

# SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES

<http://englishkyoto-seas.org/>

## <Book Review>

R. Michael Feener

A. C. S. Peacock and Annabel Teh Gallop, eds. *From Anatolia to Aceh: Ottomans, Turks, and Southeast Asia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, xvi+348p.

*Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 3, December 2016, pp. 553-556.

**How to Cite:** Feener, R. Michael. Review of *From Anatolia to Aceh: Ottomans, Turks, and Southeast Asia* edited by A. C. S. Peacock and Annabel Teh Gallop. *Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 3, December 2016, pp. 553-556.

**View the table of contents for this issue:**

<https://englishkyoto-seas.org/2016/12/vol-5-no-3-of-southeast-asian-studies/>

**Subscriptions:** <http://englishkyoto-seas.org/mailling-list/>

**For permissions, please send an e-mail to:** english-editorial@cseas.kyoto-u.ac.jp



Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University



*From Anatolia to Aceh: Ottomans, Turks, and Southeast Asia*

A. C. S. PEACOCK and ANNABEL TEH GALLOP, eds.

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, xvi+348p.

This edited volume in the Proceedings of the British Academy series is comprised of 14 chapters covering interactions between the two regions from the sixteenth through the twentieth centuries. Its various chapters were developed out of papers originally prepared for a workshop held at the International Centre for Aceh and Indian Ocean Studies (ICAIOS) in Banda Aceh in 2012 as part of a collaborative project between the British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara (BIAA) and the Association for South-East Asian Studies in the United Kingdom (ASEASUK) on “Islam, Trade, and Politics across the Indian Ocean.” The editors have done a remarkable job here in bringing together the work of historians and philologists to produce a volume of studies tightly focused along clearly defined axes of interaction between the two regions. Their efforts have produced a book that makes significant and meaningful contributions to our understandings of these trans-regional dynamics in the history of Southeast Asia. In this it both complements and substantially enriches a growing library of work focused on analogous vectors of the historical connections of Southeast Asia with the Arab Middle East, South Asia, and East Asia.<sup>1)</sup>

The editors’ very fine introduction to the collection presents an engaging overview of the field, highlighting the ways in which the various chapters contribute to developing richer and more nuanced understandings of diverse modalities of connection between the two regions. It is followed by a chapter from Anthony Reid, whose pioneering work stimulated a growing body of research on this field since his first publication on connections between the Ottomans and Aceh in 1969. In his chapter for this volume, Reid has produced a new essay that provides rich contexts for understand-

---

1) These areas have each been the subject their own edited volumes appearing over the past decade: Eric Tagliacozzo (2009), R. Michael Feener and Terenjit Sevea (2009), and Geoff Wade (2007)—the last of these drawing in constructive ways on material published earlier elsewhere. These collections both reflect and have themselves stimulated broader developments in historical work on Southeast Asia from trans-regional perspectives, as seen in the proliferation of individual journal articles and monographs on the topic over recent years.

ing the findings of this more recent scholarship in a magisterial overview of ways in which understandings of both the historical and imagined relationships between the two regions have developed over more than four centuries.

The remainder of the volume is comprised of a series of focused, in-depth case studies of particular examples of political, religious, economic, and literary connections between the two regions—including the presentation of new work on a wide range of archival sources. Jorge Santos Alves begins by introducing a previously little known dimension of sixteenth century Ottoman-Southeast Asian interactions in the role played by Jews of Portuguese origin (who had lost much to both the Inquisition and the *Estado da Índia*) that were active at Istanbul in supporting a stronger anti-Portuguese stance in the Indian Ocean. The economic focus is also central to Andrew Peacock's own chapter, which highlights the importance of looking beyond diplomatic connections to the particulars of both trade commodities and the careers of individual merchants to develop more fine-grained depictions of connections as embodied in the people and things that moved between the two regions.

Diplomatic and political relations return to center stage in several of the chapters that follow. Jeyamalar Kathirithamby-Wells takes as her focus the Hadrami diaspora in the Netherlands Indies with an examination of both their pragmatic collaboration and resistance in light of appeals to their rights as Ottoman citizens. Isaac Donoso's chapter presents us with yet another case in which colonial views of the ties binding Muslims in Southeast Asia to the Ottoman Empire and the heartlands of Islam factored into diverse political projects. The other chapter in this volume focusing on the Philippines, by Gervase Clarence-Smith, opens up a window onto new dynamics introduced under American colonial rule and the remarkable experiments of this new colonial power with engaging the Ottomans as part of policies designed for the management of their Muslim subjects in Southeast Asia.

The potential role of the Ottomans to influence the religious and political landscape of the region was, however, not purely the product of Western imaginations. One of the real highlights of the volume is the chapter by İsmail Hakkı Kadı, in which he provides a provocative critique of dominant scholarly understandings (based to a considerable degree on colonial notions) of the centrality of Abdülhamid II as the driver "Pan-Islamism." In contrast to a vision of trans-national Islamic ideology and activism centered on the Ottomans, Kadı argues that interest in Southeast Asia in Istanbul was "not inaugurated by the Ottomans, but was prompted by various initiatives from the region" (p. 152). Further evidence of Southeast Asian initiative in these developments is presented in İsmail Hakkı Göksoy's discussion of the visit of the Ottoman frigate *Ertuğul* to Singapore in 1890. In this chapter Göksoy continues his ongoing explorations of the Ottoman archives to present here new letters from the late nineteenth century documenting the interest in Aceh within "official circles" at Istanbul—as well as the ongoing attempts of Acehnese and those claiming to represent them to pursue Ottoman support.

The historical progression is followed through the twentieth century in the chapters that follow. Amrita Malhi's chapter opens a window onto previously under-appreciated dimensions of anti-British uprisings in early twentieth-century Malaya through her explorations of the "subterranean symbolic life" of the Ottoman Empire in Muslim Southeast Asia—and in particular in the ritual and political imaginations of Malay "secret societies." Chiara Formichi's contribution sheds some stimulating new light on yet another little recognized, but very different, sphere in which developments in Anatolia inspired anti-colonial visions in Southeast Asia. Here the focus is on the impact of late and post-Ottoman secularizing projects, and the way in which some Indonesian nationalists came to perceive Kemalism as a "middle way" facilitating "progress" at a critical juncture in the country's history.

The last three chapters of the volume shift gears from political and economic history to literary and religious connections. Vladimir Braginsky begins by taking up another thread from Reid's early work on Ottoman-Southeast Asian relations to explore literary imaginations of "Turks" in Malay literature. Drawing on his extensive work in this field, Braginsky provides us here with an illuminating overview and typology of a wide range of pre-modern texts across various stages of Malay literary history. Oman Fathurahman's chapter turns attention toward aspects of intellectual and religious history as evidenced in a selection of important Malay and Arabic texts in genres ranging from Qur'ānic exegesis to sermons. Here, he reminds us, the major center of gravity was not Istanbul, but rather the holy cities of Arabia where Kurdish and Sumatran Sufis and scholars came together around a shared textual corpus—as most perhaps most famously demonstrated by Anthony Johns in his 1978 portrait of Ibrāhīm al-Kurānī and Abd al-Rāūf Singkel as "Friends in Grace" (in Udin 1978). Another modality of religious connections between the two regions is the focus of the last chapter in the volume, in which Ali Akbar presents a very perceptive overview of the influence of Ottoman traditions of Qur'ānic calligraphy and codicology on the production of manuscript and early print Qur'āns in Southeast Asia. These examples provide a compelling case for the continuing importance of these religious and cultural connections that transcend the limits of direct political or economic relations between the two regions.

As with most edited collections, there is of course some variation in the quality of the individual chapters, but overall the work is of a very high standard. The editors and contributors are to be commended for producing a fine work that will serve to set the state of the field in studies of connections between these two regions, and should inspire further work on diverse dynamics of trans-regional history. If there is one shortcoming of this collection it would be one of omission. Of course, it is never possible to cover all that one may wish in any book. However, given the extensive coverage of Aceh across the volume, and the specific mention of this toponym in its alliterative title, it is something of a surprise that it did not include an essay on the re-invigoration of connections between Aceh and Turkey in the wake of the 2004 tsunami. Nevertheless, this fine volume will certainly serve as an important resource for work on this and other aspects of connec-

tion between the two regions in the future.

R. Michael Feener

*Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, University of Oxford*

## References

- Feener, R. Michael; and Sevea, Terenjit, eds. 2009. *Islamic Connections: Muslim Societies in South and Southeast Asia*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- Tagliacozzo, Eric, ed. 2009. *Southeast Asia and the Middle East: Islam, Movement and the Longue Durée*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Udin, S., ed. 1978. *Spectrum: Essays Presented to Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana*. Jakarta: Dian Rakyat.
- Wade, Geoff, ed. 2007. *Southeast Asia-China Interactions*. Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society.

## *A Sarong for Clio: Essays on the Intellectual and Cultural History of Thailand, Inspired by Craig J. Reynolds*

MAURIZIO PELEGGI, ed.

Ithaca, NY: Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications, 2015, 208p.

When a stellar cast gathers for the festschrift, the result is both a thoughtful reflection on the past oeuvre by Craig J. Reynolds, who inspired the essays, and a peek into the various issues and debates that will characterize the future of Thai studies.

If not directly mentioned, Reynolds' influence and carefully crafted concepts from his decades-long career in Thai and Southeast Asian Studies pervade the book. This can partly be attributed to the contributors' association with Reynolds as his students, colleagues, and friends. However, it would be wrong to assume that the volume represents a closed academic circuit. Reynolds' opuses span from the 1970s to the 2010s and counting. His seminal works illuminate important aspects of these often turbulent decades, such as the analyses of Buddhist and Marxist writings in Thailand and beyond, the charting of previously under-explored terrain of historiography in Southeast Asia, the clearing of the ground for intellectual and social histories in the area, the probing of the ideas of national identity and globalization, and the meditation on varied aspects of power, including its unorthodox linkage with magic and local knowledge. All the while, he widely borrows conceptual tools from, *inter alia*, semiotics, feminism, structuralism, and post-structuralism, but always subjects them to scrutiny and test in the Southeast Asian weather. The editor Maurizio Peleggi's introductory chapter well captures this across-the-board and seasoned nature of Reynolds' works and thoughts.

In the essays that follow, three Reynolds' leitmotifs emerge quite clearly, namely: (1) *power*