

Abstract
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**THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SOUTHEAST ASIA FOR THE
GLOBAL ISLAMIC STUDIES:
THE ‘ULAMA NETWORKS IN HISTORICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL
PERSPECTIVES**

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The Muslim area in Southeast Asia, also conveniently called the Malay-Indonesian world, situates on the periphery of the Islamic world. The area represents one of the least Arabized parts of the Islamic world. Despite these facts, however, developments of Islam in Southeast Asia is inseparable from those in the Arab world. Therefore, since the introduction of Islam into Southeast Asia, developments of Islam in the Middle East have continually affected the course of Islam in the Malay-Indonesian world. Therefore the study of Southeast Asian Islam is very significant for the global Islamic studies.

There has been a tendency among scholars to exclude Southeast Asian Islam in any discussion on Islam. This kind of treatment is largely based on an assumption that the area has no single stable core of Islamic tradition to serve as a dominant focal point, in relations to which scholars can find some points of orientation. Furthermore, the evidence that survive for the arrival and developments of Islam, by and large, are considered fragmented among a large number of languages and cultural tradition. The combination of these factors has, until recent times, placed the study of Southeast Asian Islam out of the mainstream of Islamic studies. Recent works on Southeast Asian Islam, together with the fact that area now contains the most populous Muslim country (Indonesia) in the world, have brought a new impetus to the study of the nature of relationship between Middle Eastern and Southeast Asian Islam.

Within this context, international scholarly (*‘ulama’*) networks, centered in the Haramayn (Makkah and Madinah), played a crucial role in incessantly sending

the renewal impulses in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to such peripheral areas of the Muslim world as the Malay-Indonesian world.

The main purpose of this paper is to disclose the intellectual and religious network of the Arab and Southeast Asian `ulamâ', precisely those of Ahmad al-Qushâsî, Ibrâhîm al-Kûrânî, Abd al-Ra'ûf al-Sinkilî, Shaykh Yûsuf and their students in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The paper is also aimed at assessing the impacts of those networks upon the Islamic renewal movements in the Malay-Indonesian world which gained their momentum since the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

By concentrating upon these themes, hopefully we will have a better grasp of the development of Islam in Southeast Asia. As we will see, though the area situates on the periphery of the Islamic world, it constantly receives various impulses--mainly through the networks of the `ulamâ'-- from the centers of Islam in the Arab world which to a great degree influence the dynamic of Southeast Asian Islam. Therefore this study of the `ulama' networks has a great significance for global Islamic studies.