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# SOUTHEAST ASIAN PROTO-PAN-ISLAMISM
## A Preliminary Remark of The Genealogy of Muslim Cosmopolitanism in Aceh

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**Abstract**

*While Pan-Islamism is commonly framed as a nineteenth-century political discourse emerging from the Ottoman response to Western imperialism, this article argues that Aceh, a westernmost province of today's Indonesia, articulated earlier forms of Islamic solidarity that may be considered as a proto-Pan-Islamic imaginaries. Adopting a conceptual-historical and historiographical approach, the study critically synthesizes historical narratives, available in modern scholarship to examine how Acehnese actors positioned their polity within transregional Islamic networks. Rather than claiming the existence of modern Pan-Islamism avant la lettre, the article traces three interrelated dimensions of Aceh's early Islamic political imagination; cosmopolitan connectivity, transregional Muslim belonging, and resistance to imperial encroachment, shaped through sustained engagements with major Islamic centers such as Mecca, Persia, the Mughal world, and Istanbul. These connections informed Aceh's political culture, religious authority, and self-representation as a Muslim power in Southeast Asia. In dialogue with Cemil Aydin's argument that Pan-Islamism and the notion of a unified "Muslim world" crystallized in the nineteenth century, this article suggests that Aceh's earlier experiences provided historical conditions that later rendered such global Islamic*

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*consciousness intelligible. By foregrounding Aceh as an active imperial periphery, the article challenges Eurocentric periodization and recenters Southeast Asia within global Islamic intellectual history.*

*[Meskipun Pan-Islamisme lazim dipahami sebagai sebuah wacana politik abad ke-19 yang muncul dari respons Kesultanan Utsmaniyah terhadap imperialisme Barat, artikel ini berargumen bahwa Aceh, sebuah provinsi di ujung barat Indonesia masa kini, telah mengartikulasikan bentuk-bentuk awal solidaritas Islam yang dapat dipahami sebagai imajinasi proto-Pan-Islamik. Dengan mengadopsi pendekatan konseptual-historis dan historiografis, studi ini secara kritis mensintesis narasi-narasi sejarah yang tersedia dalam kajian ilmiah modern untuk menelaah bagaimana para aktor Aceh memosisikan polities mereka dalam jaringan Islam transregional. Alih-alih mengklaim keberadaan Pan-Islamisme modern sebelum waktunya, artikel ini menelusuri tiga dimensi yang saling berkaitan dari imajinasi politik Islam awal Aceh, yakni konektivitas kosmopolitan, afiliasi Muslim lintas wilayah, dan perlawanan terhadap penetrasi imperial, yang dibentuk melalui interaksi berkelanjutan dengan pusat-pusat Islam utama seperti Mekah, Persia, dunia Mughal, dan Istanbul. Koneksi-koneksi ini membentuk budaya politik Aceh, otoritas keagamaan, serta representasi diri sebagai sebuah kekuatan Muslim di Asia Tenggara. Dalam dialog dengan argumen Cemil Aydin bahwa Pan-Islamisme dan gagasan tentang "dunia Muslim" yang bersatu mengalami kristalisasi pada abad ke-19, artikel ini menunjukkan bahwa pengalaman-pengalaman Aceh pada periode sebelumnya menyediakan kondisi historis yang kemudian membuat kesadaran Islam global semacam itu menjadi dapat dipahami. Dengan menempatkan Aceh sebagai sebuah periferium imperial yang aktif, artikel ini menantang periodisasi Eurosentris dan memusatkan kembali Asia Tenggara dalam sejarah intelektual Islam global.]*

**Keywords:** PAN-Islamism, cosmopolitanism, Ottoman caliphate, *Negeri-Negeri di Atas Angin*.

## A. INTRODUCTION

While Pan-Islamism is often understood an ideology articulated by the Ottoman caliphate in the nineteenth century to counter western imperial powers, this interpretation tends to obscure earlier and regionally grounded forms of Islamic connectivity. In this regard, the establishment of Islamic Sultanate in Aceh predates the emergence of Pan-Islamism and played a formative role in shaping the Islamic culture of Southeast

Asia.[1] Scholarly literature on Islam and politics has long emphasized the significance of Pan-Islamism as a transregional phenomenon. At the same time, studies of Pan-Islamism reveal the presence of divergent, and at times competing, interpretations concerning its meaning and historical scope. Existing research thus suggests that the conceptualization of Pan-Islamism, including its origins, reach, and character as a political and religious movement, remains deeply contested. Consequently, numerous scholars have sought to interrogate and reassess these issues from both historical and theoretical perspectives.[2]

Scholarly attitudes toward Pan-Islamic movements and ideas may be broadly divided into two contrasting positions, namely positive and negative interpretations. The positive position is advanced by proponents who view Pan-Islamism as an ideological project aimed at fostering solidarity and unity within the Islamic world under the symbolic or political umbrella of the caliphate. Scholars associated with this perspective include Ismail al-Faruqi (1921-1986),[3] Abu Zahra (1898-1974),[4] as well as figures connected to the Muslim Brotherhood (*Ikhwān al-Muslimīn*).[5] Despite

[1] Cemil Aydin, "Modern Muslim Cosmopolitanism between the Logics of Race and Empire", in *Cosmopolitanism in Conflict: Imperial Encounters from the Seven Years' War to the Cold War*, ed. by Dina Gusejnova (London: Springer, 2018), pp. 113-46; Peter G. Riddell, "Aceh in The Sixtenth and Seventeenth Centuries: 'Serambi Mekkah' and Identity", in *Verandah of Violence: the Historical Background of the Aceh Problem*, ed. by Anthony Reid (Singapore, Seattle: Singapore University Press, University of Washington Press, 2006); Saifuddin Dhuhri and Tarmizi Jakfar, "Māturīdite Kalam among Southeast Asian Ash`Arite: A Synthesis of Māturīdite Influences on Dayah's Theology", al-Jāmi'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies, vol. 58, no. 2 (2020), pp. 391-418; Saifuddin Dhuhri, "From Pasee to Southeast Asian Islam: An Archaeological Semiotic Study of Shared Symbols among Malays", ARICIS Proceedings (Banda Aceh: UIN Ar-Raniry, 2016), pp 369-84.

[2] Dwight E. Lee Problematised the existing conceptualision of the term Pan-Islam. Dwight E. Lee, "The Origins of Pan-Islamism", *The American Historical Review*, vol. 47, no. 2 (1942), 278-87.

[3] In many of Faruqi's works are subject to reconcile muslim differences and he is obsessed with the call for muslim unity and caliphate re-establishment, for further reading, see Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi, *Cultural Atlas of Islam* (New York: Macmillan, 1986).

[4] See Muḥammad Abu Zahra, *Al-Wiḥdah al-Islāmiyah* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-Arabī, 1976).

[5] The fellows of ichwan muslimin have great legacy in resisting againts western control over muslim worlds and call for the unity of muslim world. aside of Garudi, many scholar view ichwan muslimin movement as radical muslims. for detailed see Greg Fealy, "Islamic Radicalism in Indonesia: The Faltering Revival?," *Southeast Asian Affairs* (2004), pp. 104-21; Kai Hafez, *Radicalism and Political Reform in the Islamic and Western Worlds*, trans. by Alex Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Shamit Saggar, *Pariah Politics: Understanding Western Radical Islamism and What Should Be*

their differing contexts, these thinkers share core assumptions with Pan-Islamic thought, particularly the imperative to restore the unity of the ummah and, in some cases, to re-establish the caliphate. They generally agree that Islamic unity and resistance to imperial domination constitute central elements of Islamic teaching and, by extension, key objectives of Pan-Islamic discourse. By contrast, a negative attitude toward Pan-Islamism has been articulated by a number of scholars who approach the phenomenon largely through Western analytical frameworks, often shaped by wartime anxieties and perceptions of cultural difference.[6] This perspective has long constituted a dominant theoretical current within the field. From this viewpoint, Pan-Islamism is frequently portrayed as a threat to democratic society or as a political spectre rather than a historically grounded movement. One of the earliest and most influential observers of Pan-Islamic activity in the Arab world was G. Wyman Bury (1874-1920),[7] whose preliminary work on the subject reflects this critical stance. Based on his observations, Bury remarked that:

> "Most people have heard of the pan-Islamic movement, especially during the War. Some of us have called it a political bogey and some a world-menace, but these are extremist views—it is really the practical protest of Moslems against the exploitation of their spiritual and material resources by outsiders. Pan-Islam (as its name implies) is a movement to weld together Moslems throughout the world regardless of nationality. Hence pan-Islam is more than a spiritual movement: it is a practical, working proposition which has to be reckoned with when dealing with Moslems even in secular matters."[8]

Accordingly, Albert Edwards further elaborates what he perceives as the threatening character of Pan-Islamism by identifying three

*Done* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Devin R. Springer, James L. Regens, and David N. Edger, *Islamic Radicalism and Global Jihad* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press 2009); Quintan Wiktorowicz, "A Genealogy of Radical Islam," *Studies In Conflict & Terrorism*, vol. 28, no. 2 (2005), pp. 75-97; Youssef M. Choueiri, *Islam Garis Keras: Melacak Akar Gerakan Fundamentalisme* (Yogyakarta: Qanun, 2003); Roger Garaudy, *Islam Fundamentalis dan Fundamentalis Lainnya*, trans. by Afif Muhammad (Bandung: Penerbit Pustaka, 1992).

[6] Albert Edwards, "The Menace of Pan-Islamism", *The North American Review*, vol. 197, no. 690 (1913), pp. 645-57; Peter R. Demant, *Islam vs Islamism: The Dilemma of the Muslim World* (London: Praeger, 2006); Fealy, "Islamic Radicalism in Indonesia"; Nikki R. Keddie, "Pan-Islam as Proto-Nationalism", *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 41, no. 1 (1969), pp. 17-28; Lee, "The Origins Of Pan-Islamism".

[7] G. Wyman Bury, *Pan-Islam* (London: Macmillan Co. Ltd, 1919).

[8] *Ibid*., 11-12.

internally fragmented and mutually antagonistic components within the movement. In his view, the first consists of what he terms the "old guard", a group largely untouched by modern historical developments and characterized by intellectual conservatism. Edwards depicts this faction as resistant to change, having, in his assessment, failed to retain the scientific and cultural achievements that once defined the classical Islamic caliphates. The second component, by contrast, is composed of so-called "Europeanised" Muslims whose intellectual formation occurred within Western institutions, including universities in France and Britain or European-style schools in the Levant. Edwards argues that although many within this group were inclined toward freethinking and had become sceptical of Islam's divine foundations, they nonetheless regarded religion as socially necessary and continued to favour Islamic monotheism over what they perceived as the doctrinal ambiguities of European theology. Finally, Edwards identifies a third current that he presents as a volatile synthesis of rigid religious zeal, mystical tendencies, and selective appropriations of European cultural influences. Taken together, these three elements, rather than constituting a coherent movement, are portrayed by Edwards as evidence of Pan-Islamism's internal contradictions and its perceived danger in the eyes of Western observers.[9]

In response to the ideas of Ottoman empire's Pan-Islamism, many scholars view Pan-Islamism as burdensome for Muslims in history and their civilization. Instead of Caliph, the second group of scholars who holds the negative attitude upon Pan-Islamism accept and are convinced by democratic and secular system of society following by the birth of national state in the end of imperialist era of 20 CE.[10] This group stands against the ideas of PAN-Islamism, such as the unity of Muslim world and the universality of Islamic nature and teachings. Such view can be found in scholarship of western scholars like Greg Fealy[11] and Dwight E. Lee.[12] This scholarship then becomes grand narrative for the proponents of the democracy versus Islamic society.

Although Pan-Islamism is commonly regarded as a modern ideology, mobilized by the Ottoman Empire and further articulated by

[9] Albert Edwards, "The Menace of Pan-Islamism", pp. 645-57.

[10] For further reading, see Hussein Askary, "Pan-Islamism is the Death of the Nation!," *EIR* (13 July 2012), pp. 35-8.

[11] Fealy, "Islamic Radicalism in Indonesia: The Faltering Revival?".

[12] Lee, "The Origins of Pan-Islamism".

Western powers in the nineteenth century in the context of colonial governance and imperial hegemony, this article argues that Aceh articulated pre-modern Islamic imaginaries of unity that later became intelligible within modern Pan-Islamic discourse. Accordingly, influential scholarship, most notably Cemil Aydin's *The Idea of the Muslim World*, has demonstrated that the notion of a unified "Muslim world" emerged as a modern global consciousness in the nineteenth century, shaped by European imperial expansion and racialized geopolitical thought.[13] This article does not contest that argument. Instead, it seeks to complement it by examining earlier, pre-modern forms of Islamic political imagination that did not yet constitute a global ideology, but nonetheless structured how polities such as Aceh understood Muslim unity, authority, and obligation. By tracing these earlier configurations, the article highlights the historical conditions that later rendered modern Pan-Islamism intelligible and mobilizable.

Relatively little scholarly attention has been paid to the phenomena observable in Aceh that may be understood as constituting a form of proto-Pan-Islamism, one that played a significant role in protecting Muslim communities in Southeast Asia and in guiding Islamic missionary activity across the region. By synthesizing the historical narratives available in modern scholarship, this article seeks to explore Acehnese "proto–Pan-Islamism" in order to illuminate the character of Southeast Asian Islam and to offer new insights into Pan-Islamism more broadly. In doing so, it addresses the following question: how did Aceh articulate a pre-colonial, proto-Pan-Islamic orientation that informed the sultanate's political identity, structured its responses to European expansion, and shaped its religious culture over subsequent centuries? The prefix *proto-* is used here to denote early or precursor forms of Islamic universalism that predate, yet anticipate, key aspects of the fully articulated nineteenth-century ideology known as Pan-Islamism. By "proto–Pan-Islamism", this study refers to a locally grounded yet transregionally connected Islamic consciousness, emphasizing Aceh's self-ascribed role as a guardian of Islam in Southeast Asia, the unity of the *ummah*, and resistance to external domination.

[13] Cemil Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World: A Global Intellectual History* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2017).

## B. Cultural Identity, Pan-Islamism, and Its Signification

Although Pan-Islamism is often understood as an ideology, it can also function as a form of identity. Stuart Hall views identity as a process of becoming, shaped through positioning within practices of representation. According to Hall (1932-2014), there are two interrelated approaches to understanding cultural identity. The first is an essentialist perspective, which defines identity as "a collective or true self hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed 'selves' which a people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common".[14] The second approach emphasizes identity as a matter of both 'becoming' and 'being', highlighting its dynamic and processual nature.[15] Hall's framework suggests that cultural identity emerges within collective contexts of shared practices and historical resources. In other words, identity is a form of social consciousness constructed by individuals and communities through experiences across time and space. These elements of culture, communalities, practices, and historical resources, are always mediated through acts of representation. Within these representational practices, shared cultural elements are actively positioned, negotiated, and contested. Hall refers to this ongoing negotiation as the process of being and becoming. Consequently, he argues that the essentialist conception of identity is insufficient, because cultural identity is not fixed or permanent but is continually reshaped through social interaction and historical processes.

In the process of *being*, cultural identity may find its grounding in the past, while in the process of *becoming*, it is subject to continual change. Hall attributes this fluidity to the demands of representation. Emphasizing representational practices, he argues that identity is not a matter of uncovering a "true self" or tracing one's roots; rather, it involves questioning "what we might become, how we have been represented, and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves."[16] Identity, in this sense, is constructed through engagement with historical resources, language, and culture, encompassing both *being* and *becoming*.[17] Because

[14] Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora", in *Identity: Community, Culture, and Difference*, ed. by J Rutherford (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), p. 225; "Introduction: Who Needs Identity?" in *Questions Of Cultural Identity*, ed. by Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay (London: Sage Publications, 1996), pp. 4-5

[15] Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora, p. 225.

[16] Hall, "Introduction: Who Needs Identity?", p. 4.

[17] *Ibid.*

representation inherently involves negotiation, power dynamics, and positioning relative to difference, subjects must actively maintain and assert their positions within these processes. Accordingly, the process of being and becoming entails continuous work of positioning and negotiation, rendering identity not as fixed or essentialist, but as strategic, relational, and contextually situated.[18] Hall further stresses that cultural identities are points of identification created within historical and cultural discourses, rather than fixed essences. They are inherently unstable, always positioned, and therefore subject to political negotiation, with no guarantee of grounding in a transcendental or unproblematic "law of origin".[19]

In line with the foregoing discussion, Hall further emphasizes that the processes of being and becoming involve the positioning and negotiation of individual or collective interests within representational practices. Identity, therefore, can be understood as a strategic tool deployed in situations of conflict, allowing groups to mobilise power to protect or advance their interests. In this sense, Pan-Islamism functioned as a form of cultural identity throughout Acehnese history, serving as a strategy for collective representation and self-positioning. Following Hall's framework, Pan-Islamist ideas, such as the articulation of an authentic Islamic identity and the call for the unity of the Muslim world, can be seen as resonating with the postcolonial understanding of identity as a process of becoming, shaping both religious self-conception and cultural character. The term "Pan-Islam" was first introduced by Orientalist scholars, with two classical accounts often cited as foundational: Snouck Hurgronje's *Mekka in the Latter Part of the Nineteenth Century*[20] and G. Wyman Bury's *Pan-Islam*. These works, written as reports on the Pan-Islamic movement in Mecca and other regions under Ottoman authority, were produced by imperial advisors and reflect the perspectives and strategic interests of colonial powers. As such, they have exerted a profound influence on subsequent scholarship on Pan-Islamism. However, the imperialist lens through which these accounts were written has been critically interrogated by postcolonial scholarship, revealing how much of the early literature on Pan-Islamism is shaped by contested ideological assumptions. Consequently, Pan-Islamism remains a deeply

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

[19] Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora", p. 226.

[20] Snouck Hurgronje, *Mekka in Latter Part of 19th Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

debated and controversial topic within Islamic studies.[21] Commenting on the given conceptualisation of Pan-Islamism, Lee argues:

> "An examination of the literature concerning Pan-Islamism reveals that there have always been conflicting and even contradictory notions about the origins and character of the movement. The reasons for this confusion seem to lie in the difficulties of language and the methods of study. Too many writers on diplomacy and on Near Eastern and Asiatic topics have had no firsthand knowledge of sources and little appreciation of the Oriental point of view. On the other hand, while orientalists have corrected many errors of perspective and have laid down an adequate theoretical background for studying Pan-Islamism, few have been interested in examining critically the actual facts and immediate circumstances involved."[22]

Hence, it is evident that there has been little consensus regarding the concept of Pan-Islam. Historically, the term was first studied and coined by Orientalist scholars during the nineteenth century,[23] a period marked by intense conflict and mutual hostility between imperial powers and colonized peoples. The primary purpose of introducing the term was to categorize and analyze those Muslim groups who resisted imperial agendas and who advocated for the unity of the Muslim community, both geographically[24] and spiritually,[25] under the symbolic authority of the caliphate. Several definitions of Pan-Islamism have been proposed, and although scholarly disagreements persist, there is general agreement that the term is closely associated with Sultan Abdul Ḥamīd II (1876–1909), who sought to unify Muslims under the Ottoman caliphate in opposition to Western powers. While Abdul Ḥamīd is often regarded as the political architect or "founding father" of Pan-Islamism, figures such as Muḥammad Abduh and Jamal al-Dīn al-Afghānī are also recognized as key propagators of Pan-Islamic ideas and concepts.[26] The character of Pan-Islamism itself, however, developed in response to broader social and

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[21] See Bury, *Pan-Islam*; Keddie, "Pan-Islam As Proto-Nationalism."; Lee, "The Origins of Pan-Islamism".

[22] Lee, "The Origins of Pan-Islamism", p. 278.

[23] Bury, *Pan-Islam*; Keddie, "Pan-Islam As Proto-Nationalism"; Lee, "The Origins of Pan-Islamism".

[24] see the calling of Islamic unity by Abdul Hamid, who was the last caliph of Ottoman to save the caliphate of Ottoman.

[25] Mental Pan-Islamism is the idea of submission to the caliph based on religious tie, which is called as spiritual caliphate.

[26] For Further Reading, See Lee, "The Origins of Pan-Islamism".

imperial contexts. As Cemil Aydın observes, early forms of Pan-Islamism prior to the twentieth century exhibited a cosmopolitan orientation, whereas in the twentieth century the movement increasingly assumed an oppositional stance, focused on resisting and responding to Western imperialist pressures. Educated Muslim publics ended up embracing and defending both the imperial and pan-Islamic cosmopolitanism at the same time until WWI, partly to balance and tame one with the other. It was only in the early 20th century that these two visions of cosmopolitanism began to be seen in contradiction, leading to political choice of creating homogeneous sovereign national states that denied both forms of cosmopolitanism in the 20th century.[27]

By the end of the imperialist era and the rise of modern democratic systems, Pan-Islamic movements were often characterized as orthodox, fundamentalist, or radical. In the Acehnese context, however, Pan-Islamism refers to a long-standing Islamic consciousness that developed over centuries, shaped by both cosmopolitan and anti-imperialist impulses. As Cemil Aydın observes, Acehnese Pan-Islamism emerged from a diverse, cosmopolitan milieu incorporating Ottoman, Mughal, Persian, European, and Arab influences and encompassing people from different religious communities. This cosmopolitan orientation reflects the rich cultural diversity of the Acehnese sultanate, which nonetheless sought to consolidate the region under an Islamic framework, producing what Aydın terms a cosmopolitical Pan-Islamism: a shared yet heterogeneous "Islamicate" culture spread across the Muslim world. At the same time, an anti-Western variant of Pan-Islamism arose in response to imperialist threats, reflecting a more exclusivist stance. The term "Acehnese Pan-Islamism", as used here, captures this dual character: a shared Islamic consciousness and political ideal in which local cultural differences were transformed into markers of collective identity rather than sources of division. Scholars generally agree that Pan-Islamism signifies Muslim unity and resistance to colonialism, and studies of Aceh have highlighted the sultans' efforts to consolidate Southeast Asian Islamic power and resist imperial encroachment. Yet the distinct, multifaceted nature of Aceh's Pan-Islamism, its cosmopolitan inclusivity alongside its anti-imperialist exclusivity, has received relatively little attention. Drawing on historical analysis, this study seeks to address both dimensions, providing a balanced assessment of how Aceh articulated a form of Pan-Islamism that was simultaneously local, transregional, and strategically responsive to its

[27] Cemil Aydin, "Modern Muslim Cosmopolitanism", pp. 113-46;

social and imperial context.

## C. The Construction of Proto-Pan-Islamism in Aceh Sultanate

Pan-Islamism has functioned as a form of cultural identity, shaping Acehnese processes of being and becoming. In the Acehnese context, it reflects the sultanate's positioning within a broader global consciousness and its engagement with the movement for Muslim unity and the symbolic re-establishment of the caliphate, which emerged during the waning years of Ottoman power. Although much research has examined the rise of Pan-Islamism more broadly,[28] few studies have explored the specific articulation of Acehnese Pan-Islamism and its role in constructing Acehnese cultural identity. The development of Acehnese Pan-Islamism can be traced across four phases, of which the first three are the focus of this study. In the first phase, it accommodated diverse Muslim ethnic groups and established Aceh as a cosmopolitan centre of Islam during the Islamization of Southeast Asia, serving as a *da'wah* hub, protector of the Malay world, and key link between Mecca and the region. The second phase, between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, marked the golden age of Acehnese Pan-Islamism, with the sultanate functioning as the "veranda of Mecca", a vassal of the Ottoman Empire, and a protector of Southeast Asian Islam under the guidance of the *Sharīf* of Mecca and the Ottoman caliphate. The third phase occurred during periods of conflict, when Pan-Islamism was mobilized to resist Dutch colonization, with local culture employed as a tool of resistance by figures such as Tgk Chiek Pante Kulu and Syeich Saman. The fourth phase, during the era of Indonesian independence, Acehnese Pan-Islamism was characterized by resistance to nationalism, concerns about partial interpretations of Islam, and demands for the implementation of Sharī'a. This study seeks to elucidate these phases and their defining characteristics, highlighting the dynamic and historically grounded nature of Acehnese Pan-Islamism.

For the Acehnese, the identity of Pan-Islamism functions as both "being" and "becoming", signifying a political ideology, a cultural ethos, and transregional or trans-umma solidarity. I use the term "Proto-Pan-Islamism" to emphasize the enduring relevance of the Acehnese sultanate and its people, who have consistently maintained a strong position for Islam in Southeast Asia, even though their articulation of Pan-Islamism

[28] Bury, *Pan-Islam*; Keddie, "Pan-Islam as Proto-Nationalism"; Lee, "The Origins of Pan-Islamism".

predates the Western-introduced versions that emerged in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This conception closely reflects the notion of Pan-Islamism advanced by Cemil Aydın, who distinguishes between cosmopolitan Pan-Islamism and anti-Western Pan-Islamism. While Aydın's conceptualization does not fully capture the Acehnese experience, the second phase of Acehnese Pan-Islamism largely corresponds to his idea of cosmopolitan Pan-Islamism, and the third phase exemplifies anti-Western Pan-Islamism. The first and fourth phases, however, represent distinct expressions of Pan-Islamic consciousness, which are the primary focus of this article.

### *1. Early phase: Cosmopolitan Pan-Islamism (8-16 CE)*

The early history of Aceh began during and before the Sultanates of Pasai (13th–15th centuries) and Pereulak (9th–13th centuries).[29] Reid suggests that the formative period of Aceh occurred before the reign of Sultan Ali Mughayat Syah (1514–1530), who unified several smaller sultanates into the Acehnese sultanate.[30] Several studies have noted that Islam was a central element in the construction of Acehnese identity during this period. In this phase, Pan-Islamism was expressed through Aceh's role in advancing the mission of Islamization by positioning itself as a regional centre. Aceh became an intermediary hub connecting the spiritual and scholarly centres of Mecca, the Sufi, literary, and philosophical centres of Persia, and the artistic and literary centres of the Mughal Empire, linking the "*negeri di bawah angin*" (*countries below the wind*) with the "*negeri-negeri di atas angin*" (*countries above the wind*).[31]

It is important to note that Aceh was the first region in Southeast Asia to encounter Islam, beginning in the early eighth century.[32] Local

[29] Muhammad Gade Ismail, *Pasai dalam Perjalanan Sejarah: Abad ke-13 sampai Awal Abad ke-16* (Jakarta: Proyek Inventarisasi dan Dokumentasi Sejarah Nasional, Direktorat Sejarah dan Nilai Tradisional, Direktorat Jenderal Kebudayaan, Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1993).

[30] Anthony Reid, "Introduction", in *Verandah of Violence: The Historical Background of the Aceh Problem*, ed. by Anthony Reid (Singapore, Seattle: Singapore University Press, University of Washington Press, 2006), p. 10.

[31] See Michael Francis Laffan, *Islamic Nationhood and Colonial Indonesia: The Umma Below the Winds* (London And New York: Routledge, 2003); Saifuddin Dhuhri, "Aceh Serambi Mekkah (Studi tentang Peran Ibadah Haji dalam Pengembangan Peradaban Aceh)", *Jurnal Ilmiah Islam Futura*, vol. 16, no. 2 (2017), pp. 188-95.

[32] This date is strongly debated among historians. I use local references such as Ali Hasjmy, Hamka and some other local historians. According to Latif citing Hazard "The first Muslims to visit Aceh were presumably seventh - century Arab traders who

communities, together with Arab, Persian, Mughal, and other Muslim preachers, contributed to the formation of Acehnese society through the process of Islamization. Islam became integral to Acehnese culture, serving as the backbone of its civilization. Prior to the arrival of Islam, Acehnese society was characterized by a syncretic mix of Hinduism, Buddhism, and indigenous beliefs, including a strong veneration of spirits inhabiting trees, stones, and other objects. The literature indicates that Islam was largely accepted by the local population in a peaceful and accommodating manner. Researchers such as Reid,[33] Johns,[34] and Hasjmy (1914-1998) note that Islam was introduced through trade, Sufi artistic performances, and other cultural media. This process is further highlighted by Ali Hasjmy, who cites Syeikh Ishak Makarani Al Pasy in *Iẓẖār al-Ḥaqq* (*The Emergence of Truth*):

> "In that time, Peureulak had long established a Hindu-Buddhist kingdom. The population embraced Hindu, Buddha and animism. Then, in the year 173 Hijriyah (800 CE) a group of preachers; about 100 *dā'i*/proselytizers consisted of Arabians, Persians, and Gujaratians, left the gulf Kambey (Gujarat) by a ship which was led by the skipper of caliph headed to the gulf of Peureulak (a part of Aceh) at Sumatra Island. During that time, they gradually introduced Islam to the population and the king. During the next two centuries, the number of Muslims had become majority in some regions, such as Peurelak and Samudra Pasai. They established Islamic kingdoms where Islamic teaching and religious practice can be managed easily."[35]

Although Marco Polo and Van Leur disagree, Reid, Salim, and the many local historians are of the view that the Islamization of Aceh caused great change and led to the development of Southeast Asia. Reid argues that Islamization changed the local people, so they became more civilized.

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stopped at Sumatra en route to China. Their successors were merchants from Gujrat who dealt in pepper, and who had by 1100 established the unique combination of commerce and proselytizing which characterized the spread of Islam in Indonesia". See Hamdiah A. Latif, "Persatuan Ulama Seluruh Aceh (PUSA): Its Contributions to Educational Reforms in Aceh", Master Thesis (Montreal: Institute of Islamic Studies Mcgill University, 1992), p. 8.

[33] Anthony Reid, *Charting the Shape of Early Modern Southeast Asia* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2004).

[34] Anthony Johns, "Islamization in Southeast Asia: Reflection and Reconsiderations with Special Reference to the Role of Sufism", *Southeast Asian Studies*, vol. 31, no. 1 (1993), pp. 43-61.

[35] See Ali Hasymy, *Bunga Rampai Revolusi dari Tanah Aceh* (Jakarta: Cv. Bulan Bintang, 1978), p. 60.

Reid identified several factors which contributed to their 'improved' civilization, such as the development of their economy through the expansion of trade and building international ports, the improvement of their well-being by embracing Islam, and political expansion due to wider connections with many Muslim cosmopolis centers. By the spirit of being Muslim cosmopolitanism, Aceh was seen as the center from which Islam spread throughout Southeast Asia. Although there were many *da'wa* groups spreading across southeast Asia, Aceh was the axis for teaching and learning about Islam and became a part of the global Islamic world, representing Islamic power in the region. According to Riddell, Aceh had played its role "as the catalyst for much of the Islamization, which was taking place throughout the archipelago". At the same time, the Acehnese made the work of Islamizing the regions their greatest priority, which had become the collective interest of the people.

Muhammad Taqiyuddin describes the way that the Acehnese spread Islam. Based on his research, he explains that there was the great amount of Acehnese *Ulema* made a commitment to spread Islam as their priority in their life. In doing so, they made gravestones, which they carried with them while they travelled, calling for non-Muslims to embrace Islam. The stones indicate their origin and commitment to Islam. On the stones their identity and commitment are written. Muhammad Taqiyuddin adds that the Islamization of Southeast Asia was an Acehnese collective interest, which became the background for their existence.[36] As a result, Islam became the new identity that pervaded Acehnese cultural practice, rituals and other interests.

The second role of Islam in Aceh was to encourage the adaptation of local rituals into Islamic values. Prior to conversion, the Acehnese practiced a variety of rituals, many of which were retained and preserved as collective cultural markers. One animism-related ritual, *Seuneujoh*, reflects the belief that ancestors' souls remain connected to the lives of their descendants, visiting them on the seventh, tenth, fourteenth, forty-fourth, and hundredth day after death. Another ritual, *Peusijuek*, is based on the belief that human life is closely connected to trees and objects; it involves symbolically transferring strength from these natural elements to the human body to promote health and vitality. The Acehnese have

[36] Muhammad-Taqiyuddin, *Daulah Shalihiyah di Sumatera: Kearah Penyusunan Kerangka Baru Historiography Samudera Pasai*, (Lhokseumawe: CISAH, 2011). See Also Othman Mohammad Yatim, *Batu Aceh: Early Islamic Gravestones in Peninsular Malaysia* (Kuala Lumpur: Museum Association Of Malaysia, 1988).

historically regarded their role in spreading Islam and transforming parts of Southeast Asia into Islamic societies with pride, viewing it as part of their collective memory. Salim argues that this pride has become a defining feature of Acehnese identity and later motivated resistance to foreign intervention. For example, he notes that the PUSA (*Persatuan Ulama Aceh*/All-united Aceh Ulama) movement, which opposed the central government of Indonesia, was also inspired by this sense of historical pride.[37]

The literature on early Acehnese history indicates that Pan-Islamism played three significant roles in shaping Acehnese identity. First, Pan-Islamist thought inspired the Acehnese to prioritize the spread of Islam throughout Southeast Asia. Second, it guided the development of Acehnese civilization and cultural practices, aligning them with broader Malay Islamic norms. Finally, Pan-Islamism emerged as a central cultural element that would motivate future social and political movements within Acehnese society. An analysis of this early period clearly shows that Pan-Islamism became a dominant feature of Acehnese identity.

### *2. Mecca-Ottoman Telecommunications Control (16th to 18th Century)*

The second phase of proto-Pan-Islamism in Aceh, spanning the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, is characterized by its trans-umma nature. This phase refers to connections between Muslim communities both in the *Negeri-Negeri di Bawah Angin* and the *Negeri-Negeri di Atas Angin*. Michael Laffan, in *Islamic Nationhood and Colonial Indonesia: The Umma below the Winds*, frames Pan-Islamism as a nineteenth-century revivalist movement.[38] Under the subsection "Revivalism, Pan-Islam, and a Modern Cairo," he conceptualizes the *ummah* as a politically mobilized Muslim community. In dialogue with Laffan's framework, Acehnese proto-Pan-Islamism emerges earlier than the Ottoman articulation of Pan-Islamism. In this study, the term *ummah* is employed not in Laffan's modern-discursive sense—shaped by nineteenth and early twentieth-century colonial contexts—but in a historically situated, pre-modern sense, denoting a transregional Islamic imaginary of moral, religious, and political belonging that informed Acehnese self-understanding long before the consolidation of modern Pan-Islamism. While Laffan's analysis

[37] Arskal Salim, "Shari'a from 'Below' in Aceh (1930s-1960s): Islamic Identity and the Right to Self-Determination with Comparative Reference to the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (Milf)", *Indonesia and the Malay World*, vol. 32, no. 92 (2004), p. 81.

[38] See Michael Laffan, *Islamic Nationhood and Colonial Indonesia*, pp. 114-31

is crucial for understanding the modern reconfiguration of the *ummah* under colonial conditions, this study contends that Aceh articulated an earlier form of Islamic solidarity that differed in structure, scale, and expression, yet later became intelligible within the discourse of modern Pan-Islamism.

It played its role as telecommunications control to the centres of Islam. It was the peak of Acehnese Pan-Islamism, when was a political and imperial centre that marked by the attempt to make a strong relationship between Aceh and Ottoman Empire. Riddell elucidated the development of Acehnese identity from the outset until the peak of Acehnese civilisation. According to Riddell, the formation of Acehnese identity developed in two different periods. The first phase was "Malay-focused political identity".[39] Accordingly, Malays believe that Samudera Pasai was their ancestor. This first phase can be seen as Acehnese Pan-Islam ideas was in play to unite all-Muslim community under the banner of Malay identity. Aly Mughayat Shah was notably often regarded as the father of the Acehnese Sultanate for his pivotal role in uniting the small, fragmented polities of northern Sumatra into a single, stronger kingdom capable of defending the ummah in Southeast Asia. His project of political consolidation was not merely territorial; it was framed as a religious duty to safeguard Muslim communities. Later, his project has safeguarded particularly the Portuguese who had begun asserting control over key maritime routes.[40] This early vision of unity laid the ideological and political foundation later expanded by Sultan Iskandar Muda, who transformed Aceh into the most powerful Islamic polity in the region. Building upon Aly Mughayat Shah's legacy, Iskandar Muda strengthened centralized authority, enhanced military capacity, and deepened regional alliances, all with the aim of protecting the ummah and resisting Portuguese domination in the strategic waters of the Indian Ocean.

Later, the Acehnese came to view a Malay identity as insufficient to effectively resist Portuguese imperialism in Southeast Asia, such as in Malacca (modern-day Malaysia). In response, the Acehnese, led by their sultans, sought support and protection from the Ottoman Sultan, marking the beginning of a new phase of Pan-Islamism.[41] During this period,

[39] Riddell, "Aceh in The Sixtenth and Seventeenth Centuries", p. 47.

[40] Amirul Hadi, "Aceh and the Portugese: A Study of the Struggle of Islam in South East Asia", Master Thesis (Montreal: Mcgill University, 1992), pp. 54, 115.

[41] Ermy Azziaty Rozali, "Aceh-Ottoman Relation in Bustan Al-Salatin", *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, vol. 5, no. 29 (2014), pp. 93-100.

a new Acehnese identity was constructed, strongly oriented around Ottoman Pan-Islamic authority, which acted as a protector of Islamic territories in the region against external threats. Riddell further highlights three key roles of Aceh in this era: first, as a "telecommunications control point for inhabitants of the Indonesian archipelago to contact Arabia (Mecca, Medina, and Cairo)"; second, as "a conduit for [the] dynamic process of change taking place throughout the archipelago"; and third, as the centre for Islamization of the region.[42] This phase of Acehnese Pan-Islamism significantly shaped a historical bloc that continues to influence Acehnese collective memory and contemporary applications of Shari`a. Its momentum and maturity were driven by the social and political complexities of Acehnese society at the time.[43] Reid argues that Acehnese identity during this era comprised the sultanate, a strong Islamic commitment (reflecting the spirit of Pan-Islamism), language and *adat*, and pride in Aceh's self-reliance.[44] At the heart of Islamic teaching and Acehnese culture, Aceh earned the title *Serambi Mekkah (The Gate to The Holy Land*). Nūr ad-Dīn ar-Ranīrī (d. 1658), one of the leading Acehnese scholars, emphasized in *Bustān al-Salāṭīn* (*The Garden of Sultan*) that the Acehnese sultanate served as a gateway to Mecca due to its role in spreading and maintaining Islamic teachings.

During the sultanate time, the Acehnese played an important role in controlling the Malacca Straits as it was the main international trade route to connect Europe and the American continent with the opening of the Suez Canal. The Dutch company who represented the Dutch kingdom was not the Acehnese sultanate's only rival in controlling the Melaka Straits. Long before the Dutch, the Portuguese had also made numerous attempts to compete with the Acehnese to control the Straits. In the early 19th century, the Acehnese faced Portuguese invasion of the Acehnese sultanate. The presence of Portuguese in the region, however, did not significantly weaken Acehnese identity, compared to Dutch intervention. An important note on Acehnese contribution to the birth of Pan-Islam in the heart of Ottoman cosmopolitan has been recorded by Cemil Aydin, he states:

"Just when the Aceh delegation was requesting aid from Istanbul, a

[42] Riddell, "Aceh in the Sixtenth and Seventeenth Centuries", p. 48.

[43] Arskal Salim, "Shari'a from 'Below' in Aceh (1930s-1960s); Ito Takeshi, "The World of the Adat Aceh: A Historical Study of the Sultanate of Aceh", PhD. Dissertation (Canberra: Australian National University, 1984).

[44] Anthony Reid, "Introduction", p. 12.

> Protestant black intellectual in West Africa, Edward Blyden, wrote an influential article titled Muhammedanism and the Negro Race' (1875). In it, he discusses the future destiny of Muslims and black-skinned people all over the world, indicating the early seeds of a geopolitical vision that would soon turn into a debate on pan-Islamism and pan-Africanism. In other words, just when Sultan Abdul Aziz was claiming to have religious ties to Aceh Muslims via arguments for spiritual caliphate, Edward Blyden was seeing this connection as both racial and geopolitical, using the term Muhammedanism in a way comparable to the Negro race."[45]

The Acehnese appeal for Ottoman support to protect Southeast Asian Muslims had a significant influence on the emergence of broader Pan-Islamic consciousness, including connections to Pan-Black Africa, as Pan-Islam served as both an ideological force and a central element of Acehnese culture.[46] The Acehnese Islamic identity matured and gained acceptance among diverse regional groups during the reign of Sultan Iskandar Muda in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Historical accounts indicate that the Aceh and Kashgar debates sparked Ottoman interest in Muslims across the world, helping to foster a trans-state Muslim identity. The Young Ottoman intellectual Namik Kemal, for instance, noted with a hint of irony that during the 1870s the Ottoman public began to express solidarity with Muslims in Western China, whom they had largely ignored two decades earlier.[47] Moreover, just five years after the Aceh delegation's visit to Istanbul, the Ottoman–Russian War of 1877–1878 saw a global mobilization of Muslim and Christian identities, in which religious distinctions increasingly overshadowed imperial strategic considerations.[48] These developments illustrate how Acehnese Pan-Islamism not only shaped local identity and culture but also contributed to the formation of a transregional Muslim consciousness that resonated far beyond Southeast Asia.

The Acehnese role as protector of Southeast Asian Islam has been explored by scholars such as Mehmet Ozay, in *Thinking Aceh as a Maritime Power*,[49] and Peter Riddell, in *Transferring a Tradition: 'Abd al-Ra'īf*

[45] Aydin, "Modern Muslim Cosmopolitanism", pp. 113-46; "Imperial Paradoxes: A Caliphate for Subaltern Muslims", *Reorient*, vol. 1, no. 2 (2016), p. 178.

[46] See Ali Hasymy, *Kebudayaan Aceh dalam Sejarah* (Jakarta: Beuna, 1983); Snouck Hurgronje, *The Acehnese*, vol. 2, trans. by A. W. S. O'sullivan (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1906).

[47] Aydin, "Modern Muslim Cosmopolitanism", p. 140.

[48] *Ibid*., p. 141.

[49] Mehmet Ozay, "Thinking Aceh as a Maritime Power", in *Port, Maritime and Hinterland Development in Southeast Asia*, ed. by Muhammad Subhan, Sabariah Yaakub,

*al-Sinkili's Rendering into Malay of the Jalalayn Commentary*[50] and *Malay Court Religion, Culture and Language: Interpreting the Qur'ān in 17th Century Aceh*.[51] Based on these studies, Acehnese Pan-Islamism can be understood for four main reasons: first, Aceh served as the centre of *da'wa* in Southeast Asia during its early phase; second, it acted as protector of Southeast Asian Muslims; third, the sultanate became the focal point of resistance against imperialist powers; and finally, in the present era, it underpins the application of Shari'a. The nineteenth century also saw prominent Acehnese figures, such as Habib Abdurrahman al-Zahir, articulate Islamic solidarity within explicitly colonial contexts. As a religious intellectual and political intermediary, al-Zahir connected Acehnese resistance to broader Ottoman and Hijazi networks, exemplifying a more modern form of Pan-Islamic activism. His work, however, should be seen not as the origin of Acehnese Islamic universalism, but as a later articulation shaped by colonial modernity, drawing upon earlier Acehnese imaginaries of Islamic unity cultivated since the formation of the sultanate, now reframed in the political language of nineteenth-century imperial confrontation.[52]

### *3. Anti-Imperialist Pan-Islamism (1873–1942)*

Anti-imperialist Pan-Islamism emerged as the response to the invasion of European imperialists. Baiquni argues that the shift from cosmopolitan Aceh into anti-colonialist was motivated due to the abandonment and racialization of Acehnese people in one aspect, and the betrayal of European powers, including Ottoman against Acehnese Sultanate.[53] The shift of the Islamic spirit of universality and resistance against imperialist power has thus been a prominent Acehnese force that sustains and maintains Muslims in the Southeast Asian region. For example, during Dutch rule, the Acehnese fought against the Dutch army, motivated by the holy war (*Perang Sabil*), which is one of Pan-

and Ahmad Bashawir Abdul Ghani (Sintok: Universiti Utara Malaysia, 2014), pp. 21-43.

[50] Peter G. Riddel, *Transferring A Tradition: 'Abd Al-Ra'uf Al-Singkili's Rendering into Malay of The Jalalayn Commentary* (Berkeley: Center for South and Southeast Asia Studies, 1990)

[51] Peter G. Riddel, *Malay Court Religion, Culture and Language: Interpreting the Qur'an in 17th Century Aceh* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2017).

[52] Seema Alavi, *Muslim Cosmopolitanism in The Age of Empire* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2015), pp. 93-168.

[53] Baiquni Hasbi, "Holy War and the International Order: Rethinking Acehnese Perang Sabil in the Late 19th Century", *Indonesia and The Malay World*, vol. 52, no. 153 (2024), pp. 199-220.

Islamic teachings.[54] During Dutch colonisation, which began in the late 1800s, Aceh was a centre of resistance against Dutch colonial rule. The Acehnese resisted Dutch forces with open fighting and guerrilla warfare. According to Bakker, the first phase of the Aceh War (1873–1893) had three phases. The first phase included "The First Aceh Expedition of 1873, The Second Aceh Expedition of 1873–74, and the 'Concentrated Line' of 1883–93". The second phase of the Aceh War was from 1894 to 1903, and the last was from 1904 to 1913.[55]

The first phase of the war involved open fighting and the bombardment of the vital infrastructure of the Acehnese sultanate, such as the Baiturrahman Mosque, the palace, and the Acehnese capital, Banda Aceh. During this period, the Dutch sent its largest armed forces, which resulted in the Dutch successfully conquering the Acehnese sultanate. Nonetheless, they lost the battle in the first expedition; many men were killed, including General Kohler, in the Bairurahman Mosque on 25 April, 1873.[56] According to Teeuwen and Doorn, Acehnese rifles and guns were modern as a result of trade relations between Aceh, Penang and Singapore.[57] Kreike argues that Dutch occupation was accompanied by "the systematic destruction of the homes, storage facilities, orchards, plantations, fields, food stores and villages of Greater Aceh society as a whole".[58] Both of Bakker and Teeuwen and Doorn reported that the main objective of the first phase of the war was to occupy the Acehnese sultanate's palace and environments.

In the second phase of Acehnese resistance, the nature of warfare changed dramatically, with guerrilla tactics becoming dominant. This period coincided with Dutch expansion into territories beyond the sultanate's core areas. Key events included the defection of Teuku Umar and the Gayo genocide. Teuku Umar, one of the most prominent Acehnese aristocrats, initially allied with the Dutch but later turned against them, leading approximately 1,000 fighters and bringing hundreds of modern weapons. His defection inflicted significant losses on the Dutch.

[54] Like Jihad, one of the most outstanding cultural media to provoke this war was through Hikayat Prang Sabie.

[55] Bakker, "The Aceh War", p. 58.

[56] *Ibid.*

[57] D. Teeuwen and H. Doorn, "The Aceh War 1873-1913", *Indonesia Dutchcolonialheritage.Nl*, 2006, p. 7.

[58] Emmanuel Krieke, "Genocide in the Kampongs? Dutch Nineteenth Century Colonial Warfare in Aceh, Sumatra", *Journal of Genocide Research*, vol. 14, no. 3–4 (2012), pp. 297-315.

Simultaneously, Dutch forces carried out the Gayo genocide, killing around 3,000 Gayo and Alas people, most of whom were women and children.[59] In the final stage of this period, the Ulee Balang resistance had weakened, yet the Dutch still faced opposition from religious reformers, such as Tgk Chik di Tiro and other Dayah leaders. Summarizing these three phases, Kreike notes that "The Aceh wars lasted from the early 1870s to the early 1900s and small-scale Aceh resistance continued into the 1930s. Although the Dutch army re-occupied most of Indonesia after the war, it failed to regain control over Aceh". Kreike also emphasizes that genocide was a common method employed by the Dutch to occupy Aceh.[60] Reid identifies a fourth phase, from 1913 to 1942. Although 1913 is often cited as the year the Dutch fully conquered Aceh, Reid argues that resistance persisted, now led primarily by the Ulama. Two significant developments that marked this period were this period were the strategic use of cultural resources for anti-Dutch propaganda and the emergence of the Persatuan Ulama Seluruh Aceh (PUSA; All-Aceh Association of Ulama). Remarkably, Acehnese Ulama employed cultural and religious resources, such as *hikayat* and other forms of Acehnese art, to inspire collective resistance and maintain Acehnese identity against colonial domination.[61]

## D. Conclusion

Aceh articulated a proto-Pan-Islamic orientation long before Pan-Islamism emerged as a nineteenth-century political discourse. Rooted in the universalist teachings of Islam, particularly the unity of the ummah, transregional religious obligations, and collective responsibility, Acehnese proto Pan-Islamism developed through sustained engagement with major Islamic centres such as Mecca, Persia, the Mughal world, and Istanbul. Across its cosmopolitan, trans-umma, and anti-imperialist phases, Islamic universalism in Aceh functioned not merely as theology but as a lived political and cultural practice, shaping state formation, religious authority, and collective identity. Drawing on Stuart Hall's notion of identity as a process of being and becoming, Acehnese Islamic identity was continuously re-positioned in response to shifting regional and global

[59] Bakker, "The Aceh War", p. 59.

[60] Emmanuel Krieke, "Genocide in the Kampongs?.

[61] Anthony Reid, "Colonial Transformation: A Bitter Legacy", in *Verandah of Violence: The Historical Background of the Aceh Problem*, ed. by Anthony Reid (Singapore, Seattle: Singapore University Press, University of Washington Press, 2006), pp. 104-5.

conditions while maintaining a coherent commitment to Islamic unity.

This study offers preliminary insights into how Acehnese proto-Pan-Islamism evolved through distinct historical phases, each reflecting a dynamic interplay of local, regional, and transregional forces. In its early phase, Aceh acted as a centre for Islamisation in Southeast Asia, linking local communities to Mecca, Persia, and the Mughal world while preserving pre-Islamic cultural practices such as Seuneujoh and Peusijuek within an Islamic framework. During the 16th to 18th centuries, Aceh's Pan-Islamism developed a trans-umma character, positioning the sultanate as both a regional hub of Islamic scholarship and a protector of Southeast Asian Muslims under the guidance of the Ottoman caliphate. This period saw Aceh serve as a conduit for religious and cultural exchange, a telecommunications point connecting the archipelago to Arabia, and a centre for the spread of Malay Islamic civilization. Later, under Dutch colonial expansion, Acehnese Pan-Islamism assumed an anti-imperialist dimension, mobilizing both aristocratic and religious elites, such as Teuku Umar, Tgk Chik di Tiro, and the Ulama of PUSA, through guerrilla resistance, cultural propaganda, and religious education. Across these phases, Pan-Islamism functioned as both a cultural and political identity, shaping Acehnese social cohesion, motivating resistance, and embedding a collective consciousness that informs contemporary applications of Shari'a. While these findings provide an initial framework for understanding Acehnese Pan-Islamism, they remain preliminary, and further detailed research is necessary to fully explore its complexities, regional interactions, and long-term influence on Southeast Asian Islamic history.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this long-standing universalist orientation intersected with emerging global discourses of Muslim solidarity, including those associated with Ottoman Pan-Islamism. Figures such as Habib Abdurrahman al-Zahir exemplify this articulation, as earlier Acehnese commitments to Islamic unity were reframed within new imperial and anti-colonial contexts without representing a radical break from the past. As Cemil Aydin and other scholars have emphasized, Pan-Islamism should be understood as historically contingent, shaped by pre-existing Islamic imaginaries rather than emerging solely from modern geopolitics. By tracing these continuities, this article repositions Aceh as an active site of Islamic universalism and transregional connectivity, challenging Eurocentric periodisation and reaffirming Southeast Asia's significance in the longue

durée of global Islamic history.

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