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# AL-SHAJARAH

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*Al-Shajarah* is a refereed international journal that publishes original scholarly articles in the area of Islamic thought, Islamic civilization, Islamic science, and Malay world issues. The journal is especially interested in studies that elaborate scientific and epistemological problems encountered by Muslims in the present age, scholarly works that provide fresh and insightful Islamic responses to the intellectual and cultural challenges of the modern world. *Al-Shajarah* will also consider articles written on various religions, schools of thought, ideologies and subjects that can contribute towards the formulation of an Islamic philosophy of science. Critical studies of translation of major works of major writers of the past and present. Original works on the subjects of Islamic architecture and art are welcomed. Book reviews and notes are also accepted.

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## ***Book Reviews***

**Nasr M. Arif and Abbas Panakkal (eds.). *Southeast Asian Islam: Integration and Indigenisation*. London and New York: Routledge, 2024. xi + 305 pp. ISBN 9781032699257.**

*Reviewer: Alexander Wain. Lecturer, Divinity School, University of St Andrews. Email: adrwl@st-andrews.ac.uk*

During the 1940s, as Indonesia's independence struggle gained momentum, several idealistic scholars tied to Sukarno's evolving project of national authentication and cultural rejuvenation began exploring creative new ways of observing and analyzing their shared Islamic heritage. During the decades that followed, within the work of leading intellectuals like Sanusi Pané, Hamka, Sartono Kartodirdjo, and Kuntowijoyo, subsequently followed by Malaysians in the mold of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, Syed Hussein Alatas, Kassim Ahmed, and Zainal Abidin bin Abdul Wahid, a series of methodologically innovative studies emerged dedicated to the examination of Southeast Asian Islam using an indigenous lens. While colonial-era scholarship had 'othered' Southeast Asian Islam, continually emphasizing its non-conformance to a perceived Middle Eastern Islamic orthodoxy, these new studies stressed its inherent uniqueness and Islamic authenticity. Although initially met with skepticism, both within Western academia and among Islamic reformers committed to essentialized notions of Arabized Islamicity, a broader cohort of Southeast Asianists have begun to embrace this emic mode of inquiry over recent decades. This volume, assembled by editors Nasr M. Arif and Abbas Panakkal, sits firmly within that trend. Characterized by diverse scholarship—both established and insurgent—local and global, it explores issues of integration and indigenization within a series of carefully crafted, sympathetically rendered depictions of Southeast Asia as a repository of a continually evolving understanding of Islam that is of no less significance or legitimacy than iterations of that faith found elsewhere.

In the volume's opening chapter, "Arrival, adoption, and adaptation: integrating Islam in maritime Southeast Asia" (pp.

13-36), Carool Kersten describes Southeast Asian Islam's post-thirteenth-century integration into the wider Muslim world. Taking a suitably expansive (if slightly Indonesia-centric) view of the region, Kersten presents a welcome corrective to previous scholarship. Rather than perpetuate prior assumptions of a profound regional syncretism, he establishes the existence of local Muslim identity "much more firmly rooted in Islamic tradition, through sustained contact with other parts of the Muslim world, than is often recognized" (p. 14). Acknowledging the region's diversity (termed its "non-existent homogeneity," p. 15), the chapter questions received assumptions and broadens subject boundaries, all while emphasizing the diverse ways in which "Muslims from Southeast Asia were not passive recipients of Islamic knowledge but active participants in the formation of [a] distinct Southeast Asian, or *Jāwī*, Muslim culture" (p. 24). Although the significance accorded (Hadhrami) Arab Muslims during Southeast Asia's earliest phases of Islamization is perhaps exaggerated, seemingly due to an overreliance on the work of Naquib al-Attas, the chapter remains a nuanced depiction of Islam's indigenization within Southeast Asia, from the thirteenth century down to the twentieth.

The next chapter, "Living *sunnah*: scholars, community leaders, and the integration of Islam in Java" (pp. 37-60), sees Ismail Fajrie Alatas creatively reconceptualize Javanese Islam as a product of "articulatory labor," or the "social realization of Prophetic teachings" via the careful modulation of Islamic norms through a local lens (p. 39). Stressing Java's Sufi past, a range of pertinent and carefully chosen examples are used to demonstrate how Java's traditional shaykhs, as Sufi masters, were considered spiritual descendants of the Prophet capable of projecting definitive recontextualizations of *sunnah* based on their own lived experiences. Coalescing with the previous chapter's desire to problematize prior scholarly perceptions of Southeast Asia as syncretic and barely Islamized, Alatas emphasizes living *sunnah*'s status as "one of multiple realizations of *sunnah* that have developed historically in different parts of the Muslim world" (p. 41), thereby situating it firmly within the ambit of an 'orthodox' Islamicity. Since the nineteenth century, however, such an inherently flexible notion of

*sunnah* has come under increasing pressure from more objectified, textually fixed (and often Hadhrami-sponsored) interpretations linked to essentialized images of Shari'ah. R. Michael Feener takes up this complex theme in chapter 3, "Islamic jurisprudence and *adat* in Southeast Asia" (pp. 61-85), which constitutes a well-informed and articulate discussion examining the shifting, historically contingent relationship between Islamic law and local custom within Indonesia. Although sadly neglecting Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei, the chapter presents a nuanced portrait of a longstanding regional Islamic legal pluralism in which pre-Islamic customary norms were deemed compatible with Shari'ah. From the nineteenth century onwards, however, and paralleling the developments highlighted by Alatas, "the notion of *adat* as being adversarial...rather than complementary...to the law of Islam" became dominant (p. 70). Post-independence, this conservative turn (notably in Aceh) has seen a "new level of symbolic state engagement with the particulars of Islamic belief and practice," such that "the coercive apparatus of the state [have been used] to steer society toward particular paths of reform and development" (pp. 75-6).

Returning to broader questions of history, chapter 4, "Integration of South Asia within Southeast Asian tradition" (pp. 86-117), sees Abbas Panakkal explore "the specific ways in which South Asia contributed to the integration of Southeast Asian cultures" within the wider Islamic world (p. 86). Cognizant of international trade's inherent potential to drive societal and cultural transformation over the *longue durée*, Panakkal delineates the mechanisms by which Southeast Asia's Islamization (broadly defined), as conducted in conversation with South Asia, developed "a unique Islamic culture that managed to preserve the core principles, values, and higher purposes of Islam while remaining open to the influences of local traditions," thereby reflecting "the remarkable flexibility and adaptability of Islam as a universal faith that encourages integration" (p. 108). In chapter 5, "Integration of Islam into the Malay and Bugis-Makassar kingdoms" (pp. 121-142), Muhamad Ali pushes elements of this argument still further, exploring Islam's integration into the political and legal landscapes of pre-modern Melaka (Malaysia) and Makassar (Indonesia), with

particular reference to Islam's role in the continued justification of pre-Islamic, Hindu-Buddhist inflected notions of kingship.

In chapter 6, "Muslim women's dress in Southeast Asia: Islamic law, fashion, and national identity" (pp. 143-166), Euis Nurlaelawati and Nina Mariani Noor present an interesting, empirically based discussion of female Muslim attire as a contemporary expression of indigenous modernity across both Indonesia and Malaysia. Avoiding 'normative' Western perspectives, which tend to frame veiling (described here using the Indonesian terms *kerudung* and *mukena*) as a reactionary gesture of anti-modernism, the authors utilize the oft-neglected Southeast Asian experience to conceptualize the veil as a symbol of cultural self-confidence and female empowerment. Nuanced enough to avoid naive conclusions – such as equating veiling with greater religiosity or anti-western sentiment – the chapter situates support for traditional clothing within a complex cultural landscape defined by national identity, fashionability, and a plurality of religious opinions. Remaining within the contemporary period, chapter 7, "Muslim cosmopolitanism in Southeast Asia: marketplaces as sites of interaction and integration" (pp. 167-186), explores the traditional Southeast Asian marketplace as a locus of "Muslim cosmopolitanism," a term used to signify "a way of living that is rooted in the central tenet of Islam, which is that all men are part of a common humanity" with "a high degree of receptiveness to universal values" (p. 168). Written by Khairudin Aljunied, this innovative treatment describes the survival of Southeast Asian Islam's traditional inclusivity, buoyed by an indebtedness to Sufi forms of spirituality, within the mercantile environments of Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia, where inherent multiculturalism has resisted conservative pressures associated with Islamic reformism.

Questions of plurality continue within chapter 8, "Cultural adaptation and integration: Islam in Southeast Asia" (pp. 189-207), which sees Anthony Reid craft a characteristically nuanced, complex, and multifaceted image of an Islamic Southeast Asia defined by (amongst other things) inter- and intra-religious plurality. In sympathy with the volume's emic concerns, Reid stresses the indigenous origins of this plurality, attributing its evolution not to

foreign influence but a longstanding regional desire for novelty (conversion) alongside reassurance (vernacularization). This commitment permitted the development of an outward and inward-looking religiosity, allowing Southeast Asian Islam to remain both adaptative and internally coherent. Chapter 9, “*Pondok* education, public discourse, and cultural pluralism in Malaysia and Indonesia” (pp. 208-233), considers some of the same issues within contemporary religious education. Author Azmil Tayeb, drawing upon extensive research conducted across both Malaysia and Indonesia, paints a stark contrast between the two nations: while picturing the first as “centralized and discursively narrow,” the second emerges as “decentralized and discursively open” (p. 209), thereby permitting the maintenance of a tolerant, pluralistic environment that contrasts sharply with Malaysia’s supposed conservative ossification. Although this rigid demarcation may oversimplify and conflict with each nation’s internal complexities, the chapter’s main argument—that discursive spaces must remain open for adaptative change and healthy societal discourse—is both essential and persuasive.

Rounding out the volume are two intriguing studies dedicated to Islamic Southeast Asia’s rich artistic and architectural legacy. The first, “The Islamic art of Southeast Asia” (pp. 234-262), is by Robert Hillenbrand, a scholar known for his erudite explorations of Islamic art history in the Middle East and Africa. Bringing that wealth of knowledge to bear here, Hillenbrand constructs numerous valuable comparative insights situating Malay and Javanese artistic expressions within their broader Islamic contexts, all with an assurance other studies often lack. Although Hillenbrand’s unfamiliarity with Southeast Asia leads to several factual errors regarding the region’s history, his conclusion—that ‘the art of Southeast Asia should be understood, accepted, and valued for what it is: an outstanding example of the capacity of Islamic art to evolve and adapt in response to other ways of seeing’ (p. 252)—is a significant contribution, designed to elevate the region’s disciplinary standing. In the volume’s final chapter, “The mosques of Southeast Asia: a narrative of representation and negotiation” (pp. 263-289), Tutin Aryanti frames traditional, independence-era, and

contemporary forms of Malaysian and Indonesian mosque architecture as “systems of knowledge” designed to reflect each nation’s unique cultural, political, and economic landscapes (p. 264). Situating her approach within the architectural philosophies of vernacularism and modern-regionalism, Aryanti defines Southeast Asian Islamic architecture in terms of its “expressions and intentions” (p. 267), thereby constructing valuable insights into how sacred space may reflect and project national aspirations.

Ultimately, this timely and well-conceived volume presents readers with a wealth of innovative scholarship designed to center Southeast Asia within the wider Islamic world while describing it in its own terms. I am sure it will constitute a valuable addition to any scholar’s library.

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**Mohammed Rustom (ed.). *Islamic Thought and the Art of Translation: Texts and Studies in Honor of William C. Chittick and Sachiko Murata*. Leiden: Brill, 2023. 558 pp. ISBN 9789004529021; ISBN 9789004529038 (e-book).**

*Reviewer: Nevad Kahteran. Professor, Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Sarajevo, Bosnia Herzegovina. Email: nevad.kahteran@hotmail.com.*

The book presented with this short review, a profound work on comparative philosophy matching in significance the work of Toshihiko Izutsu, appeared in the edition of our colleague M. Rustom, a member of the International Society for Comparative Philosophy towards World Philosophy (CPWP) and a multi-talented researcher and associate of those to whom this extensive volume is dedicated, i.e., the Chittick couple, William Chittick and his wife, Sachiko Murata. As I have been associated with the Chitticks for almost two decades, it is my great pleasure to present this praiseworthy endeavor of our colleague Rustom to our readership, taking into account the important fact that these are two of the most prominent American and world-widely known researchers in this

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