
In a complex and ambitious study, Tom Gibson has followed on from his previous foray into the interweaving memories and traditions of Sulawesi to explore the ways in which Islam has been interpreted, and deployed in a particular Southeast Asian context. Commencing with ruminations on the notions of symbolic knowledge and authority, drawing from and against the works of Weber, Lévi-Strauss and Foucault, Gibson moves through a temporal interrogation of what one might term a series of intellectual emanations. These range, in chronological order, from (1) considerations of the notion of the ruler as the “perfect man” (from the late 16th century), (2) more intensive connections with the “cosmopolitan Islam” of the Indian Ocean littoral thereafter, (3) narratives of “Islamic martyrdom” played out in opposition to the Dutch East India Company (which conquered Gowa in 1667), (4) popular mysticism (wherein Sufi orders like the Sammaniyya began to recruit beyond the royal elite), (5) cosmopolitan piety and the late colonial state (where heightened contact with the emergent bureaucracy led to a questioning of the efficacy and validity of local Islamic praxis), (6) the “revolutionary” Islam of the Darul Islam movement (that drew on similar questionings from Egypt and sought to annihilate all such alleged deviation as inimical to a nation that should be recognised as Islamic), and, lastly, (7) contestations and accommodations within the parameters allowed under the developmentalist state of Suharto and his successors.

In this venture Gibson succeeds admirably in plumbing the sources of his narratives, recorded in the field in the 1980s and by Dutch scholar-officials of previous eras, and shows how each narrative has come to occupy a space in the formation of Makassar identity without necessarily dislodging past and competing discourses. In each case, moreover, Gibson argues that a specific model has been presented to Southeast Asians to allow them to understand their relationship with the worlds of the here and now and what is to come. For in each historically-contingent model a differing set of relationships is laid out, by which the ruler can be seen as God’s shadow on earth, the ideal partner to “cosmopolitan” shaykhs, or indeed the de facto agent of feudalist tradition and thus the supporter of the Dutch in a

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1) See Thomas Gibson, *And the Sun pursued the Moon: Symbolic Knowledge and Traditional Authority among the Makassar* (Honolulu: Hawai’i, 2005).
long-running war against Islam and Muslims. There are also versions that present the secular state as a foe to be engaged or as a vehicle to be used.

All in all, Gibson’s attempt to read many of the narratives he collected as Islamic is laudable and valuable, especially in cases where he is able to point to cosmopolitan borrowings from further west across the Indian Ocean. In chapter five, for example, he argues that the widely-popular ode of Ja’far al-Barzanji (d. 1767), recited in honour of Muhammad, whose life it recounts, has inflected narratives such as the Epic of the Three Boats that sets the hero, and past ruler, Arung Palakka (1633-96), on a path from tribulation and triumph echoing that undergone by Muhammad himself. This effort to read the valences of Islam beyond the political stands in distinction to earlier anthropological studies of Southeast Asian societies, such as Scott’s Weapons of the Weak, wherein mention of Barzanji was understood as a verb for chanting from the Qur’an.2

There is much indeed to praise in this study, from the placing of figures like Shaykh Yusuf of Makassar (1626-99) in religious genealogies of power, to the attempt at making use of specific Sufi pedigrees still preserved in Sulawesi. But here is where a note of caution might be sounded. At some points, as when particular pedigrees are reported, one could argue that Gibson trusts his narratives a little too much as he tries to reconcile them with standing (but occasionally dated) scholarship on other parts of the Muslim world. There is at present little proof that the Sufi brotherhoods were the prime disseminators of Islam in the region, as some would hold, rather than the post-factum appropriators of that narrative claim. Then again, at other moments Gibson does make it plain that he is well aware of such appropriations and their intent (i.e. pp. 150-51).

It is also questionable whether Sulawesi’s rulers, who exemplified an Austronesian model of linking heaven and earth, necessarily required a specific extrapolation of the ideas of the Andalusian mystic Ibn al-ʿArabi (1165-1240) in order to convert. More particularly it seems a stretch to argue that it might have been the (somewhat ironic) model of a Shiʿi ruler of Iran, the Safavid Shah Ismāʿīl (1484-1524), that impelled them. Indeed we have the precedents of other Southeast Asian conversions in Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula to consider, and these occurred before al-Jili (d. 1420) or Nur al-Din Jami (1414-92) advanced the notion of “the Per-

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