

Forging Islamic Power and Place: The Legacy of Shayk Da'ud bin 'Abd Allah al-Fatani in Mecca and Southeast Asia

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In *Forging Islamic Power and Place* Francis Bradley (Pratt Institute) speaks to a broad audience of historians, religious studies scholars and, most specifically, students of Islamic intellectualism. The crux of the study is based upon the analysis of 1,300 manuscripts that have received minimal scholarly attention to date (p. 3), and which, brought together, provide the basis for Bradley's detailed history of the Patani School of Islamic intellectualism. Situated in what is now southern Thailand, the Patani School was influential beyond measure in the spread of Islam in Southeast Asia, with scholars living semi-permanently in Mecca travelling across the Indian Ocean to form the foundations of the school in peninsular Malaysia, Thailand and Cambodia.

Bradley's primary contention in this work is with the debate over the 'origins of Southeast Asian poverty', in which he sees the Weberian framework of famed historian Anthony Reid (1993) as flawed, as it does not account for the 'redirection' of social strategies chosen by Southeast Asian elites when one strategy proved to have failed them (p. 7).^[1] He draws upon Ira Lapidus' (1967) assertion that each urban center has its own 'internal power brokers, urban elites, and the social customs and manners that resulted from each city's unique social structure' (p. 7).^[2] The entire frame of inquiry, therefore, can be framed by the question: 'How did elites and other social actors reproduce their status in nonmaterial forms?' (p. 8). In response Bradley seeks to show that there was a period of transition, from the royal authority of 17th-century Southeast Asia, through to the moral authority that ruled in elite intellectual circles at least up until the middle of the 20th century.

Bradley situates his studies of the Patani School within the foundational debates of Islam in the region, including the pantheism debate between the followers of Hamza Fansuri, Shams al-Din al-Sumatra'i [d. 1630] and Nur al-Din al-Raniri [d. 1658], which occurred in Aceh (Sumatra, Indonesia) between 1637 and 1644. Nur al-Din had arrived in Aceh from Gujarat at the beginning of the debate (1637), and his claim that 'the world is God' was a heretical concept. Azyumardi Azra (2004) believed that this was one of the first 'reformist' movements in Southeast Asian history (p. 69) and Bradley shows that the critiques and ideas of al-Raniri were present in the social climate that the Patani scholars had already been familiar with in Southeast Asia (p. 70).^[3] Typically, however, scholars of Southeast Asian Islam have looked at the 17th

century and onward, in particular the 18th and 19th centuries, in terms of waves of 'Islamic revival'. The problem is that revival, for Bradley, 'suggests a return to something forgotten or lost, when in fact the source for change came from books and the written word in a region that possessed only a scattered Islamic textual tradition confined almost entirely to the royal courts' (p. 13). Bradley rejects the term 'revival,' in favor of a *textual turn*. This *textual turn* therefore highlights a particular re-emphasis on the value of 'the text' for the Patani School and associated thinkers, wherein practice and 'the text' cannot be divorced from each other. This was certainly so for the most influential teachers, including Shayk Da'ud bin 'Abd Allah al-Fatani (1769–1847).

In order to back his analysis of Shayk Da'ud's influence and the Patani School as a whole, Bradley contextualizes the work within a well-rounded description of the social fabric of the kingdom of Patani preceding the rise of the school. The pre-existing loose networks of power of Southeast Asian *mandala* states may have aided the preservation of certain elites within the region. However it also meant that Patani was already caught between the desires of Melaka, and, at times, Ayutthaya (Thailand), spending much of the 17th century as a tributary state of lands to the north (chapter two). Nevertheless, after a brief interlude following the collapse of Ayutthaya, the expanding power of Siam in the north could not be denied, as Patani became subject to the Siamese court and the Patani royal power declined over the course of five wars with Siam between 1785 and 1838. Patani slaves arrived in Siam as a result of this conflict, and would have resulted in the movement of refugees along extended kinship network ties to similar Malay-Muslim court locations and ports along the peninsula, such as Kedah, Kota Bharu, Penang, Perak and Terengganu (chapter three).

The implication is that with the decline of royal power, there was also a questioning of where social authority should lie. Pre-existing networks between courts had meant that there were also pre-existing connections between court scholars. But, after the decline of the royalty, authority need not be rooted locally. The emergence of a Patani diaspora in Mecca, which amounted to the beginnings of a permanently settled Patani-Malay population with strong connections to centers in Southeast Asia was therefore critical in the reshaping of the world according to the Patani School. The scholars left no descriptions of Mecca themselves it seems (pp. 64–5), but we can be sure that during the time of Shayk Da'ud's life, the city was taken over by Sa'ud Ibn Abd al-Aziz of the Saudi-Wahabiyya movement in 1803, although Muhammad Ali of Egypt sent an army to repel the Saudi forces in 1813 and Ottoman control was reestablished in 1818. This occupation does seem to have impacted the teachings of Shayk Da'ud and the Patani School. However, the influence was temporary. More important to Shayk Da'ud's cause was the translation of texts and juridical rulings from Arabic into Malay. As a proponent of Sufism Shayk Da'ud was influential beyond the extent that previous scholars have given him credit for (chapter four).

In chapter five Bradley's study delineates the key texts and arguments of the Patani School and in particular those that were formulaic in the teachings of Shayk Da'ud. Two texts in particular, which the shayk authored himself, were the *Al-Manhal al-Safi fi Bayan Ramz Ahl al-Sufi* (1820s) – itself strongly influenced by Ibn al-Arabi's *Manazil al-Sairin* and al-Burhanpuri's *Tuhfat al-Mursala ila Ruh al-Nabi* – and the *Munat al-Musalli* (1827), which was a treatise on the nature of prayer (pp. 84–7). Shayk Da'ud argued for a defense of Sufism on the grounds that although Sufi practices may appear to contradict the surface rulings of *shari'a* law, they do not contradict the *hidden* meaning of the law (p. 87).

Furthermore, he took a political stance, advising the Patani Sultan Da'ud to be merciful and to be aware of his mortality in the context of the 1831–2 rebellion against the Siamese. Here, Bradley seems to reject popular claims that the shayk himself participated in the rebellion as a form of *jihad*, since there are a number of texts that were completed in Mecca that can be dated to the same period. There are quotes that suggest that the shayk had an explicitly anti-Siamese stance, though Bradley is careful to note that if we do follow this assumption, the shayk was 'tactful' enough to omit any explicit references to Siam (p. 98). Regardless, through the prevalence of composed texts, it is clear that the Patani School's influence spread throughout the works of Shayk Da'ud, both in Mecca and in Southeast Asia (chapter six). The last chapter then delineates a new form of social space in Southeast Asia that Bradley terms 'The Pondok Zone'.

Bradley's 'Pondok Zone' is best delineated through his identification of the centers of Canak, Patani, Yaring and Yala on the Siamese/Thai side of the border and Tumpat, Kota Bharu, Pasir Mas, Duyong (Terengganu), Bagan Datuk, Parit Buntar and Alor Setar on the Malay side (p. 125). Bradley argues that these centers, although they have origins that are unclear, became associated with Patani-Malays after the formation of the initial waves of Patani diaspora. They then became centers in the Patani diaspora communities in the peninsula that reconnected the diaspora and sometimes provided means of return migration. The zone came into being in the late 19th century. However, the networks that were formed remain influential. The zone itself also allows Bradley to trace the influence of the Patani School through the major urban areas of the peninsula – including Johor, Singapore, Perak, Melaka and Pehang. As Bradley argues 'The character of the individual *pondok* relied largely upon the personality of its chief teacher and the intellectual genealogy to which he was linked, but all bore the imprint of Shayk Da'ud' (p. 137). Hence, Shayk Da'ud was one of the most influential intellectual figures in the peninsula leading into the period of the Kaum Muda/Kaum Tua debates of the early to mid-20th century.

By concluding with the 'Pondok Zone' Bradley demonstrates a critical shift in the social fabric of the Malay peninsula that extends into the present, as the local Islamic school became the central place for study of all aspects of life. At the foundation of the Patani School Bradley determines that Shayk Da'ud al-Fatani took 'the middle path' when it came to his particular understanding of free will and determinism. Shayk Da'ud concluded that there were certain aspects of life that were predestined, just as other aspects of life are determined by free will and the ability for an individual to make decisions (pp. 77–9). The ruling on free will and Shayk Da'ud's other ideas about Islamic mysticism, juridical rulings and practice therefore influenced the coming generations of students that would form the foundation of this 'Pondok Zone' that Bradley ultimately proposes.

Reading through Bradley's work, it is clear that the textual influence of Shayk Da'ud can be traced through many places in peninsular Southeast Asia and into the mainland as well. The question of Shayk Da'ud's influence through the rest of island Southeast Asia is therefore one potential line of inquiry. Another is that of the level of influence of Shayk Da'ud upon Patanis in Mecca today, in light of the subsequent, substantial, waves of reformist debate that came to a head in the 20th century in Egypt and Mecca, which were networks that the Patani scholars were connected intimately to in the 1920s to the 1940s? Second, if the student-teacher relationship was the one that replaced royal authority, to what extent did these shifting relations reflect a decrease in royal power, built upon the deva-raja model, and to what extent were they a continuation of the pre-existing Guru-student relationship of court Hindu-Buddhist-elite priests from previous centuries? The question here is to raise the issue of the subtle underlying South Asian influence more clearly, beyond the works of reformers such as al-Raniri. Given the importance of the *sisilah* in the intellectual climate that Shayk Da'ud wrote, it would have been useful to have a clearer delineation of the particular influences or schools that influenced Shayk Da'ud in the form of a 'kinship structure' or a visual representation. Finally, it would have been good to get a more in-depth description of why the author found the ideas of Bourdieu more attractive in framing his study, as he makes mention of them in the introduction, but does not go into extensive detail on this point. Despite these questions and minor critiques, this fantastically rich study will be relevant to many courses of study.

From a theoretical perspective Bradley is most interested in creating a response to the famed historian of maritime Southeast Asia, Anthony Reid (1988, 1993), and his reliance upon the social theories of Max Weber.^[4] His claims contest Reid's heavy emphasis on the role of commerce in the spread of Islam and the assertions of many scholars that individuals in Southeast Asia converted for want of coin.^[5] The book comes upon the heels of a recent (2014) *Journal of Asian Studies* article by Bradley that stakes the claim of the importance of kinship networks in the spread of Islam.^[6] It is further contextualized by other scholars whose work supports the 'textual turn' that Bradley proposes, such as major international figures in the study of Southeast Asian Islam Michael Laffan (2003, 2011),^[7] Ronnit Ricci (2011),^[8] Eric Tagliacozzo (2009, 2013)^[9] and Azyumardi Azra (2004, 2006).^[10] He additionally relies substantially upon Southeast Asian scholars works produced in Malay, such as those of Syed Muhammad Naguib al-Attas, Ismail Awang, Ismail Che Da'ud,^[11] as well as the critical analysis of the primary texts of Shayk Da'ud bin 'Abd Allah al-Fatani. Bradley's contribution provides a rich new analysis of Islam in the context of global history, which will resonate within the walls of the classroom and beyond.

Notes

[1] Reid, Anthony. 1993. *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce 1450-1680*, vol. 2: *Expansion and Crisis*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

[2] Lapidus, Ira. 1967. *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

[3] Azra, Azyumardi. 2004. *The Origins of Islamic Reformism in Southeast Asia: Networks of Malay-Indonesian and Middle Eastern 'Ulama in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*. Honolulu, HI: Allen and Unwin and University of Hawai'i Press.

[4] Weber, Max. 1968. *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*. 2 vols. Ed. Geunther Roth and Claus Wittich, trans. Ephraim Fischoff et al. New York: Bedminster Press.

[5] Reid, Anthony. 1988. *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce 1450-1680*, vol. 1: *The Lands Below the Winds*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press; Reid, Anthony. 1993. *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce 1450-1680*, vol. 2: *Expansion and Crisis*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

[6] Bradley, Francis. 2014. Islamic Reform, the Family and Knowledge Networks Linking Mecca to Southeast Asia in the Nineteenth Century. *Journal of Asian Studies*. Vol. 73, No. 1: pp. 89-111.

[7] Laffan, Michael. 2003. *Islamic Nationhood and Colonial Indonesia: The Umma Below the Winds*. London: Routledge; Laffan, Michael. 2011. *The Makings of Indonesian Islam: Orientalism and the Narration of a Sufi Past*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

[8] Ricci, Ronnit. 2011. *Islam Translated: Literature, Conversion and the Arabic Cosmopolis of South and Southeast Asia*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

[9] Tagliacozzo, Eric ed. 2009. *Southeast Asia and the Middle East: Islam, Movement and the Longue Duree*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press; Tagliacozzo, Eric. 2013. *The Longest Journey: Southeast Asians and the Pilgrimage to Mecca*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[10] Azra, Azyumardi. 2004. *The Origins of Islamic Reformism in Southeast Asia: Networks of Malay-Indonesian and Middle Eastern 'Ulama in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*. Honolulu, HI: Allen and Unwin and University of Hawai'i Press; Azra, Azyumardi. 2006. *Islam in the Indonesian World: An Account of Institution Formation*. Bandung: Mizan.

[11] These essays are from a two volume series edited by Ismail Che Daud. The versions that Bradley used

were: Daud, Ismail Che ed. 2001. *Tokoh-Tokoh Ulama' Semenanjung Melayu*, vol 1. 3rd edition. Kota Bharu: Majlis Ugama Islam dan Adat Istiadat Melayu Kelantan; and Daud, Ismail Che ed. 2007. *Tokoh-Tokoh Ulama' Semenanjung Melayu*, vol 2. 2nd edition. Kota Bharu: Majlis Ugama Islam dan Adat Istiadat Melayu Kelantan.

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