His peripatetic study enriched his religious knowledge and deepened his Sufism. He mastered several foreign languages, mainly Arabic and Persian, as well as local languages, such as Malay, Acehnese, and Javanese.

After returning from his journeys, al-Fanşûrî established himself as a *sufi* master. His theological exposition on the *wujûdiyyah* shows the clear influence of Ibn ‘Arabî. This teaching, later shared by Shams al-Dîn, is known in Aceh as the “*Martabat Tujuh*” [The Seven Grades]. It explicates the doctrine of emanation which derives from the teaching of Ibn ‘Arabî:

All things in the universe necessarily emanate from divine prescience in which they pre-exist as ideas ... Man has to become conscious of the fundamental truth that the existence (*wujûd*) of created things is nothing but the very essence of the Creator; hence the name of this doctrine is *wujûdiyyah*.<sup>37</sup>

Although a *sufi* master and wanderer, al-Fanşûrî is also believed to have had a position at the court. In his writings he praises the king, and some of his works were done with the Sultan’s consent.<sup>38</sup> It is not unreasonable to infer that he functioned as a spiritual counselor to the Sultan. Because of his good relationship with the court, he had ample opportunity and leisure to write many treatises on theology and poetry.

Some scholars regard him as “the greatest Malay *sufi* poet, and the first man to set the *sufi* doctrines and metaphysics in Malay.”<sup>39</sup> He is also considered to be the founder of modern Malay literature. Brakel says:

... within the context of Classical Malay Literature Hamza [sic] rates as first-class poet, who possessed an excellent grasp of this poetical genre, the invention of which has been attributed to him.<sup>40</sup>

The distinct achievements of al-Fanşûrî are his eloquence in poetry and his ability to elucidate the teaching of *wiḥdat al-wujûd* in the archipelago for the first time, for which he was regarded as the cornerstone of both. His piety, diplomacy, and excellence in teaching enabled him to attract the court dignitaries, and especially the Sultan, into his *ṭarîqah*. Al-Fanşûrî had the ability to link the spiritual life of the Malay people to the larger world of Islamic mysticism. Since Malay was his main literary language, his works are known throughout the archipelago.

Shams al-Dîn ibn ‘Abdullâh al-Samaṭrânî was born in the latter half of the sixteenth century.<sup>41</sup> Since he came from Pasai (present North Aceh) he was also known as Shams al-Dîn Pasai<sup>42</sup>. Shams al-Dîn was younger than, and probably a disciple of, Ḥamzah al-Fanşûrî.

In pursuit of religious knowledge, al-Samaṭrânî went to Java to study with the Javanese *wali* [saint] and scholar Pangeran Bonang. From his works we also know that he mastered, at least to a certain degree, several languages, including Arabic, Persian, Malay and Javanese.<sup>43</sup> His mastery of languages enabled him to further his search for knowledge in Islamic sciences, including *fiqh*, Sufism, theology and politics.

As a disciple of al-Fanşûrî, al-Samaṭrânî continued the teaching of *ṭarîqah wujûdiyyah*. He too, was able to attract the Sultan to be his student in the *ṭarîqah*.<sup>44</sup> Due to his vast knowledge and expertise in diplomacy, he was appointed a special adviser to the Sultan, and, as *Shaykh al-Islâm*, the highest religious authority in the Sultanate of Aceh Darussalam.<sup>45</sup> This position gave him the supreme authority in court to make legal judgement on matters relating to religion. His eloquence in politics enabled him to function in the court dealing with state affairs and foreign emissaries. In the year 1602 CE, he was assigned to receive the British emissary, Captain James Lancaster, who presented a letter from Queen Elizabeth of England to the Sultan of Aceh. He was the only noble for whom Lancaster expressed great respect.<sup>46</sup>

Beside being the supreme judge of the court, he also had time to write some treatises explicating the teaching of Ibn ‘Arabî, similar to what al-Fanşûrî had done.<sup>47</sup> His mastery of Arabic was so complete that all of his works bear Arabic titles. His works on Sufism are particularly important, since it was through these that Islamic Sufism took shape in Acehnese society and the archipelago.

As a special advisor to the Sultan, al-Samaṭrânî’s legal positions

were very accommodating to the Sultan's interests. For instance, he condoned the use of lavish goldware in the court.<sup>48</sup> He also allowed female musicians to play and sing for foreign guests in the court. At the request of the Sultan, he also agreed to the singing of the Psalm of David by the visiting guests. He did not criticize the use of animal fighting as entertainment in the kingdom.<sup>49</sup> It appears that al-Samaṭrânî was not afraid that his rulings would jeopardize Islam and its followers, nor that he would alienate the latter through such accommodation.

Until his death, al-Samaṭrânî served at the court of Iskandar Muda.<sup>50</sup> Apparently the Sultan had invested a great deal of trust in him; after al-Samaṭrânî's death, the Sultan largely withdrew from political ventures.

Nûr al-Dîn al-Rânîrî's full name was Nûr al-Dîn Muḥammad bin 'Alî bin Ḥasanjî al-Ḥamîd al-Shâfi'î al-Ash'arî al-Aydarûsî al-Rânîrî. He was born in Rander on the Gujarat coast of India.<sup>51</sup> On the father's side, al-Rânîrî was an Arab from Hadramawt; his mother was of Malay origin. Al-Rânîrî's education started in his home town of Surat, Gujarat. He then moved to Tarim, southern Arabia, to continue his education. In 1621 CE, he left for Makkah and Madinah, mostly for pilgrimage. After some time, he came back to Surat. While in Tarim he was introduced to the *ṭarîqah Rifâ'iyyah*. He eventually became one of the *shaykhs* of this *ṭarîqah*, (with which Aceh had been well acquainted with in years past).<sup>52</sup>

Before coming to Aceh, al-Rânîrî had mastered at least both Arabic and Malay languages. As soon as he arrived in Aceh he became religious adviser to Sultan Iskandar Thânî (1636-1641). During his seven years stay in Aceh, he was active in politics and prolific in writing. His books cover the subjects of fiqh, ḥadîth, 'aqîdah, history, mysticism, and philosophy. He is the first "scholar" to write a history of the Malay archipelago, in his *Bustân al-Salâṭîn* [*Garden of the Sultans*].<sup>53</sup>

Among his distinctive religious views is his verdict on the prohibition of the teaching of *wiḥdat al-wujûd* and the condemnation of its teaching as heretical. Consequently its followers were persecuted, the books of the teaching were confiscated, and the teaching was prohibited. The books were then collected in the courtyard of the grand mosque, Bayt al-Raḥmân, and burnt.<sup>54</sup>

During his tenure in the Aceh court, al-Rânîrî also functioned as the political advisor to the ruler, Iskandar Thânî. After Iskandar

Thânî's death, al-Rânîrî sought to gain the favor of the Sultanah of the Sultanate, Şafiyat al-Dîn, widow of the late Sultan, daughter of Iskandar Muda, and the first woman ruler ever to emerge in the Sultanate of Aceh Darussalam. Her coronation was carried out with the full consent of al-Rânîrî.

Al-Rânîrî was the first *'âlim* in Aceh Darussalam to give a *fatwa* on the legitimacy of a woman ruler. He defended his position vigorously against the opposition of the *ulama* of the Hijaz, to whom the most crucial religious problems were referred. Al-Rânîrî's stand on this matter is historic, yet remains controversial.

Al-Rânîrî also condoned the luxurious life of the court, and apparently made no objection to the extremely lavish funeral of Sultan Iskandar Thâni, his patron, which occurred in February 1641. The burial ceremony is still remembered as the most luxurious one ever held in the kingdom of Aceh Darussalam.<sup>55</sup> It seems likely that this was permitted to occur as the result of pressure from the royal household, but there are no records attesting to this. Certainly in his books al-Rânîrî does not indicate any disapproval.

Al-Rânîrî did not stay long in Aceh. After the death of his patron, Iskandar Thâni, his position became shaky. His involvement in politics and the persecution of the *ṭarîqah wujûdiyyah* followers had earned him enemies, and he left Aceh abruptly. A number of his legal decisions were challenged by the new *'âlim* of Minangkabau, Sayf al-Rijâl, who had studied in Aceh under Shams al-Dîn, but later had to leave Aceh because of the theological disputes in the kingdom.<sup>56</sup> In 1644, al-Rânîrî left for his home town Ranir, where he lived for the next fourteen years; he died on September 21st, 1658.<sup>57</sup>

The last renowned *'âlim* in Aceh Darussalam was 'Abd al-Ra'ûf al-Sinkîlî. He was one of the most prominent *'âlim* serving during the "golden age" of the four female sultanahs of Aceh. Al-Sinkîlî was born when Iskandar Muda was at the peak of his power, (ca 1615 CE) in Singkil, which is in the southern part of Aceh.<sup>58</sup> He spent most of his student life in various centers of Islamic learning in Arabia.

When al-Sinkîlî travelled to Arabia, around 1642, the chief *'âlim* of Aceh was Nûr al-Dîn al-Rânîrî. The theological controversy caused by al-Rânîrî's accusation of heresy against al-Fanşûrî and al-Samaṭrânî was at its height. Awareness of this problem may have encouraged 'Abd al-Ra'ûf to obtain as much knowledge as he could on religious subjects in the heartland of Islam. He remained abroad for nineteen years, studying under more than fifteen renowned teachers. In addi-

tion to that he was also able to establish good relationships with colleagues and mentors in a number of learning centers such as Makkah, Jeddah, Bayt al-Faḳīh, Zabīd, and Madīnah. For many years he maintained a consultative religious link with his teacher, Aḥmad al-Qushāshī of Madīnah, and afterwards with al-Qushāshī's successor, Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī. These masters gave al-Sinkīlī the *ijāzah* to establish a Shatariyyah order in Aceh, through which the teaching was spread all over the archipelago.<sup>59</sup>

Al-Sinkīlī returned to Aceh after the death of Aḥmad al-Qushāshī, who had been aware of the religious contention in the Sultanate of Aceh. Aḥmad al-Qushāshī had prepared al-Sinkīlī to resolve the religious turmoil in the Aceh Court, in the face of the persecutions being carried out on account of al-Rānīrī's verdict.

By the time al-Sinkīlī was back in Aceh in 1661, the kingdom was already in the hands of the queen, Sri Sulṭān Taj al-Ālam Ṣafiyat al-Dīn Shāh. The challenge faced by al-Sinkīlī was not easy, and the trauma caused by al-Rānīrī was far from over. As a sufi and a new master of the Shatariyyah order, the role al-Sinkīlī played was sometimes risky. The queen commissioned him to write a book on *fiqh* entitled *Mir'at al-Ṭullāb*. The book leans far closer to so-called "orthodoxy" than towards the supposed "heterodoxy" that had existed before al-Rānīrī.<sup>60</sup>

Al-Sinkīlī's religious knowledge was beyond dispute. He also served the court and validated the *sharī'ah* ruling regarding the legitimacy of female rulers in Aceh. Without his approval, female succession could have been jeopardized. After al-Sinkīlī's death,<sup>61</sup> the last of the four female rulers, Queen Kamālat Shāh, had to abdicate on the basis of a *fatwa* from *ulama* at Makkah, not in Aceh. However, at that time it was apparent to most that such a *fatwa* could have been issued while al-Sinkīlī was in the office; they appeared to have waited for his death, and then acted promptly.

Besides being active in teaching, al-Sinkīlī was also a prolific writer. Among the books he wrote is the *Tafsīr Anwār al-Tanzīl*, the first complete translation of the Qur'ān into Malay language. The basis of his *tafsīr* is that of al-Baidawī. He wrote *Mir'at al-Ṭullāb* on *fiqh*,<sup>62</sup> and he introduced the Shatariyyah order to the archipelago, which was later brought to Java by his disciples.

In conclusion, we can say that the feature common to the Aceh Darussalam's *ulama* was their study abroad in different centers of Islamic teaching. As well, all the *ulama* of Aceh Darussalam were of

“foreign” origin. None was originally from Aceh Proper [Aceh *Besar*], the core land of the Sultanate of Aceh. Al-Fanşûrî and al-Sinkîlî were from Pansur and Singkil respectively, two areas on the west coast of Sumatra. Ethnically they might have been originally Melayu of north Sumatra or from Minangkabau, perhaps mixed with Acehnese stock. Al-Samaṭrânî was from Pasai, two kingdoms to the east of Aceh Proper, which was conquered and into the Sultanate of Aceh in the early sixteenth century. Al-Rânîrî was simply a “visitor” of an Indian-Arab origin. For acceptance in Aceh, the ethnic or national origin of the *ulama* did not appear to matter. What counted was their professionalism and knowledge of religion. If there was any disfavor towards the *ulama*, whether it came from the ruler or the people, the cause was always their views on a particular Islamic teaching, rather than their ethnic identity.

The second feature common to these *ulama* is their educational background. All of them had the opportunity to study in wider circles of Islamic learning, which enriched their knowledge and experience to the benefit of their position as *ulama* in the kingdom. All seem to have been quite skillful and respected. Al-Sinkîlî, for example, was able to approve the installation of four women as consecutive rulers during his tenure and at the same time, maintain a good relationship with his mentors in the Middle East. His position on the matter was never shaken, and his attitude was never considered blameworthy. But when al-Sinkîlî died, the political opponents of the ruling Queen had strong religious grounds for forcing her to abdicate.

Having studied in different places and countries also enhanced the language proficiency of those *ulama*, which was of critical importance. Malay and Arabic were two major official languages employed in the kingdom, although Acehnese was the everyday language of the people. Al-Rânîrî was already well-versed in Malay before coming to Aceh. Arabic was the language used with foreign dignitaries. Negotiations with the British envoys were held in Arabic, and for these, court officials, particularly *ulama*, were the leading figures.<sup>63</sup>

The third common feature was that all the *ulama* mentioned always collaborated with the rulers, both males and females. That is why most of the works done by the *ulama* were commissioned by the kings or the queens. They never regarded cooperating with the rulers as prohibited or harmful, or demeaning of the position of the *ulama*. It seems that collaboration with the *umara* had been one of the *ulamas* missions and that they were comfortable with it. In this

regard it is certain that the *ulama* of Aceh, consciously, “ignored” what Imam al-Ghazâlî said in his treatise about the quality of *ulama*. One type of *ulama*, he says, is ‘*ulamâ’ al-sû’* [the bad *ulama*], particularly those *ulama* who join the rulers.<sup>64</sup> What al-Ghazâlî was emphasizing was based on the prophetic tradition: “The worst *ulama* are those who come to the rulers and the best rulers are those who approach the *ulama*.”<sup>65</sup> This means that approaching, or even nearing, the rulers, let alone collaborating with them, is, to al-Ghazâlî, strictly prohibited. In the case of the *ulama* of Aceh Darussalam, collaborating with the *umara’* was part of their mission.<sup>66</sup> It is safe to say that the *ulama* of the Aceh Sultanate regarded themselves as free to interpret the *shari’ah* according to their assessment of the needs of the time and the particular situation.

### The *Prang Sabil ulama*<sup>67</sup>

“*Prang Sabil*” literally translates as “waging war in the path of God”. It was the war between Aceh and the Dutch which began in Aceh on March 27, 1873 and lasted for more than forty years.<sup>68</sup> This technologically unequal war caused both parties grave losses. In order to achieve victory, the Dutch spent millions of dollars, mainly for advanced weaponry and extensive field operations. To defend their country and their religion, the Acehnese had sacrificed hundreds of thousands of lives, including those of women and children. The material losses were incalculable: thousands and thousands of houses were burnt and many properties were confiscated. For the Acehnese, the trauma of this war still lingers, and their physical, mental and spiritual losses are not yet recovered. However, my purpose here is simply to examine the role of the *ulama* in the war, and their ability to provide the war with religious “ideology” and, as such, make it a true *jihad* war.

After the fall of the *Dalam* [the Sultan’s palace] in Banda Aceh in 1874, and the sudden death of the Sultan after his escape, there was no central figure to rally the people against the enemy. The Dutch began to secure their power by fortifying the city against local incursion. However, the insurgents were never stopped by the occupation of the city. Some local chieftains in Aceh Proper continued to fight until the last bastion, Seulimum, fell to the Dutch in 1879. In that year Aceh Proper, the domain of the Sultan of Aceh, was “pacified.” The surviving insurgents fled to other areas or went into hiding. Many local resistance fighters scattered into the hills, some dying unno-



ticed in their refuge. Renewing, let alone winning, the war seemed impossible. Apparently the Dutch had won, and the Acehnese had lost, the war.

In 1881 some heroic escapees from Aceh Besar concluded that only the *ulama* could help dispose of the *kaphe* [unbeliever] intruders. They consulted the *ulama* of Tiro, in Pidie, east of Aceh Proper, where there were a few well-known and respected *ulama*. Then, under the leadership of the *ulama* of Tiro, the war was revived, prolonged and at the same time religiously sanctioned. It was the *ulama* who revived the war, and their special “weaponry” was the religious teaching, and the “headquarters” of the struggle was the *dayah*, a typical traditional religious school.<sup>69</sup>

The *ulama* of this war were many, but the core leadership was always in the hands of the *ulama* of Tiro until they were finally all killed. Among them was Teungku Chik Dayah Cut, the senior *‘âlim* of that time, who was the spiritual leader of the holy war. Another was Teungku Haji Shaykh Muhammad Saman, his nephew. He was the one who revived and exercised the leadership of the *jihad* until his death. The leadership then passed to his son, Teungku Muhammad Amin.

The most important *‘âlim* of the *perang sabil* was Teungku Haji Muhammad Saman.<sup>70</sup> His first training in religion was at home with his father; he then went to study with his uncle, Teungku Chik Di Tiro Dayah Cut. He later studied at several other places in Pidie, including the *dayah* of Teungku Muhammad Arshad Ie Leubeu, and the *dayah* of Teungku Chik Tanjong Bungong. Muhammad Saman also studied in Dayah Meunasah Blang, Samalanga, under Teungku Chik Abdullah Meunasah Blang. He then emigrated to Aceh Proper where he continued to pursue his studies at a *dayah* in Lam Krak. After two years, Muhammad Saman returned to Tiro and joined his uncle, the Teungku Chik, in teaching activities. Such was the educational background of Muhammad Saman before he went on pilgrimage in 1880,<sup>71</sup> a quite typical *‘âlim* in the Aceh of his time.

Since the war was flaring up in many places, the involvement of other *ulama* around Aceh was unavoidable. All of them, except *Ḥabīb ‘Abd al-Raḥmân*, were of native origin.<sup>72</sup> As the main battles took place in Aceh Proper, Teungku Chik Tanoh Abee (Teungku Abdul Wahab), Teungku Muhammad Saleh Lampoh Raya, Teungku Haji Cut of Maheng and Teungku Chik Kuta Karang were all directly involved. However, the war was supported, directly or indirectly,

by most of the *ulama* throughout Aceh. Among them are Habîb Samalanga, Teungku Di Mata Ie, Teungku Cot Plieng, and Teungku Di Barat from outside Aceh Proper. For this discussion I will present the *ulama* of the *perang sabil* as a group, and analyze their role with regard to their ideology, operational basis, and political strategy.

The operational basis of the *perang sabil* under the command of the *ulama* was all the religious institutions, namely the *dayahs*, *meuseujids* [mosques] and *meunasabs* [village prayer halls]. It was from these institutions that the concept, the planning, the moral and material support and the execution of the holy war originated. Imbued with Islamic principles, formulated in and disseminated through religious institutions, the war was carried out.

The involvement of the *dayah* was crucial, since almost all the top commanders of the war were *dayah* leaders. Not only the leaders, but also students of the *dayah* were involved in the war, directly or indirectly. The *dayahs* were no seen as simply a symbol of piety and a place for religious education, but the center of survival for the Acehnese struggle. Some of the *dayahs* even started to produce weapons in order to support the *perang sabil*.

Part of the *dayah's* role in the holy war was to serve as the *ulamas'* communication link. The role of the students of the *dayah* in Tiro contributed significantly in this regard. The *dayah* students were used like couriers or intelligence agents to educate parents and other village dwellers about the meaning and significance of *perang sabil* and the justification for it. It was through these students that communication between one place and another was maintained.

There were three means by which information about the war were conveyed to the people. These were the *khutbahs* [Friday sermons], *tablighs* [public lectures], and *hikayat* [epics] readings. *Khutbahs* and *tablighs* were given by the *ulama* and leaders of the community at the prescribed gatherings. The *hikayats* were recited by artists, some of whom were trained for that purpose. Teungku Pante Kulu is known to have composed a *hikayat* for that particular aim, called the *Hikayat Prang Sabil* [Poems of the Jihad War]. These original poems were apparently adapted according to the situation by the artists reciting them.

The *ulama* also revised the function and the structure of the mosques. For a long time mosques had only functioned as weekly prayer halls, and the Friday sermon was given in Arabic. The religious services in the mosques were largely directed towards "the other

world.” During the *perang sabil*, however, the mosques functioned as centers for lobbying, recruitment and agitation. The services in the mosques were now oriented toward facing the challenge of real life by being endowed with a function in the *perang sabil*. The *khutbah* was now delivered in Acehese so the message could be clearly understood by the masses.

The *meunasahs* also functioned as centers for information. Going to daily congregational prayers at the *meunasahs* also meant getting information and instructions regarding the *perang sabil*. It was through the *meunasahs* that the ideology of *prang sabil* was implanted in the consciousness of the masses on a daily basis.

Even the activities of the pilgrimage ritual were geared towards international lobbying. During their stay in Arabia for pilgrimage, the Teungkus talked with fellow pilgrims about the situation in the rest of the Muslim world. Since people were coming from all over the world, the news of the fate, the struggle, and the oppression of Muslims around the world was disseminated. There were many Muslims who were awakened from their “sleep” by this contact with other fellow Muslims.<sup>73</sup> Muhammad Saman during his pilgrimage also exchanged experiences and information with Muslims from around the world,<sup>74</sup> which influenced his conduct of the holy war.

To establish a firm foundation for the *prang sabil*, the ideology of the war was gradually taking shape. The ideology was the concretization of the Islamic teachings concerning the struggles that can make a war “holy.” One such teaching is the universalized aspect of the war. That war in Aceh was not local or tribal, but universal. And the war was defined as not simply between Aceh and the Dutch but between Muslims and unbelievers. Muslims were seen as the friends of God, while the “unbelievers” were perceived as His enemies. Thus, in this view, siding with the Acehese was like joining the army of God. Consequently, it was held that participation in the war was incumbent upon the believers and would be rewarded by God, both in this world and in the hereafter. The success of the *ulama* in bringing the war into this universal theological scheme gave them the authority to make some important legal decisions<sup>75</sup> supporting it.

First, the war against the Dutch was incorporated into the pillars of Islam. It became *farḍu ‘ayn* [an individual obligation], no less than the five daily prayers. As such it became the first priority after the *shahâdah* [profession of faith]. This decision applied to the masses and the *ulama* alike. Teungku Chik Tanoh Abee postponed going

on *Haji* [pilgrimage] in order to take part in this holy war. Thus, *perang sabil* was even more important than *Haji*. This idea spread all over the archipelago; some gave moral support to the Acehese struggle, or even took part in the *perang sabil* in lieu of pilgrimage.<sup>76</sup>

Secondly, since the *meuseujids* and *meunasahs* had become centers for information and mobilization, a new style of *khutbah* was also instituted. In order for the congregation to understand what the preachers were saying, it was declared that the *khutbah* should be given in Acehese.<sup>77</sup> This is in contrast to the pre-war style where the *khutbah* was only valid when it was given in Arabic, in conformity with what the Prophet did, regardless of whether the people understood it or not.

Third, the martyr was promised admission into paradise at once. Anyone killed on the battlefield would instantly become a martyr and be overwhelmed by eternal happiness.<sup>78</sup> This promise galvanized many who were really suffering. For the Acehese, it was better to die on the battlefield and go to paradise than to live in this world under the oppression of the Dutch "unbelievers."<sup>79</sup>

Fourthly, any land in Aceh under the Dutch occupation was rendered *Dâr al-Harb* [the land of war]. Consequently, Dutch property on Acehese soil was considered booty, and any Muslim could take whatever he or she liked. This decision also provided incentives to the Muslims, especially the committed, to participate, even with their bare hands, hoping to get a share of booty, particularly weaponry, which might add to the strength of the *jihad*.<sup>80</sup>

Fifth, the *ulama* required that Muslims had to overwhelm their enemies with whatever means were available. One *âlim* ordered the *jihad* fighters to use lavish silk garments, and have ornate swords with golden handles in order to impress and amaze their enemies.<sup>81</sup> This *fatwa* of Teungku Kuta Karang was not supported by most of the *ulama*, because it was well-known that the wearing of silk and gold were strongly discouraged for men.

Sixthly, the reason for the *kaphe* [unbelievers] occupation of Aceh was discerned by the *ulama*. Their coming was a punishment from God; the Muslims of Aceh had neglected the commands of God. Thus to escape the punishment for their sins, the Muslims of Aceh had to participate in the *perang sabil* by any means possible. This would serve as expiation of their sins.<sup>82</sup>

Seventh, those not able to go to war were urged to give to charity, especially to make contributions to the war. People were also urged

to fast at least three days, to read the Qur'ân, and to carry out *khanduri* [food charity]. This was done in conjunction with the recitation of special supplicatory prayers of repentance.<sup>83</sup>

In addition, the *ulama* declared that the *kaphe* were *najis* [impure]. Thus they deserved to be named “*kaphe bangsat*,” “*kaphe asee*,” “*kaphe Yabudi*” [all meaning the accursed unbelievers].<sup>84</sup> This was not simply said in words but also demonstrated by actions. When the *kaphe* came to a house or a village, the owner had to wash the place where they walked and sat. If they passed through a village alley, the villagers, especially women would mark the path with the *pureh u* [palm leaf rib] on the route taken by the *kaphe*, so that the people would know that the *kaphe* had just passed by. No one would cross this path until either the rain or the night dew cleansed it.<sup>85</sup>

Furthermore, the Quranic concept of justice was to be more concretely realized. This was both hope and promise: if the war were won, the unbelievers would be chased away and real justice would then be implemented. A person would have the right to possess property only according to the *sharî'ah*, and no illegal gains would be allowed. The *sharî'ah* would be the only ruling paradigm in the country and it would apply to everybody, both people and leaders. Justice according to the law of God would truly be implemented.<sup>86</sup>

Finally, as a whole, religious supremacy was upheld to the extreme. To ensure that the war was ultimately between “believers” and “u,” invitations for conversion to Islam were issued. That is, if the Dutch were to accept Islam as their religion, they would have the right to rule Aceh; otherwise they should be expelled from Aceh by any means necessary or possible.<sup>87</sup>

In regard to political strategy, the *ulama* took the initiative to cooperate with the formal leaders of the Acehnese, the sultans and the *uleebalangs* and made such cooperation a major issue. This decision was regarded as the fundamental strategy. The war could not be won without the support of every element of the Acehnese society. If this strategy had not been adopted and maintained from the very beginning, the pace of the “holy war” would have been different.<sup>88</sup>

The inclusion of women in the *perang sabil* was done very deliberately. The *ulama* declared their view that women should play a role in every aspect of life, including warfare.<sup>89</sup> This view was not yet common, at least in the region, but Acehnese women were urged to participate in and, indeed became commanders of, the *perang sabil*.<sup>90</sup>

In summary, the *ulama* of the *perang sabil* were far more activist

than previous generations of *ulama*. It was their ability to translate religious teachings into the consciousness of ordinary people which elevated them beyond other formal leaders in society. The ideal formulation of the five pillars of Islam had been brought to real life by the injunctions of the *ulama*. Their education, broad-mindedness, adherence to religious values, their manifest "sincerity," and their demonstrated concern for the lives of ordinary people enabled them to function properly as the ideal *ulama* in the country. Their extraordinary abilities drew *umara* [rulers], *ulama* and the people into remarkable unity.

### The PUSA *ulama*

After a long and bloody war, the Acehnese realized that they were no longer able to challenge Dutch superiority. The Sultan was captured; the *uleebalangs* returned to their previous positions by signing an agreement and acknowledging the sovereignty of the Dutch, rather than the Sultan. Although their power was limited, the *uleebalangs* now became the extended hands of the colonial power. On the surface, order was restored, and laws were implemented which best served the rulers' interest.

Most of the *ulama* who had fought in the war, a war in which many of their fellows had been killed, realized that if full-scale warfare were to continue, it might cause the annihilation of all the *ulama* and greatly increase the suffering of the people. Consequently, a consensus among the *ulama* was reached: although the war was to be continued, some of them must go back to normal life for the sake of providing religious education to the masses.<sup>91</sup> The fear was that if no one took the responsibility of teaching the religion to the people, that ultimately the Acehnese might simply follow the traditions of the "unbelievers." In the *ulamas'* view, if this were to happen, the curse of God would fall on everybody; there would be no acceptable excuse for such a state of affairs. Thus, the *ulama* began to reopen the *dayahs* and to recruit new students. Slowly the process of education in the traditional form began to take shape again, but in a new spirit.

Among such *ulama* were some who investigated what they thought was the infusion of "non-Islamic" practices. These *ulama* realized that many Acehnese were involved in the practices of *takhayyulât* and *kburafât* [superstition and myth]. These common practices included a special supplicatory prayer after burial; the big feasts held after a death; the *fidyah salat* [penance payment for any missed prayer of the

deceased]; *peuglah alen* [the sacrifices offered for the spirit], *peulahra burong* [taming the bad spirit], etc. Animist beliefs in spirits residing in mountains, caves, and big trees had been incorporated into Islamic practices since the introduction of Islam in Aceh, but had not attracted the attention of the *ulama* before.

As early as 1907, after the so called “pacification,” the Dutch started to introduce their system of education.<sup>92</sup> The first school was aimed primarily at training workers for the Dutch administration. Most of the students were from the royal families or families linked to them. There was no means for common people to enter into the school system. Immediately the new schools provoked religious resentments. The people labelled them *sikula kaphe* [schools of the infidels]. They believed that going to the Dutch school would make a person an “unbeliever.” Thus the majority of the masses did not get access to formal education, since at the same time the number of *dayahs* was also limited.

As a result, the Acehnese were “trapped” by the two systems of education, the *dayah* on the one side and the *sekolah* on the other. The *dayah* maintained the old style of education by teaching only religious subjects based on the Shâfi’î school, with the emphasis on *fiqh* [jurisprudence, legal issues]. The study of these subjects was believed to be sacred —“following the right path”— hence only these should be pursued for the sake of service to God. The “secular” subjects like math, history, and geography were considered useless and were not taught. Any European language, especially Dutch, was named *Bahasa Kaphe* [Language of the Unbelievers] and should not be studied at all. These subjects were considered profane, and the study of them would be a waste of time and prevent a person from following the right path.

In the meantime, some of the *ulama* were trying to overcome this dilemma. A few even went abroad to study in the Middle East,<sup>93</sup> though while residing there they maintained their link with their homeland. Any development there was conveyed to Aceh. The reforms of Muḥammad ‘Abduh and Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhâb in the Middle East were known to Aceh through this means. Others went to Padang [central Sumatra] for a better education. The interest in improved education was growing rapidly. It was in the spirit of this transformation in ideas that reforms in the field of religion and of education in Acehnese society were initiated. The educational background of the *ulama* was still one of the traditional *dayah*, de-

spite the addition of reformist ideas to their thinking. Among the leading reformers were Teungku Muhammad Daud Beureueh, Teungku Abdurrahman Meunasah Meucap, Teungku Muhammad Nur el-Ibrahimi, Teungku Isma'il Jakub, Teungku Abdul Wahab Seulimum, and Teungku Ahmad Hasballah Indrapuri.<sup>94</sup> They became among the top leaders of the PUSA organization established in 1939.

The PUSA *ulama* were the reformist *ulama* of Aceh who later organized themselves into the *Persatuan Ulama Seluruh Aceh* [The All-Aceh *ulama* Association], abbreviated PUSA, established in 1939.<sup>95</sup> The name adopted in 1939 formalized many activities that had been launched by some *ulama* since the late 1920s.<sup>96</sup> The establishment of educational institutions, like Sa'adah Abadiyah in Sigli, Al-Muslim in Peusangan, and Perguruan Islam in Seulimum, may be regarded as further examples.

The reform of religious observances was done mostly through the *tabligh* [public speech, preaching],<sup>97</sup> in which the *ulama* gave talks on religion, education, and other social concerns. These *ulama* used to travel from place to place preaching to the people the "correct" understanding of Islam. As a result, the *tabligh* became very popular among the people. It was fashionable for a *muqim* [a unit consisting of several villages] occasionally to have a public speech delivered by a well-known *'alim*. These functions were held at night and usually ended after midnight, always with a big turnout. Teungku Haji Abdullah Lam U (known as Abu Lam U) of Aceh Proper and Teungku Shaykh Peusangan of North Aceh were among the most eloquent asought-after speakers of the time.<sup>98</sup> The effect of this public education effort was soon noticeable.

Educational reform was carried out through the establishment of the *madrasahs* [religious schools] which combined the two models, the Dutch and the *dayah*. Like the Dutch system it was co-educational and incorporated the classroom with benches, desks and blackboards where some "profane" subjects were taught. The *dayah* system adopted in such religious schools constituted at least seventy percent of the *madrasah* curriculum. So, the *madrasah* was an amalgamation of the traditional and the new system of education. In spite of heated objections, the *madrasahs* gained more popularity than any other type of education. It was against this backdrop that the division between the *ulama*—traditional or reformist— took shape.<sup>99</sup>

The training of more teachers and the unification of the curriculum were also needed. A teacher training school, "Sekolah Normal



Islam” or “Normal Islam Institut,” was established. It was a kind of a standard college for teacher training where students were concentrated under the close guidance of teachers and supervisors.<sup>100</sup> Again, this Normal Institute reflected the convictions of those reformist *ulama* who believed that only through proper education could the superiority of the Acehnese be restored.

After getting support in these two areas, the *ulama* of PUSA ventured into the political sphere. Their hatred of the Dutch, their “jealousy” of and rivalry with the *uleebalangs*, and the intense opposition from the “*ulama kolot*”, all permeated the self-concept of the PUSA *ulama*, particularly when they realized that a majority of people were rallying behind them, and they felt their power. Previously the *ulama* worked together with the *uleebalangs* like “mother and father” of the society; now *uleebalangs* were joining the “unbelievers.” After the *perang sabil*, the *ulama* started to be suspicious of the *uleebalangs*, especially those whom they believed were disloyal to the Acehnese cause. In this regard, their role as the “mother of the society” surfaced. The *ulama* were now more selective in approaching those *uleebalangs* whom they believed were loyal to the cause.<sup>101</sup> This continued until the coming of the Japanese to Indonesia in 1942. Gradually but certainly, the PUSA *ulama* were trying to establish themselves as an alternative political entity in Aceh — to the *uleebalangs* as well as to the “*ulama kolot*.”

When the Japanese came to Southeast Asia, some of the reformist *ulama* played a role in bringing them to Aceh.<sup>102</sup> While during the *perang sabil*, the help solicited had been in the form of *du‘a* [supplicatory prayer] from the Holy Land, now the *ulama* actively worked to bring the Japanese forces to Aceh in order to chase the Dutch out. For better or for worse, the involvement of the *ulama* had facilitated the coming of Japanese colonialism into Aceh. It terminated the Dutch rule there forever.<sup>103</sup> Ousting the Dutch and bringing in the Japanese escalated the tension between the *ulama* and the *uleebalangs*, especially since the Japanese were adept at playing two contending parties off against one another. During the Japanese occupation the reformist *ulama* started to gain a few positions in the bureaucracy. But it turned out that the Japanese were far more cruel than the Dutch.<sup>104</sup>

To the *ulama*, the *uleebalangs* were frequently perceived as rivals. That is why when some *uleebalangs* initiated the campaign for welcoming back Dutch rule, and ridiculed the Indonesian independence movement, the popular backlash against the *uleebalangs* culminated

in the so-called *Peristiwa* Cumbok [Cumbok Affair]. It was the beginning of the revolution against the *uleebalangs*. Starting from a real battle against the central power of *uleebalang* headquarters in Lameulo, Pidie, this social revolution was launched throughout Aceh. The masses, who mostly sided with the *ulama*, worked together to crush the domination of the *uleebalangs*. This social revolution, which spread all over Aceh resulted in great loss of life and property. Many of the *uleebalangs* were detained and some were killed.<sup>105</sup>

The activities of the *ulama* during the independence movement were numerous. It was the *ulama* who issued the “*Maklumat*” [notice] which stated that fighting to defend the independence of the country was equal to *jihad* [striving in the path of God]. Hence, if a person died in that cause he would be considered a *shahd* [martyr]. This edict was considered by the masses the equivalent of a *fatwa* of holy war.<sup>106</sup> That is why when the Dutch returned to Indonesia (except to Aceh) after independence, many Acehnese *mujâhidîn* [fighters] were sent to North Sumatra to defend the land from Dutch occupation. This situation gave a strong indication that although the Acehnese had resisted foreign domination and the *uleebalangs* uncompromisingly, the unification of Aceh into the Republic of Indonesia would be carried out smoothly. This was done particularly under the leadership of the *ulama* in alliance with some nationalist royal leaders.

For some time after independence, the PUSA *ulama* were dominant in both the religious and political life in Aceh. Many of them held key positions in governmental offices and business enterprises.<sup>107</sup> Daud Beureueh was appointed the head of the Office of Religious Affairs, with Abdurrahman Meunasah Meucap as his deputy. His success in this led to his later appointment as the Military Governor of Aceh, Langkat and Tanah Karo.

His unprecedented deposition from the office of Military Governor and the subsequent dissolution of Aceh into North Sumatra province led to another shift in the course of Acehnese history. Precipitated by the “odd” central government policy of merging Aceh into North Sumatra, and supported by the power of the *ulama*, the “last revolution” was proclaimed in September 1953. It was called *Peristiwa Aceh* [the Acehnese Rebellion] in which the PUSA *ulama* took the lead and proclaimed the establishment of *Dâr al-Islâm*.<sup>108</sup> This was their “last hurrah” — their final opportunity to make an impact on Acehnese society and, indeed, on the whole country. The rebellion,

which lasted until 1963, was again led by a well-known *‘alim* — Muhammad Daud Beureueh. Since the *ulama* were the leaders, most of the Acehese supported the rebellion in one way or another. The granting-back of provincial status for Aceh, with special particularities in the three areas of religion, education and tradition, restored Aceh to peace again, though with a severe loss of life and properties.<sup>109</sup> After this movement ended, the role of the *ulama* seemed to deteriorate as well,<sup>110</sup> just as the society was being transformed by a new era of development. In spite of the political achievement as the result of the rebellion, the loss in education was serious. The absence of teachers from *madrasahs* and other religious institutions for more than ten years, had disturbed the on-going religious education and the training of the cadres.

The reformist PUSA *ulama*, then, were all indigenous stock, conscious of their history, deeply aware of religious teachings and practices and concerned with the education of the people. Their educational foundation was in the *dayah*, but with the spirit of religious reform of the Middle East and West Sumatra. They emphasized two modes of reform, in religious practices and in education. In education they adopted two models, of the *dayah*, as well as the school which later became the *madrasah*. In their efforts they were challenged by both *uleebalangs* and the traditional *ulama*. Consequently they were transformed into an emerging force with a political identity. Their political role within the society contributed to the relatively smooth absorption of Aceh into the Indonesian nation up to 1953. In the circumstances, the clash with the *uleebalangs* was probably unavoidable, and the persecution of the *uleebalangs* was carried out under their influence. Pride in their contribution, the bitterness over the central government’s treatment of them, and the dissolution of Aceh into North Sumatra province all led to the bloody revolution of 1953. Subsequently the role of the *ulama*, both as persons and as an institution, deteriorated, as the society was being transformed by modern development.

### Closing remarks

It is clear that the role of the *ulama* was a crucial one. In the Pasai era and the era of Aceh Darussalam, *ulama* and the sultan working together became a driving force for the promotion of religion. The Islamization process went forward at a smooth pace. If, later on, the spread of Islam was so conspicuous in the archipelago, it was because

the *ulama* of both Pasai Melaka (after Peureulak) were instrumental in this endeavor. In the era of *prang sabil*, the *ulama* acted as the leaders of the fight against the Dutch colonialists; while at the time of PUSA, the *ulama* were active in reviving the religious life of the people while introducing a new era of “modern” education.

Throughout the centuries, the ethnic origin of the *ulama* was never an issue, but their education was fundamental. All the *ulama* of Pasai and most *ulama* of Aceh Darussalam had been trained in the Middle East, particularly in Makkah and Madinah, the very heartland of Islam. Their proficiency in language was obvious and the school of thought they adopted was that of Shâfi‘î. However, the education of the *ulama prang sabil* was *dayah*, with an admixture of Middle Eastern experience. The education of the PUSA *ulama* was *dayah*, with the additional reformed spirit of the Middle East and of modern education from Padang (West Sumatra).

The roles of those *ulama* can be judged through their contributions. The *ulama* of Pasai were very keen on spreading Islam to Malaya and Java. Their erudition made Pasai the first center of Islamic learning in the archipelago. The *ulama* of Aceh Darussalam introduced the archipelago to the world of Islamic Sufism. Well-known *tarîqahs* were brought in: the *wujûdiyyah*, the *rifâ‘iyyah* and the *shattâriyyah* were among the major ones. The *ulama* of *prang sabil* made the teachings of Islam the ideology of the masses, while the *ulama* of PUSA transformed the Acehnese education system from a traditional to a modern system. Challenged by the Dutch educational system, the reform in this field was carried out in a well-designed manner.

The relationship between the *ulama* and the *umara* was well established during the Pasai and Aceh Darussalam eras. During the holy war, the self-identity of the *ulama* began to take shape. When the sultan’s role ended, the role of the *ulama* was of increased importance. During the period of the PUSA *ulama*, the tension between the *ulama* and the *umara* surfaced, particularly when the *umara* were either the Dutch “unbelievers” or the “dishonest” *uleebalangs*, or both. During independence, the *ulama* were very instrumental in defending the Motherland and merging the Acehnese into a larger “Indonesian” identity. For that purpose the *ulama* had to fight those tribalist *uleebalangs* who opposed national unity. Disappointed by the central government policy of merging Aceh into North Sumatra province, the positions of the *ulama* and the *umara* became confused. The

formerly “nationalist” *ulama* became “tribalist” and proclaimed the establishment of the *Dâr al-Islâm* of Aceh, away from Indonesian unity. The prolonged *ulama*-led war with the central government resulted in the deterioration of the well-being of the people and of the role of the *ulama*. At the same time the society was being transformed by modern development, in which the needs of the society and the roles of the *ulama* have changed.

## Endnotes

1. See Azra, "The Transmission of Islamic Reformism to Indonesia: Networks of Middle Eastern and Malay-Indonesian 'Ulama in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries", PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 1992, especially chapter v.
2. Until the 13th century, Sriwijaya was a Buddhist kingdom, centered in Palembang, Southern Sumatra. Majapahit was a Hindu state located in Eastern Java. Samudra Pasai and Aceh Darussalam were both Islamic kingdoms, situated in North Aceh and Aceh proper respectively. On the Sriwijaya, see, O. W. Wolters, *Early Indonesian Commerce: A Study of the Origins of Srivijaya* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967), 252-3 and 347-8 (fn.107).
3. "Bandar" originally taken from Persian, means "port town."
4. *Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai*, 55-59. See also A.C. Moule & Paul Pelliot, *Marco Polo: The Description of the World* (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1936), 370-377.
5. Since Iskandar Muda was an ambitious king he never missed any opportunity to collect income from any possible source. He "piled up an immense amount of gold and treasure within the royal palace." On the wealth of the King, see DasGupta "Aceh," 77, 78, 88, 93, 94, 96.
6. DasGupta, "Aceh," 55-59; also *holy war*, Luthfi, 54.
7. DasGupta, "Aceh," xi.
8. See, *Bustân al-Salâtîn*; Said, *Aceh*, 331-378 (new ed. 205-208); A. Hadi, p.112; Auni, p.56-57; DasGupta, p. 179+...
9. One other queen in Aceh ruled the Islamic kingdom of Samudera Pasai whose name is Ratu Nihrasiyah Rawangsa Khadiyu (1400-1428). Queen Nihrasiyah, the daughter of Sulţân Zayn al-'Âbidîn Malik al-Zâhir (1350-1395) ruled the kingdom long after her grandfather Malik al-Şâlih. See, Hasjmy, "Wanita Aceh," 7; Djamil, *Tawarich*, 15-17; Alfian, *Mata Uang Emas*, 23.
10. Hasjmy, "Wanita Aceh," 16-31; Auni, 58-71.
11. This Pasai era (from the middle of the thirteenth century to the middle of the sixteenth century) was preceded by the Peureulak era (from early ninth century to the middle of the thirteenth century). Both Pasai and Peureulak became part of Aceh in the middle of the sixteenth century CE and remain so up till today. Marco Polo witnessed (1292 CE) what was already an Islamic kingdom when he visited Peureulak. (See, *Marco Polo: The Description of the World* vol.I, trans. A.C. Moule & Paul Pelliot. London: George Routledge & Sons, 1938, 371). The situation he described presupposed the role played by the *ulama* in this kingdom; and in fact there are at least two *ulama* names, Nûr al-Haq al-Mashriqî al-Dihlawî and Abû Ishâq al-Makrânî, known to have come from Peureulak kingdom. (See, Said, *Aceh*, 66-67; also Hasjmy, *Kebudayaan*, 39).
12. It was written in *Jâwî*, which is Malay Language written in Arabic script. A.H. Hill romanized it with the title *Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai*. T. Ibrahim Alfian edited and romanized it with the title *Kronika Pasai*. Russell Jones edited it with the title *Hikayat Raja Pasai*. For the purposes of this paper it will be referred to as *Hikayat*. Although its narration is mixed with myths and legends, the *Hikayat* is considered the oldest extant writing in the archipelago particularly regarding the kingdom of Pasai. It may have been written around the middle of the fourteenth century CE, but no later than 1390 CE. The text used in this paper is based on the copy made for Sir Stamford Raffles in 1814 from a manuscript then belonging to Kiyai Suvadimenggala of Demak, Bogor, Java. See, *Hikayat Raja-*

- Raja Pasai* [Pasai Chronicles], a romanized version with English trans. by A.H. Hill, *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 33, 2, 1961.
13. It was written around 1612 CE by Tun Muhammad of Batu Sawar, whose nickname is Tun Sri Lanang; his title is Paduka Raja. *Sejarah Melayu* is about the kingdom of Melaka and its relationship with the rest of the world, especially the archipelago. Part of the content is similar to that of the *Hikayat*, namely on the Islamization of Pasai. There are strong indications of the close relationship between Melaka and Pasai and also clear evidence that the *Hikayat* is older than the *Sejarah Melayu*. See, R.O. Winstedt, "The Malay Annals or Sejarah Melayu," *JMBRAS* 16, 3, 1938, p.35. See also, Ibrahim Alfian, ed., *Kronika Pasai*, Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press, 1973, 10, and C.C. Brown, trans. "Sejarah Melayu," *JMBRAS* 25, 2-3, 1952.
  14. *Sejarah Melayu*, 154-155.
  15. Ahmad Daudy, *Allah dan Manusia*, 11-12.
  16. *Hikayat*, 40. *Sejarah Melayu* [Malay Annals], trans. C.C. Brown, *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 25, 2-3, 1952.
  17. In sufi terminology *faqîr* means "a person whose life is devoted solely to God." See further in, *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, s.v. *faqîr*. This *Faqîr* was originally the ruler of Ma'abrî in southern India and his name was Sultan Mu'ammad, a descendant of Abû Bakr. He finally abdicated and went to Sumatra to do religious work. See *Hikayat*, 56, and *Sejarah Melayu*, 41-42.
  18. Although in many European writings the name is known as Malacca, the official spelling "Melaka" is adopted here. See, *Melaka Digest*, ed. form of the *Undang-Undang Melaka* by Liaw Yock Fang, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976). "Melaka" may have derived from the name of a tree found in the area, *pohon melaka* [phyllanthus emblica], or possibly from the Arabic "*malakat*" [kingdom, possession]. (See, *Sejarah Melayu*, 52, 98; also, Allessandro Bausani, "Indonesia and Malaysia in the Travelogue of Ludovico De Varthema (D. 1517)," in C.D. Grijs and S.O. Robson's eds. *Cultural Contact and Textual Interpretation*, (Dordrecht/ Cinnaminson: 1986), 151.
  19. *Sejarah Melayu*, 100.
  20. *Sejarah Melayu* 100-101.
  21. The envoy of Melaka rewarded seven tahils of gold dust and two slave girls to the *ulama* of Pasai. *Sejarah Melayu*, 101-102.
  22. The country of "*mâ warâ'a al-nahâr*" is identified as Bukhârâ and Samarkând. (See, Brown, *The Malay Annals*, 249 fn624).
  23. *Sejarah Melayu*, 155.
  24. See, *Sejarah Melayu*, 101.
  25. The taking of this religious title could have been inspired by the Quranic injunction 16: 90, which says: "Lo! Allah enjoineeth justice and kindness, and giving to kinsfolk, and forbiddeth lewdness and abomination and wickedness. He exhorteth you in order that ye may take heed," (Pickthall's trans.) This verse, in fact, has been recited at the end of every Friday prayer in all Sunnî congregations from the time of 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azîz of Banî Umayyah (r.717-720 CE/99-101 AH). (See, Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran*, New York: Dorset Press, nd. 201, fn.1). See also, Ibrahim Alfian, "*Samudra Pasai: Bandar Dagang dan Pusat Budaya*," unpublished article, 13.
  26. The adoption of the Sultan's title of "Malik al-Zâhir" and the "Sultân al-'Âdil" are later to be found on many of the gold coins of the Malay peninsula and of

- Aceh Darussalam. For further discussion on the coins, see T. Ibrahim Alfian, *Mata Uang Emas Kerajaan-Kerajaan di Aceh* [The gold coins of the kingdoms in Aceh], (Banda Aceh: Seri Penerbitan Museum Negeri Aceh no. 16, 1986).
27. Al-Attas, *Preliminary*, 11.
  28. Around the year 1370 CE, Pasai was attacked by the Kingdom of Majapahit. Many Pasai captives were brought to Java. The inclusion of the *ulama* in the captives is inferred from the following:  
Maka titah Sang Nata akan segala tawanan orang Pasai itu, suroh-lah ia dudok di tanah Jawa ini mana kesuka'an hatinya. Itulah sebabnya, maka banyak keramat di-tanah Jawa itu tatkala zaman Pasai alah oleh Majapahit itu. [So Sang Nata (the king of Majapahit) spoke about the captives of Pasai: "Ask them to stay on this soil of Java wherever they like." That is why there were many saints on Javan soil the time when Pasai was defeated by Majapahit]. See, (*Hikayat*), 100; "*banyak keramat*" means "many saints" or "many holy men."
  29. His name is known as "Falatehan" in Portuguese pronunciation. His real name could either be Fathullâh, or Fathurrahmân. Since he resided in, and was buried near, Gunung Jati (West Java), his posthumous name is Sunan Gunung Jati [The Saint of Gunung Jati]. (Said, *Aceh*, 70, 246-7).
  30. The "pseudo"hadîth says: "Now history relates that in the days of the Apostle of God (may God bless him and give him peace), the Apostle said to his Companions, 'In the latter days there shall be a city, below the wind, called Semudra. When you hear tell of this Semudra go thither with all speed and bring the people of that city into the Faith of Islam, for in that city shall be born many saints of God ...'" (*Sejarah Melayu*, 41, and *Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai*, 55). Thus, the very foundation of the kingdom was legitimized by the "highest" religious authority.
  31. "So all of them sincerely and whole heartedly confessed their faith in Islam. That is why it (the country) is named *Dâr al-Islâm*, ..." (*Hikayat*, 58).
  32. Another *âlim* mentioned in the kingdom of Aceh, after Nûr al-Dîn al-Rânîrî and before `Abd al-Ra'ûf al-Sinkîlî, is Shams al-Rijâl, an *ulama* of Minangkabau origin, a probable disciple of al-Fanşûrî and al-Samaţrânî. His coming back to Aceh may have caused al-Rânîrî's departure. For further discussion see, Takeshi Ito, "Why did Nuruddin Ar-Raniri leave Aceh in 1054 A.H.?" (*BKI* 134/1978), 489-91.
  33. Al-Attas even suggested that al-Fanşûrî might have been born in Shahr Nawi, Ayuthia (Siam). See, Al-Attas, "New Light on the Life of Hamzah Fansuri," *JMBRAS* 40, 1/1967, 47-48.
  34. Information on the life and thoughts of al-Fanşûrî is known mostly from the verses of his *sha'ir* [poems]. A. Hasjmy suggests that Hamzah might also have had the opportunity to serve under Sultan Muda 'Alî Ri'âyat Shâh V (1604-1607), and in the early years of the reign of Sultan Iskandar Muda subsequently. See, A. Hasjmy, *Kebudayaan*, 195. A more detailed discussion of his possible birth place and likely dates is discussed by L.F. Brakel, "The Birth Place of Hamzah Fansuri," *JMBRAS*, vol.42, part 2/1969, 206-212. For Brakel, Hamzah might have been alive until 1620. Al-Attas states that al-Fanşûrî "was most likely dead before 1607," which was before the reign of Iskandar Muda. See further, Al-Attas, "New Light on the Life of Hamzah Fansuri," *JMBRAS* 40, 1, 1967, 48-49.
  35. All of these place names are found in his poetry, though the exact location of



- some is still debatable, such as Kudus and Shahri Nawi. Kudus here can be interpreted as either Kudus in north Central Java, or al-Quds of Jerusalem (or both); al-Quds seems to be more probable. Shahri Nawi has been understood as a port city of Siam (Ayuthia), a place where Hamzah had opportunity to enhance his mystical quest and to learn Persian. Nevertheless, a "Shahr Nu" is also mentioned in the *Hikayat Aceh*, and is a place near Aceh proper. (*Hikayat Aceh* 164, 185).
36. Muhammad Bukhari Lubis, *The Ocean of Unity*, 275.
  37. G.W.J. Drewes, "Indonesia: Mysticism and Activism," in Gustave E. von Grunebaum's (ed.) *Unity and Variety in Muslim Civilization*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), 289.
  38. In the *sha'ir* "Ikatan-ikatan 'Ilmu'l-nisâ'" he writes: "Hamba mengikat sha'ir ini/Di bawah hadrat raja yang wali ... [I composed this poem/under His Majesty the saintly king ...]." The king who the poem is referred to as "*Raja Yang Wali* [The Saintly King]" is 'Alâ' al-Dîn Ri'âyat Shâh (1588-1604). (See, Al-Attas, "New Light," 48).
  39. Al-Attas, *A Commentary on the Hujjat al-Siddiq of Nûr al-Dîn al-Rânîrî* (Kuala Lumpur: Ministry of Culture, 1986), 6. For further discussion of his teaching, see, Al-Attas, *The Mysticism of Hamzah Fansuri* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1970).
  40. L.F. Brakel, "Hamza Pansuri: Notes on: Yoga Practices, Lahir dan Zahir, the 'Taxallos', Punning, a Difficult Passage in the *Kitâb al-Muntahî*, Hamza's likely Place of Birth, and Hamza's Imagery," (*JMBRAS*, 52, pt.1/1979), 77.
  41. "Sumatra" or "Samaṭra" denotes "Samudra," where the kingdom of Samudra Pasai was previously established.
  42. See, for instance the book written by a Dutch scholar, C.A.O. van Nieuwenhuijze, *Shamsu'l-Dîn van Pasai*, E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1945.
  43. Lubis, *The Ocean of Unity*, 270.
  44. See, *Hikayat Aceh*, 50.
  45. It is important to note that although Shams al-Dîn might have functioned as Qâḍî Malik al-'Âdil at times, his real office is above this. His special position was never maintained by any later king, and al-Rânîrî (the other 'âlim was simply a Qâḍî Malik al-'Âdil under Sultan Iskandar Thâni. This is known from *Bustân al-Salâḥîn*, where in many significant events, the Sultan Iskandar Muda always mentions the name of Shaykh Shams al-Dîn first, and then other court dignitaries, as in this instance: "Katakan olehmu kepada Sheikh Shamsu'd Din dan Kadhi Maliku'l-Adil, dan kepada Perdana Menteri Orang Kaya Maharaja Seri Maharaja dan segala hulubalang: ..." [Say to Shaykh Shams al-Dîn and Qâḍî Malik al-'Âdil, and to Prime Minister Orang Kaya Maharaja Seri Maharaja and to all the royal chieftains: ...]. (*Bustân al-Salâḥîn*), 37, 38, 40, 42, 43, 46.
  46. James Lancaster described the chief negotiator of the kingdom, who was fluent in Arabic, as follows: "The one of these noblemen was the chiefe bishope of the realme, a man of great estimation with the king and all the people; and so he well deserved, for he was a man very wise and temperate." *The Voyages of James Lancaster to Brazil and The East Indies 1591-1603*, (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1940), 96.
  47. Among them two have been published.
  48. This occurred especially in entertaining foreign emissaries. In Islam, especially according to the Shâfi'î school of thought, use of goldware for eating and drink-

- ing is strictly prohibited. Gold can be used as ornament by women. Men are not even allowed to adorn themselves with gold.
49. See, *The Voyages of Sir James Lancaster to Brazil and the East Indies 1591-1603* (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1940), 93. Also, William Marsden, *The History of Sumatra*, 436, 439-40. Apparently, all of these situations were in fact common in other parts of the world during his time.
  50. The date of Shams al-Dîn's death is "Sunday evening, 12 Rajab, 1039" AH (1630 CE)". see, *Bustân al-Salâfîn*, 35.
  51. Rander is a town in the Surat district, Bombay, two miles north of Surat city; it is one of the oldest places in southern Gujarat. See, *The Imperial Gazetteer of India*, vol. 21, new ed., 1972, sv. "Rander". For comprehensive biography of al-Rânîrî, see Azra 1992, "The Transmission...", chapter v.
  52. The *ṭarîqab* was named after its founder Aḥmad Rifâ'î. It was Nûr al-Dîn al-Rânîrî who introduced this *ṭarîqab* to Aceh (see Azra 1992, "The Transmission..."). One of the traditional Acehese drums, the *rapa'i*, was taken from this *ṭarîqab*'s name. Occasionally, a number of *rapa'i*s are beaten together by a group, who also chant the *salawat* [praises to the Prophet]. In a serious performance, the *rapa'i* show is accompanied by *daboh* [*dabbûs*] play, in which one or more people dance and stab themselves with sharp weapons. The show must be done with the approval of the *khalîfab* [spiritual leader]. It is very thrilling to see, and still practiced today.
  53. The book, commissioned by Sultan Iskandar Thâhî, was written in 1637/1638 CE (1047 AH). Its contents range from the story of the creation of the world to the rules of women's behavior. The whole book consists of seven *babs* [chapters]. Each chapter consists of several *fasals* [sub chapters]. *Bab* II, *Fasal* 13, on the history of the sultans in the Sultanate of Aceh Darussalam, was published by Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Malaysia in 1966, under the editorship of Teuku Iskandar. *Bustân al-Salâfîn* can be considered the *magnum opus* of Nûr al-Dîn al-Rânîrî, (see Azra 1992, "The Transmission...").
  54. I believe that is why most of the books written by Ḥamzah al-Fanṣûrî and Shams al-Dîn al-Samaṭrânî have been lost, and why information about the life and travels of those two *ulama* have also disappeared.
  55. Nicolaus de Graaff, who was a witness to this funeral, wrote:  
 The funeral procession was carried out with royal magnificence: it consisted in a great following of Princes, Lords and Nobles, as well as 260 elephants, all hung with costly silks, gold cloth, and embroidered cloths. Their tusks were covered with gold, others with silver; others had little square houses and lavish tents on their backs, which had many banners hanging from them, worked with silver and gold. Also some rhinoceros and Persian horses with silver and gold bridles, equipped with costly cloths. And so the body was carried in a chest of *tembaga suasa*, that is half gold and half copper, to the grave dug by his forefathers ... The king's body was not put in its grave before two silver double-cannons were fired, after which all the guns in Aceh were fired off during the whole night, with continual shouts of 'God protect the new Queen. J.C.M. Warnsinck, ed. *Reisen van Nicolaus de Graaff, Gedaan naar alle gewesten des Werelds* ('s-Gravenhage, 1930), 13-14. Quoted from, Anthony Reid, "Elephants and Water in the Feasting of Seventeenth Century Aceh," *JMBRAS* 62, part 2, 1989, 29.
  56. Takeshi Ito, "Why did Nuruddin Ar-Raniri leave Aceh in 1054 A.H.?" *BKI* 134,

- 1978, 489-91.
57. Al-Attas, *A Commentary*, 12.
  58. Peter Riddell, *Transferring a Tradition: 'Abd Al-Ra'ûf Al-Sinkîlî's Rendering into Malay of the Jalâlayn Commentary*. Monograph 31, Berkeley: Centers for South and Southeast Asia Studies University of California at Berkeley, 1990, 4, 5, and 8.
  59. Riddell, *Transferring a Tradition*, 11,12. For comprehensive discussion on the al-Sinkîlî's link with the major scholars of Haramayn, see Azra 1992, "The Transmission...", chapter v.
  60. Riddell, *Transferring a Tradition*, 13.
  61. His grave is located near Kuala Aceh, north of present Banda Aceh. One of his students confirmed that 'Abd al-Ra'ûf al-Sinkîlî was still alive in the year 1693 and resided in Peunayong, a section of Banda Aceh. Since nothing is heard of him after this, scholars believe that al-Sinkîlî might have died in that year. I think it likely that al-Sinkîlî lived longer than that. This is because most of the *ulama* were by then opposing the legitimacy of female rulers. If al-Sinkîlî were dead by 1693, Queen Kamâlat Shâh could not have maintained her power until 1699, when she was dethroned. Since no great *ulama* arose after al-Sinkîlî, that was too long for the queen to survive without the support of a "strong" 'âlim such as al-Sinkîlî.
  62. *Almost all the books he wrote were commissioned by the rulers. In his writings he covers various subjects such as fiqh, tasawwuf, tafsîr, shari'ah*, the doctrines of Ibn 'Arabî, and *adab*. At the same time he also explicates the teachings of his mentors, Aḥmad al-Qushâshî and Ibrâhîm al-Kûrânî. For a complete list of al-Sinkîlî's writings, see appendix A.
  63. *The Voyage of James Lancaster*, 96-97.
  64. See, al-Ghazâlî, *Ithya' 'Ulûm al-Dîn* Book One, improved ed. trans. by Maulana Fazlul-Karim, New Delhi: Islamic Book Services, 1991, 79.
  65. The text of the *ḥadîth* is: "*Shirâr al-'ulamâ' alladhîna ya'tîna al-umara', wa khiyâr al-umara' alladhîna ya'tîna al-'ulamâ'.*" There are some other *Ḥadîths* supporting this idea. "When you see a learned man frequenting the house of a ruler, beware of his company, as he is a thief." Another *ḥadîth* is: "There is nothing more hateful to God than a learned man who frequents the house of a ruler." (See, *Ithya'*, 79).
  66. Certainly those *ulama* were familiar with the works of al-Ghazâlî, especially the *Ithya' 'Ulûm al-Dîn*, which is still being taught in the higher classes in *dayahs* of Aceh.
  67. Originally this was one of the many Aceh wars against European domination. Since the Portuguese first came to the archipelago, the Acehnese displayed an anti-colonial spirit and willingness to go to war to maintain their independence. The idea of such a war is, in fact, considered as one of the Islamic injunctions emphasized in the Qur'ân by *jihad fi sabil Allâh* [striving or fighting in the path of God], although it does not necessarily refer to physical struggle. (See, *Qur'ân* 2:218; 8:72; 9:41; and 22:78), etc. In the Dutch records, the war is named *Atjeh Orlog*; in Indonesian history, *Perang Aceh*; and in Acehnese consciousness, *Prang Sabi(l)*.
  68. There are four views regarding when the Aceh War ended. Ibrahim Alfian says that the real war ended by 1912. (See, Alfian, *Perang di Jalan Allah*, 24). Isma'il Jakub suggests that the war lasted until 1913. (See, Isma'il Jakub, *Tengku Tjhek di*

- Tiro, 90). Hasan Muhammad Tiro says that the significant battles ended in 1927 with the death of the last war leader, *Teuku* Cut Ali, in southern Aceh. (See, Hasan Muhammad Tiro, *Perang Atjeh 1873-1927* [Aceh war 1873-1927] (Jogja: Pustaka Tiro, 1948), 31, 39. Paul van't Veer divides the war into four stages and says it lasted until 1942, when Japanese colonialism started. (See, van't Veer, *Perang Aceh*, trans. Grafitipers (Jakarta: Grafitipers), explicitly p. 254). If we consider the effort devoted to the struggle of anti-colonialism, the last date is more accurate. The bringing in of the Japanese in 1942 by the *ulama* was simply to get help to fight the Dutch; it was a continuation of *prang sabil*.
69. *Dayah*, from the Arabic *zâwiyah*, "religious teaching circle," used to be held at the corner of a mosque. In Aceh, *dayah* means a religious boarding school, like *pesantren* in Java and *pondok* in Malaysia. The core elements of a *dayah* are students and teachers (living together in one compound), boarding facilities, a big prayer hall, and the specific classical religious books as the core curriculum, emphasizing the teaching of classical *fiqh*. For further discussion on the *pesantren*, see, Zamakhsyari Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren: Studi tentang Pandangan Hidup Kyai*. Jakarta: LP3ES, 1982. For *meunasah*, see, Glossary.
  70. In Tiro *ulama* tradition only one Teungku can become a Teungku Chik (grand Shaykh) at one time. Thus, when Teungku Chik Dayah Cut died, Muhammad Saman assumed the title of Teungku Chik di Tiro.
  71. During those days almost no other alternative was provided for higher education, so it was necessary that if a person wanted to be an 'âlim, he had to study at a *dayah*. Since the Teungku Chiks were usually more well-versed in certain subjects and books than others, the most highly motivated students would shift from one place to the other for advanced study. The additional opportunity of going to the Middle East to study was available only to a rare few. The handful who went to the centers of Islamic teaching in Makkah and al-Madînah usually did this in conjunction with the performing of the pilgrimage.
  72. Ḥabîb 'Abd al-Rahmân al-Zâhir was of Arab origin. He was employed in the Court of Aceh Darussalam for some time. He eventually left for his homeland, Arabia, when he knew that the situation did not favor him any longer. Whether he sided with the Acehnese cause or pursued his own interest is a matter of some dispute. See further in Anthony Reid, "Habib Abdurrahman az-Zahir (1833-1896)," *Indonesia* 13, 1972, 37-59.
  73. The *Haramayn* [Makkah and Madinah] connection was taken quite seriously in regards to the politics of Muslim countries. The Dutch embassy in Jeddah was assigned to keep its eye on the activities of the Malays in the Holy Land, especially of the Acehnese. "On September 12, 1890, the Dutch envoy in Jeddah informed his superior ... in the Hague, that religious gatherings were taking place in Mecca, during which sections of the Qur'ân were recited and prayers were said on behalf of the struggle of the Acehnese against the Dutch." See, W.A.L. Stokhof and N.J.G. Kaptein (eds.) *Beberapa Kajian Indonesia dan Islam* [Indonesian and Islamic Studies], Jakarta: INIS, 1990, 89. Even the scholar Snouck Hurgronje was assigned there during 1884-85 simply for this purpose. His stay was, in his own words, "... - especially at Mecca - [meant] to obtain an intimate knowledge of the influence of Mohammedan fanaticism upon the obstinate resistance of the Acehnese to Dutch rule ...". See, Hurgronje, *The Acehnese*, I, v.
  74. The *Haramayn* visits had been crucial to the *ulama* of Aceh, even before the seventeenth century. See, for instance the cases of Nûr al-Dîn al-Rânîrî and 'Abd

al-Ra'ûf al-Sinkîlî. It was a pre-condition that any Teungku Chik, in a normal situation, must have fulfilled and exercised the five pillars of Islam, and the *Hajj* rite was the culmination. As such all of the Teungku Chiks were highly regarded in those days, because they possessed more than simply knowledge of Islam but also the opportunity to experience being in the "center of the universe," at the biggest world gathering of the Muslim community. A few pilgrims would stay for years to increase their religious knowledge. Performing the *Hajj* and pursuing study in Arabia are considered the highest achievements for a Muslim. Laity, especially the aged, if they were able to make it, would wish to die and be buried there. They believed that their souls would be purified and go directly to paradise.

75. In a way we may consider these legal decisions as being like *fatwas*.
76. See, Jakub, *Tengku Tjhek*, 41, 50; Reid, "Nineteenth Century Pan-Islam," 277; and Ibrahim Alfian, *Perang*, 163.
77. Ibrahim Alfian, *Perang*, 125, quoted from *Tadhkirât al-Râkidîn* of Teungku Chik Kuta Karang.
78. Eschatological rewards like the *budiadari* [the beauties with lovely eyes] allegorically understood from the Qur'ân 44:54; 52:20; 55:72; 56:22 is emphasized.
79. Since the Dutch aggression began, even basic freedoms were abolished, and torture and persecution of civilians was carried out. One example of extreme cruelty is the case of the killing of the well-respected Panglima Nyak Makam in 1897. The Panglima was seized on his sick bed. He was shot to death and beheaded in front of his wife and children. His head was then put into a glass jar filled with alcohol, which was exposed to public view in the military hospital in Banda Aceh. See, van't Veer, *Perang Aceh*, 194; also, Jakub, *Tengku Tjhek*, 80.
80. Ibrahim Alfian, *Perang*, 157, 176, and fn.27.
81. Ibrahim Alfian, *Perang*, 161-62 [fn.46]. This *fatwa* is interesting since it gives the impression to the person that his or her involvement in the *perang sabil* makes him or her a martyr already — only more so if he or she gets killed. This is because no limit of enjoyment is ever inflicted on the martyr. This view comes from the interpretation of the Qur'ân, 22:23 which says: "Lo! Allah will cause those who believe and do good works to enter Gardens underneath which rivers flow, wherein they will be allowed armlets of gold, and pearls, and their raiment therein will be silk" [Pickthall's trans., emphases are mine].
82. Ibrahim Alfian, *Perang*, 163.
83. See, Ibrahim Alfian, *Perang*, 107. Especially the recitation of *lâ haula wa lâ quwwata illâ billâh* ["there will be no power and no strength except in God"], the *ayat kursi* [Qur'ân 2: 255], and the *qunut* [special prayer inserted in prescribed daily prayer, especially at dawn] were strongly urged. These prayers are all meant for soliciting and acknowledging the strength of God in pursuing and winning the *jihâd*.
84. T. Iskandar, "The Hikayat Prang Geudong," in C. D. Grijns and S. O. Robson (eds.), *Cultural Contact and Textual Interpretation*, Dordrecht/Cinnaminson: Foris Publications, 1986, 108, 110, 112, 114, and 116; also see, Ibrahim Alfian, *Perang*, 119-120.
85. Interview with Teungku Muhammad Dahlan Tanoh Abee, February 15, 1992. He is the grandson of Teungku Chik Tanoh Abee Abdul Wahab, one of the major *ulama* during the early holy war. Muhammad Dahlan is presently the Teungku Chik of the Dayah Tanoh Abee.

86. This was the response of the *ulama* to the suffering of the people because of the injustices inflicted by local chieftains. In fact, there were many local chieftains, the *uleebalangs*, who operated unjustly, particularly in regards to property confiscation. Cases in the Pidie region are particularly well-known.
87. An official letter to this effect was sent by Teungku Muhammad Saman di Tiro. In 1888, three years after the letter was received, the Dutch responded to Teungku di Tiro by quoting The Qur'an 2: 257, "There is no coercion in religion." See, Jakub, *Tengku Tjhik*, 60-61; and also, Ibrahim Alfian, *Perang*, 151.
88. This is one of the most important elements in the course of the *perang sabil*. The *ulama* realized that, although the sultans and the *uleebalangs* had lost the battles, they still had the ambition to rule the country at any cost. And they still had talents, experience, wealth and followers, however limited. To ignore the sultans and *uleebalangs*, let alone to deny their existence, would be to open two battlefronts from the outset. That is why, from the very beginning, Muhammad Saman consulted the chief *Sagi* Panglima Polem and a few other concerned traditional leaders.
89. Muhammad Saman deliberately assigned women to non-combat duties. The role of Teungku Paki and her followers in providing medical service for the war victims is legendary. Sometimes women were also involved in building forts. See, Jakub, *Tengku Tjhik*, 53. The *ulama* must have been aware of the many *hadiths* on the involvement of women in *jihad*. One of the *hadiths*, related by Bukhârî, goes, "Rubayyi' bint Mu'awwidh said: We joined the battles with the Prophet. We fed the people, we served them, we took care of them, and we brought the injured and the dead back to Madinah" See, Mansûr 'Alî Nâsîf, *Al-Tâj* vol.4, Dâr 'Ithâ' al-Kutub al-'Arabiyyah, 1962, 344. On the other hand, one also has to be aware of a prophetic tradition on preventing the involvement of women in a physical *jihad*, like war. According to the *hadith*, for women the *jihad* is *hajj* and *umrah*. Hasbullah Bakry, *Pedoman Islam di Indonesia*, 410. Here it is clear that the *ulama* justified by divergent traditions what suited the situation.
90. The case of Cut Nyak Dhien, is noteworthy. In the beginning, she joined her husband as the commander of a major guerilla group in West Aceh. After his death, she herself led the war with a company of the followers. After she suffered poor health she was then captured and exiled to Java, where she died. She is now recognized as one of Indonesia's heroines. Cut Meutia of northern Aceh is another.
91. This was done after serious concern was expressed by traditional leaders, including Tuwanku Mahmud, Tuwanku Raja Keumala and Teuku Panglima Polem Muhammad Daud. Their concerns were conveyed to the *ulama* of guerrilla leaders by 1909 CE (1327 AH). See further in A. Hasjmy, "Teungku Haji Ahmad Hasbullah Indrapuri," *Sinar Darussalam* 1980, 230.
92. This year was marked by the policy of van Daalen, the Dutch governor of Aceh, who took the initiative to establish a village school near Banda Aceh [then Kutaraja] with thirty-eight pupils. See T. Ibrahim Alfian, "Modern Education in Aceh: a Preliminary Note." Paper presented to the Sixth International Conference on Asian History, Yogyakarta, August 26-30, 1974. The school was the first of the kind in Acehnese history, where students were introduced to a classroom with chairs, tables and chalkboards. Teachers were instructed to wear well-ironed pants and shirts. See, further in Ismail Yakub, "Gambaran Pendidikan di Aceh

- Sesudah Perang Aceh-Belanda Sampai Sekarang” [On the Education in Aceh after the Aceh-Dutch War up till Today], in *Bunga Rampai Tentang Aceh*, ed. Ismail Suny, Jakarta: Bhratarata, 1980, 326-342.
93. Some of them even migrated to Malaysia, joining the Acehnese war refugees. These refugees also needed proper religious education. So they established the *dayah* within their compound, particularly in Kedah, Malaysia, where there was a concentration of the Acehnese.
  94. Some of the young generation in this movement, like Amir Husein al-Mujahid, Ali Hasjmy, and Ahmad Abdullah, were active in the youth organizations and Boy Scouts. A women’s organization was also established, the first of its kind.
  95. The original Dutch spelling at the time of its establishment was POeSA. (Persatoean Oelama Seloeroeh Atjeh).
  96. This reformist *ulama* association was not monolithic. There were other ulama outside PUSA, as individuals and members of other organizations, who were also involved in religious and educational reform. Muhammad Hasbi Ashshiddieqy and the Muhammadiyah organization are examples of such groups. However, these other reformist ulama were either not as influential or less consistent in their effort.
  97. Due to its popularity, this medium was not only well-known through the Arabic term *tabligh* [conveyance, transmission, delivery], [Acehnese *tabalek*], but also through the Dutch *lezing* [lecture], which the Acehnese called *liseng*. The extreme negative attitude toward *babasa kaphe* [language of the unbelievers] was lessening. The reformist *ulama* seemed to have learned, to some extent, the advantages—and the disadvantages—of the Dutch colonial system for their own benefit.
  98. In many instances Teungku Shaykh Peusangan used to recite a *pantun* [a poem] in his speeches reiterating the absolute imperative of youth education:

Alah hai palem ka meulagee  
 ureung ka chik ta yue jak beut  
 lagee kebeu kleut talow bak ulee  
 yoh di reubong han ta tem ngieng  
 oh ban jeut keu trieng jak mita parang u Cot Batee

Alas, what a difficult thing happens  
 when an adult is asked to go study.  
 (It is) as if a wild buffalo were tied by its horns!  
 (It is because) when (at the time of) its sprouting we did not pay any attention (to it),  
 (So now), when it becomes bamboo, (we have to) get a machete made in Cot Batee.

Interview with Teungku Ahmad Lipah Rayeuk, the “retired” Teungku Chik of *dayah* Darussa’adah, Bireuen, North Aceh, December 15, 1991.

99. The dichotomy between the *ulama* was known as “*ulama kolot*” and “*ulama pembabaru*.” “*Kolot*” means “awkward,” “underdeveloped,” “adherents to outmoded traditions,” while *pembabaru* means “reformist.” The traditional *ulama* openly challenged the *madrasah* system. Their arguments were that teaching “secular” subjects and mixing female and male students in one room were like following the *kaphe* tradition; as such they were considered unlawful. In fact,

there used to be a curtain in the *madrasahs* to separate boys from girls, so they could not see each other in the room. In spite of this kind of strict rule, the criticism was still launched. One of the *sha'ir* composed for that particular purpose says: "... bukeon salah ma bukeon salah ku, salah guru geupeuduek sapat" [... (if anything happened between boys and girls) parents should not be blamed; the mistake was solely because of the teacher who put them together (in the same room)].

100. This type of school was already established in Padang (West Sumatra), and the model of the Normal School in Bireuen, Aceh, was based on that of Padang.
101. The establishment of the PUSA organization in 1939 was the outcome of this approach. *Uleebalang* Peusangan of North Aceh and *uleebalang* Keumangan of Pidie were among the few *uleebalangs* who supported the *ulamas'* cause.
102. The Indonesian people generally, and the PUSA *ulama* particularly, were terribly impressed by the "sweet" promise of the Japanese, who called themselves *saudara tua* [older brother] whose mission it was to liberate Asia from European domination.
103. In this event, the role of Sayyid Abu Bakar, one of the PUSA members who diligently consulted the Japanese agents in Malaysia, was important. No authority in Aceh knew of this "conspiracy" until the last moment when a few leaders in Aceh Besar were informed.
104. So cruel were the Japanese that the three and a half years occupation is seen as comparable to three and a half centuries of that of the Dutch.
105. The *peristiwa Cumbok* [Cumbok Affair] was, in fact another tragedy of the Acehnese. Many of the royal elites, who had become professionals and bureaucrats, were persecuted during this social revolution. The PUSA *ulama* played a very decisive role in this tragedy. For further details see, Abdullah Arif, *Peristiwa Pengkhianat Tjumbok*, published in Kutaraja by Kongres Besar PUSA & P. PUSA, 1950. The text has been translated into English by Anthony Reid "The Affairs of the Tjumbok Traitors," in *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs* 4/5 - 1970-71, 29-65.
106. This announcement was officially signed on Oct. 15, 1945 by four leading *ulama* of Aceh: Daud Beureueh, Hasan Krueng Kale, Dja'far Sidik Lamdjabat and Ahmad Hasballah Indrapuri. The message, under the heading "*Maklumat Ulama Seluruh Atjeh*" [The Announcement of the *ulama* of All Aceh] says: "... bahwa perjuangan ini adalah sebagai sambungan perjuangan dabulu di Atjeh jang dipimpin oleh almarhum Tgk. Tjibik di Tiro dan pahlawan-pahlawan kebangsaan jang lain." [... that this struggle (to defend independence) is the continuation of the previous struggle in Aceh led by the late Teungku Chik Di Tiro and others]. See, further in M. Nur El Ibrahimy, *Teungku Muhammad Daud Beureueh*, (Jakarta: Gunung Agung, 1986), 251-2.
107. Nazaruddin here divided the reformist *ulama* into two categories, the *ulama* and the *zu'amâ'*. What he means by *ulama* are those who are still working in the field of religious affairs, whether as governmental officers or free-lance. The *zu'amâ'* are those who relinquished their religious profession and shifted to work in a more "secular" affairs, like being governmental officers, politicians, businessmen, etc. Both groups, nevertheless, shared the same background of religious education. See, Nazaruddin, *Pemberontakan Kaum Republik*, 7-10, and *passim*.
108. So, when in 1953 the *ulama* of Aceh declared the establishment of *Dâr al-Islâm*



- apart from the Republic of Indonesia, they did nothing new. This had been done in Pasai long before. The difference was that the *Dâr al-Islâm* of Pasai was initiated in peace while the *Dâr al-Islâm* of Aceh of 1953 was started with war.
109. On this turmoil a number of books and treatises have been written. Among them are M. Nur El-Ibrahimi, *Teungku Muhammad Daud Beureueh*, Jakarta: Gunung Agung, 1986; Hasan Saleh, *Mengapa Aceh Bergolak*, Jakarta: Pustaka Utama Grafiti, 1992.
  110. The role of the *ulama* started to deteriorate even during the early years of the rebellion. This is because of the fact that some *ulama* displayed inconsistency between their words and deeds, particularly concerning the rebellion. That is why some of them left their leaders in the jungles fighting and came back to live normal lives in the city. (Interview with *Haji* Affan Amin, one of the leaders in the rebellion, Bireuen, October 2, 1992).

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