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Baba Davud: A Turkish scholar in Aceh

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Abstract

This paper introduces Shaikh Davud b. Ismail b. Mustafa Rumi (a.k.a. Baba Davud or Mustafa ar-Rumi), an Islamic scholar believed to have lived in Banda Aceh sometime between 1650 and 1750, to the larger Muslim world. This person is important for three reasons: (1) Baba Davud, who lived at the time of the Aceh Darussalam Sultanate (16th-17th Century), became a leading student and a religious caliph of Abdurrauf as-Singkili (a.k.a. Teungku Syiah Kuala), a well-known Acehnese religious scholar; (2) his *Risalah Masailal Muhtadi li Ikhwanil Muhtadi* has been taught at Islamic institutions in Aceh and around the Malay world; and (3) no scholarly works have been written about him, despite the striking fact that he and Syiah Kuala co-founded the Dayah Manyang Leupue institution, to which he subsequently became affiliated.

In order to analyze him as an Islamic scholar, I provide information on the development of the Islamic sciences and the existence of Islamic scholars among within Aceh's various sultanates. For this reason, the early period of Islam and the region's subsequent Islamization until the seventeenth century are considered significant. In this context, it is vital to emphasize the

Islamic scientific circles in the sultanate during the seventeenth century.

Introduction

This text discusses the life of the Turkish scholar known as Baba Davud or Mustafa ar-Rumi, whose grave is located in the provincial capital city of Banda Aceh. It also attempts to answer several questions, among them “Who is the scholar known as Baba Davud or Mustafa ar-Rumi?”, “How did he come to these lands?”, and “How did he obtain his education?” As was common in other pre-modern Southeast Asian societies, written culture was not a common practice in Aceh. Thus, even though Aceh has produced many scholars, today only very few of them are known in any detail.²

Some issues need to be clarified briefly before this scholar’s life and intellectual identity are discussed: the region in which he lived and the regional scholars’ role in the local society and the sultans’ court. These background topics are discussed below. The development of Muslim educational institutions and the status of foreign and domestic scholars in Aceh are also analyzed, with an emphasis on the relationship between scholars and rulers during Baba Davud’s presumed lifetime. Existing documents on his life and scholarly personality, as well as his works and information about his alleged offspring, are also put forward. Unfortunately, the lack of authentic primary sources and detailed information about existing sources is a serious obstacle. In addition, Ottoman-Aceh relations are also discussed due to Baba Davud’s Turkish origin. Given that this is first article written about Baba Davud, it is hoped that this work may encourage further studies about him.

Aceh: Doorway to Makkah

The fact that Islam spread to Southeast Asia from Aceh means that Aceh has more than just a geographical importance. Many

scholars who travelled throughout the region to spread Islam were educated in its Islamic educational institutions, which explains why it has been known as “Doorway to Makkah” for centuries.³ This reflects the sultanate’s importance in the subsequent Islamization of the region.⁴

Scholars have posited two theories about when Islam arrived in Aceh. Based on Marco Polo’s notes during his compulsory stop in Sumatra on the way back to Europe, western orientalist, especially Snouck Hurgronje, think that Islam reached Southeast Asia in the thirteenth century. According to local historians, however, Islam arrived as far back as the first Islamic century.⁵ As for how and through whom Islam reached the region, they ascribed this to Muslim merchants’ long-standing middle-man role in the Middle East-China trade and, later on, to the emergence of Sūfi movements in the Muslim world.⁶

Muslims came to the Malay Archipelago from the Middle East (Ḥaḍramawt, Oman, Iraq, and Iran); Baluchistan and Sind (Indo-Pak border regions); and Cambay, Gujarat, Coromandel, Malabar, Sri Lanka, and Bengal (Indian coastal regions). The first wave of Arab and Iranian Muslim merchants continued these travels during the eighth-twelfth centuries, and the second wave of Islamization occurred between the thirteenth and eighteenth centuries.⁷ Muslims first settled on Sumatra’s northern shore, the region known today as Aceh. Over time, the first Islamic sultanate arose from this Islamic community.⁸

The role of scholars in the Aceh Sultanate

As Islam spread throughout Southeast Asia through Aceh’s city states, the role of foreign-born Islamic scholars became noteworthy. Scholars and Islamic educational institutions played an important role in the life of Aceh’s first sultanate.⁹ Accepting the sultans’ personal invitations to come to his domain, these scholars

settled in Aceh and began laying the groundwork for the educational institutions that would shape the region's cultivation of knowledge.

During the various phases of Islamization, especially between 1550-1650, scholars coming from Egypt, Syria, Arabia, India, and Iran made vital contributions.¹⁰ Local scholars trained in Aceh also played an important role. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries featured Aceh's most important and best known scholars, namely Hamzah Fansurî, Shamsuddin Sumatranî, Nuruddin ar-Raniri, and Abdurrauf as-Singkili. Thus this period is considered the region's pinnacle of achievement as regards the understanding of Islam and the production of works in the Islamic sciences. Many other domestic and foreign scholars also spread Islam while travelling in Aceh and different regions of Southeast Asia.¹¹

Shaikh Abul Khair b. Shaikh Hajar, Shaikh Moḥammad Yamani, Shaikh Muhammad Jailani b. Hassan b. Muhammad Hamid ar-Raniri, and other Islamic scholars led Acehnese society in education, social, and political issues.¹² The rulers entrusted these above-name scholars with managerial duties in the palace and allowed them to help train the next generation of rulers. For example, the scholars named above contributed to the education of Iskandar Muda, whose reign (1607-1636) is considered the most glorious period in the Aceh Darussalam Sultanate.¹³ Shamsuddin Sumatranî, who dispensed religious guidance to the palace and served as the Shaikh'ul Islam, also participated in politics: he was appointed to meet and conduct negotiations with James Lancaster, a special envoy of Queen Elizabeth I, during the latter's official visit to Aceh in 1602.¹⁴

To understand the scholars' position in Aceh, it is useful to look at their situation in the region's other important states, such as Perlak, Samudra-Pasai, and the Aceh Darussalam Sultanate. The ruler of Perlak, founded by Mevlana Sayyid Sultan Abdulaziz Shah

(r. 840-846) and usually considered Aceh's first sultanate, invited scholars from Arabia, Iran, and Gujarat to take up residence in his realm. Due to the Islamic educational institutions that they subsequently set up, Perlak was able to play an important role in developing the Islamic sciences. Teungku Muhammad Amin founded Dayah Cotkala, an educational centre resembling a modern university, and implemented therein a multi-functional training program consisting of Islamic knowledge, history, geography, finance, agriculture, astronomy, and other courses. With the rulers' consent and support, graduates were sent to Makkah, Madinah, Baghdad, and Cairo to specialize in their chosen fields.¹⁵

A similar occurrence can be seen Samudra-Pasai, one of the region's most important sultanates and one that had a strong interest in scholarship and scholars. During the second half of the twelfth century, while Sultan al-Kamil sat on the throne, Mevlana Naina b. Naina al-Malabari and many other scholars came to Samudra. He gave them various positions at the palace and encouraged them to spread their knowledge of Islam wherever they could. He appointed al-Malabari commander of the army and gave Abdurrahman al-Pasi an executive position in the palace.¹⁶

Scholars advised the rulers on both religious and political matters. For example, Malik az-Zahir, the son of Malik us-Saleh, invited scholars from Makkah, Iran, and India to hold a major scientific debate;¹⁷ he also contributed to the spread of Islamic educational centres throughout the Malay Archipelago.¹⁸ Scholars also had a role in establishing the Aceh Darussalam sultanate. A group of soldiers led by Shaikh Abdullah Kan'an came to Indra Purpa, located near present-day Banda Aceh, and ultimately acted as the catalyst for the region's Islamization and the appearance of the sultanate led by Meurah Johan Shah (1205-1234).¹⁹ These extraordinary examples show the importance accorded to Islamic scholars and Islamic educational institutions by the rulers of Aceh's various sultanates.

A brief overview of the Aceh Darussalam Sultanate

The Perlak sultanate, which arose in the ninth century, was followed by the Beunua, Samudra-Pasai, Pedier (Pidie), Daya, Lingga, Lamuri, and other important sultanates.²⁰ Perlak survived into the sixteenth century. After the Portuguese captured Malacca in 1511, Ali Mughayat Syah combined the Lamuri and Dar'ul Kamal sultanates to form the Aceh Darussalam sultanate. He subsequently established a federation by uniting the region's various city states.²¹

In a short time, Shah implemented his plan to unify the region so that it could better defend itself against the Portuguese threat: "Ali Mughayat Syah (1514-1530) maintained an alliance against the Portuguese by consultation with many leaders from Aceh as well as with scholars. Pasai, Pedir, Aru and Daya sultanate took place within this alliance."²² While expanding his territory further in the fight against the Portuguese, he transformed the Aceh Darussalam sultanate into the region's most important Islamic state.²³ Hence, it was one of the leading five major Islamic states during the sixteenth century.²⁴ It officially ended in only 1903 after the Dutch captured its last ruler: Muhammad Davud (1874-1903).

With the early sixteenth-century arrival of European colonialism in Southeast Asia, led by the Portuguese, the existing small sultanates united in a religious, political, and economic struggle to defend themselves against this invasion.

Relations with the Turks

The roots of the Turkish-Acehnese relationship go back several centuries. Based upon the historical account known so far, it began by making "close relations with the Turks" one of the five basic tenants of the sultanate's foreign policy. This policy, which was initiated by Alaaddin Mughayat Shah, the founder of Aceh

Darussalam sultanate,²⁵ endured for centuries. The Ottoman empire was actively engaged in the region's anti-Portuguese struggle right from the outset, a period that coincided with the sultanate's early years. As a sign of this sultanate's strong Islamic faith, the caliphate of the Ottoman empire, the most powerful Islamic state of the time, was accepted in the sixteenth century; establishing relations against the Portuguese was thus a natural development.²⁶

Subsequent sultans abided by Shah's foreign policy undertakings as a reference and implemented similar policies. Although the Ottoman empire always regarded the requests of the sultanate's ambassadors positively, it appears that the desired help was not always forthcoming. In this context, the first serious Ottoman-Aceh Darussalam relationship began during the reign of Alauddin Riayat Syah al-Kahar (1537-1571). Al-Kahhar signed military and trade agreements with Süleyman the Magnificent through the Ottoman governor of Egypt. It is recorded that in exchange for future Ottoman support, the Aceh Darussalam sultanate granted its merchants privileges in Pasai, an extremely important trading centre.²⁷

The two parties also formed a political tie: the sultanate adopted the Ottoman flag as its own,²⁸ although its moon and star were replaced by a sword. Moreover, it appears that relations were established through the individual efforts of scholars and Turkish merchants. When all of these factors are taken into consideration, it is possible to say that the initial military relationship between the Ottomans and the Acehnese eventually expanded into the political, cultural, scientific, and religious realms. Ottoman military experts and craftsmen sent to Aceh were accommodated and subsequently settled down in Bayt al-Maqdis, located somewhere near the palace. A military academy, Bitai, was also established there and staffed, to an unknown degree, by Ottoman experts.²⁹

The presence of Turkish scholars in Aceh, along with their Arab and Iranian counterparts, also indicated the existence of close ties.³⁰ In addition to Europe's colonial presence during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, this relationship and arrival of Ottoman and Mongol (Mughal) scholars played an important role in the region's conversion to Islam.³¹ For instance, al-Firus al-Baghdadi, the founder of Dayah Tanoh Abee; Teungku Di Bitai, known as the Saint of Bitai;³² and Haji Ahmet Kasturi³³ are scholars whose names are still well-known today. Baba Davud's family came from the Ottoman empire's domain and settled in Aceh.

The Sultanate's socio-political structure

Acquiring an accurate insight into Baba Davud's environment and status requires us to look at Aceh's socio-political events and developments. During the first half of the seventeenth century, the sultanate enjoyed a very advanced commercial and religious intellectual life.³⁴ When Sultan Iskandar Muda came to power in 1607, he inherited a strong frontier Islamic state. By combining this structure with his charismatic personality and solid statesmanship, he further enhanced it in terms of social and political strengths. Consequently his reign, in terms of military conquest and cultural development, is regarded as the sultanate's most glorious period and this holds an important place in Aceh's history.³⁵ Muda, who had a solid belief in Islam, made important progress in terms of the sultanate's political, military, religious, and cultural developments. One of his major accomplishments was to unify the region through military conquests so that the region could present a united front designed to protect themselves against the attempts of Portugal and other colonial powers to establish themselves in the Straits of Malacca.

He also pursued a very active foreign policy, part of which consisted of signing trade agreements with the Dutch and the

British in order to set the terms by which economic and commercial activities would be conducted. In addition, Muda never established his own hegemony in the region. During this period, it was possible to count the Portuguese, Dutch, British, Indians, Arabs, and Iranians among the foreigners who were conducting direct or indirect commercial activities in the region.³⁶

Iskandar Muda was a statesman with great ideals. Muda knew how important the Malacca Straits as a sea route was in the international trade, especially for the Southeast Asian trade. He developed relations with Keling (India), Iran, Arabia, Ottoman and Western Europe. At the same time relationships were established with countries such as Thailand (Siam) and China (Tionghoa). With these actions Muda wanted to control the Malacca Straits and the Malay Peninsula.³⁷

Muda, who did his best to establish Aceh as an Islamic stronghold, designated the rulers as the protectors of culture and tradition; scholars were designated as practitioners of Islamic provisions in the administrative mechanism. They latter were well represented in his court after he ascended the throne.³⁸ Given this reality, the author of *Bustan'us Salatin* refers to him as the greatest of all the Acehnese sultans who stressed the importance of Islamic education. Seeking to cultivate Islamic education among his subjects and his regional administration units, he built a mosque and, at the same time, initiated the creation of a significant madrasah in the Baiturrahman Mosque (*Bayt al-Rahim* madrasah) complex.³⁹ This is detailed in the following section.

Muda placed great importance on Islamic scholars and spreading Islamic educational institutions. He appointed Shamsuddin Sumatranî and Shaikh Abdullah as-Shams, the leading scholars of his time, to important posts in the palace. Shamsuddin Sumatranî became the Shaykh al-Islam and advised Muda on political issues.⁴⁰ After his death in 1630, Shaikh Abdullah as-Shams took on an important role in the palace as an advisor. It was normal for Aceh's

scholars to advise the sultan on matters connected with religion and politics.

In the context of Islamic education, Muda's order to establish a madrasah in the Baiturrahman Mosque complex is one of the best examples. Such institutions divided their courses into eighteen departments, including the positive, social, and religious sciences.⁴¹ This particular academic institution could also be considered a university in the modern sense, as it featured departments of medicine, chemistry, mathematics, logic, law, philosophy, theology, exegesis, Ḥadith, history, literature, public administration, mining, agriculture, and others. In addition, it had its own military academy.⁴²

During this period, forty-four Acehnese and foreign scientists lectured at the University of Baiturrahman and similar among them were Shaikh Muhammad Azhari (metaphysics), Abu al-Kahar b. Shaikh b. Hajar (Islamic law), Shaikh Yamani (theology), and Muhammad Jailani b. Hasan b. Hamid (logic and the methodology of canon law).⁴³ The importance given to knowledge and scholars continued under Muda's successors. For example his stepson and successor Iskandar Tsani (1636-1641) emphasized the Islamic sciences and the continuance of cultural life. Nuruddin b. Ali Hasanji b. Muhammad Hamid ar-Raniri, who came to Aceh during his reign, was one of his advisors. At Iskandar Tsani's request, he wrote *Bustan'us Salatin* (The Garden of Kings),⁴⁴ which remains the core work on Aceh's history.

After Iskandar Tsani's death, Aceh was ruled by female sultans for about sixty years (1641-1699). During these years Shaikh Abdurrauf as-Singkili played an important role, for the first female sultan, Iskandar Tsani's widow Safiyatuddin, and those who followed her received his complete support. This man, who moved the Shattariyya order to Indonesia,⁴⁵ worked in the palace as the *waliyul mulki* (deputy sultan) and continued to

produce scientific works. Among his works were the first Malay interpretation of the Qur'an⁴⁶ (according to Bayzavî's commentary) and *Mir'at at-Tullab fi Tashil Ma'rifat Ahkam As-Syariah lil malik al wahab*⁴⁷ (a book on canon law), both of which are ranked among the most important. As-Singkilî also wrote on theology, canon law (*fiqh*), Hadith, and Sufism.⁴⁸

Baba Davud

Given the explanations above, we can assume that Baba Davud was born and raised some time after 1650. His full name was Davud b. Agha Ismail b. Agha Mustafa al-Javi ar-Rumi.⁴⁹ Baba Davud, whose ancestors came to Aceh, was also known as Mustafa ar-Rumi.⁵⁰ The name tag al-Javi indicates the possibility of his mother's Malay origin or his birth in Indonesia.⁵¹ There is no definite information about his birth and death dates. However, if it is considered that his teacher Abdurrauf as-Singkilî lived between 1615-1693 and came back to Aceh in 1661 after receiving his education in Arabia, we can assume that he lived some time between 1650-1750.

To date, authentic information about his identity has been found in two main works. The first is that found in the introduction of *Baydawi Tafsiir*, which was translated by as-Singkilî and contributed to by Baba Davud. This source mentions that Baba Davud was a student of as-Singkilî and had the following lineage: Baba Davud b. Ismail; Ismail b. Agha Mustafa; Agha Mustafa b. Agha Ali ar-Rumi.⁵² The second work, *Manzarul Ajla Martabatil A'la*, was written by Shaikh Faqih Jalaladdin b. Kamaluddin al-Asyi, one of Baba Davud's students. It refers to Baba Davud as a student of Abdurrauf al-Fansurî.⁵³

There are several different opinions of how Baba Davud reached Aceh. According to Azyumardi Azra, he was one of the many soldiers deployed by the Ottomans to help the Aceh

sultanate defend itself against the Portuguese.⁵⁴ But Abdullah Shagir, a contemporary Malay scholar, criticizes this view and opines that Ismail ar-Rumi (d. 1631/1643), shaikh of the Qādirī order who was sent from Turkey to Aceh during this period, is likely the father of Baba Davud ar-Rumi.⁵⁵

Syaikh Davud b. Ismail b. Mustafa ar-Rumi was also known as Tunku Chik di Leupue (Shaikh of Di Leupu) because of his administrative service in the Dayah, which he founded in collaboration with his teacher Syiah Kuala in Banda Aceh's region called *Di Leupe*. It is reputed that Shaikh Abdurrauf wanted him to manage the Dayah Leupeu.⁵⁶

A copy of the Qur'an, written with a special calligraphy by Shaikh Abdurrauf, was given to Baba Davud. Upon the latter's death, it was transferred to Haji Yahya, the leader of Dayah Leupue and, apparently, transferred from generation to generation among his descendants. Until recently it was in the hands of Teungku Abdulaziz Ujung in Penauyong. Ali Hasjmy noted that he once saw it.⁵⁷ It is believed that Syiah Kuala's grandson Mahmud has a photocopy of this Qur'an. Baba Davud is considered as one of Syiah Kuala's leading students because of his role both in establishing the Dayah and completion of translation works.⁵⁸

Due to his Anatolian origin, Baba Davud was also called "Rumi," as this was the usual way for Arabs and Persians to refer to the Byzantine empire.⁵⁹ After the Seljuk Turks conquered and established Turkish sovereignty in Anatolia, this name was transferred to them.⁶⁰ When Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror captured Istanbul, it was used for the Ottoman Turks as well and continued to be a common designation for their empire even after it became a major world power during the mid-fifteenth century. Therefore, any Muslims coming to Southeast Asia from this land were called "Rum." Azra has remarked:

In Indonesia and the Malay world there is a special narrative about Rum Sultanate that transferred from generation to generation. In the past, not only Turks, but also Arabs and Iranians played important roles in trade and Islamic education. Though there is no definite evidence about this issue, Turks too, contributed to Islamization of this region at the beginning.⁶¹

Emperoum, a village located in the centre of Banda Aceh, supports this argument because this name apparently stems from its first inhabitants: a group of Ottoman subjects. *Empe* is an honorific phrase, whereas *Rum* is used for people coming from Anatolia. In this context, *emperoum* was applied to the people who lived in this village as an expression of respect; eventually, it became the village's name.⁶²

The Ottoman empire's political and cultural power impacted the whole Muslim world, along with the Islamic sultanate in the Malay Archipelago. Within this framework, the Muslims of the Malay world used to call the Ottoman sultan the "King of Rum" (Raja Rum) in the fifteenth century because of the conquest of Istanbul.⁶³

His works and scholarly personality

Baba Davud was one of the important students and successors of as-Singkilî, who is widely regarded as Aceh's greatest scholar. The significance of the former's scholarly personality can be seen in his creation of the Dayah Manyang Leupue, an Islamic education centre, in conjunction with al-Singkilî.⁶⁴ Baba Davud helped complete his teacher's *Turjumanul al-Mustafid*, considered the first Malay-language translation and commentary of the Qur'an. This work, which has made important contributions to the development of Islamic knowledge in the Malay world, was first published in Istanbul.⁶⁵ The original copy was given to one of Baba Davud's grandchildren in Patani (southern Thailand) and

then passed on to Shaikh Ahmed b. Muhammad Zain al-Patani, who published the first edition of this study.

Although his descendents who still live in Patani and Kelantan say that Baba Davud wrote several books, no concrete information about them has ever been discovered. His manuscript work was copied by Shaikh Davud b. Ismail al-Patani from his lineage (a.k.a. Tok Davud Katib), after which his cousin Shaikh Ahmed al-Patani took over. This work was subsequently rewritten by Shaikh Ahmed b. Muhammad Zain al-Patani, Shaikh Davud b. Ismail al-Patani, and Shaikh Idris b. Hussein Kelantanam, all of whom made corrections to the original work.⁶⁶ The first copy of this study was published in Istanbul, Makkah, and Cairo.

In addition to contributing to as-Singkili's works, Baba Davud wrote *Risalah Masailal Muhtadi li Ikhwanil Muhtadi* (The Guide for Right Path for the New Starting Brothers),⁶⁷ which was taught for nearly three hundred years as the basic text at religious schools in Aceh and other parts of the Malay world. Written in Javî in the form of a question-answer dialogue, the best method of that time, it imparted elementary religious knowledge to those first year students who did not know Arabic. Interestingly it is still being used today, with no change in its content, to teach issues related to faith, worship, and other subjects.⁶⁸ It was taught during the first stage of Islamic education in Aceh, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, and southern Thailand, where Malay is spoken.⁶⁹ Considered an important work, it has contributed to the religious education of hundreds of thousands of Indonesian students and is still being used in Aceh's religious schools.⁷⁰

Many famous scholars studied under Baba Davud, among them Nayan al-Baghdadi, son of al-Firus al-Baghdadi (the founder of Dayah Tanoh Abee), and Muhammad Zain.⁷¹ Al-Baghdadi continued his education at the Dayah Leupue di Penaoyung under the supervision of Shaikh Davud b. Ismail b.

Mustafa ar-Rumi (a.k.a. Tunku Chik di Leupue), a leading scholar of the period. When al-Baghdadi earned his certificate, Baba Davud encouraged him to open an Islamic educational centre in Seulum, 40 kms outside Banda Aceh.⁷² Thus, Baba Davud is credited with being the force behind opening Islamic educational institutions there. Shaikh Fakih Celaledin, a scholar from Aceh, also studied under Baba Davud.⁷³

Baba Davud's tomb and offspring

I acquired the first information about Baba Davud while conducting fieldwork in Aceh during September-December 2005. His tomb is located in a small cemetery near Penaoyung, in front of the Di Leupue mosque. After the widespread damage caused by the 2006 tsunami, local residents surrounded his tomb with pieces of wood and wire and marked it with a note: "Makam Ulama Atjeh Anak Murid Tg. Syiah Kuala." During my 2005 visit, intense construction activity was being done by foreign NGOs and a carpenter's workshop had been set up next to the cemetery. Thanks to the local residents, who had not forgotten the past, the location of Baba Davud's tomb was identified.

Today, there are no living descendants of Baba Davud in Aceh. In southern Thailand, however, a famous scholar named Shaikh Davud b. Ismail el-Cavi el-Patani, who lived in Patani, has been put forward as one of his grandsons. Another descendant, Haji Nik Wan Fatma (Kak Mah) bint Hacı Wan Abdulkadir Kelantan b. Shaikh Davud b. Ismail el-Patani, died on 26 July 1999 in Kota Baru.⁷⁴

Conclusion

For a long time scholars have tried to determine why Islam became so popular in the Malay Archipelago, and the region's inhabitants have expressed interest in their research. What kind of

phases did Islamization pass through until it became firmly established? My research indicates that the indigenous people's adoption of Islam occurred over a long period of time, beginning with the eighth century and continuing to our own time. Islam was introduced by merchants and Sūfis who moved and sometimes settled among the people. The efforts of indigenous scholars also helped this transformation. The development of Islam as a result of individual communication demonstrates its slow but steady penetration.

Aceh, the "Doorway to Makkah," played the primary role in this process. During the first period of Islamic history, its rulers invited scholars from various Muslim lands, especially the Middle East and India. Out of this policy emerged indigenous religious training centres and scholars. Scholars played important roles in the palace, educational institutions, and society. With the start of Islamic missionary (*da'wah*) activities, Islamic educational institutions increased in the region as indigenous scholars produced works on various topics. Thus, this corner of Muslim world created its own civilization and established Islam on a solid foundation.

Scholars who came to Aceh, either on their own or invited by the rulers, planted the roots of their Islamic teaching deeply by establishing Islamic educational institutions. Although many scholars either came to Aceh or were born and raised there, very few of them are known to us today. Baba Davud, who had a Turkish ancestor, shares a similar fate. After all, the only reason he is mentioned at all in various books is because he was a student of Syiah Kuala. Based on these data and the role of scholars in Aceh, this article provides some general information about Baba Davud. Due to the lack of well-organized works on him, more comprehensive and deeper studies on this scholar and his works need to be undertaken.

Notes

1. Dr Mehmet Özay, Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Islamic Civilization and Thought, University Technology Malaysia.
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3. Snouck Hurgronje, *The Acehnese*, vol. II, p. 19; Anthony Reid, "Indonesian Diplomacy: A Documentary Study of Atjehnese Foreign Policy in the Reign of Sultan Mahmud: 1870-1874," *JMBRAS*, vol. XLII, Part 2, December, 1969, p. 74.
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8. H. Abdullah Ujong Rimba, "Daerah Manakah Yang Mula Mula Menerima Agama Islam di Indonesia," *Seminar Sejarah Masuk Dan Berkembangnya Islam Di Aceh Dan Nusantara*, Majelis Ulama Propinsi Daerah Istimewa Aceh Dan Pemerintah Daerah TK. II (Aceh Timur, 1980), p. 3.
 9. A.H. Johns, "Islam in Southeast Asia: Problems of Perspective," p. 312; See. Oman Fathurahman and Munawar Holil, *Katalog Naskah Ali Hasjmy Aceh (Catalogue of Aceh Manuscripts: Ali Hasjmy Collection)*, The 21st Century Center of Excellence Programme "The Center for Documentation and Area-Transcultural Studies (Tokyo: Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, 2007).
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47. This work was ordered by Sultanah Sri Sultan Taj al-Alam Safiyatuddin.
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