CHAPTER 1

Technology, training, and cultural transformation

> When a change in a society's self-awareness has become at all widely disseminated, that society's styles of thinking and acting have been irreversibly altered.
>
> – J. G. A. Pocock, "Time, Institutions and Action"

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries witnessed a number of remarkable developments in Muslim institutional and intellectual history, as a result of which the very categories and structures of traditional religious authority were subjected to fundamental challenges. This had a significant impact not only upon social and cultural institutions, but also on the form and content of Islamic religious and legal debates in the modern period. This being said, however, some qualifying remarks must be made with regard to the apparent novelty of the modern situation. For among these relatively recent developments are also distinctly traceable and historically significant threads of continuity that have run through centuries of Islamic history.

MODERNIZATION AND TRADITIONS OF REFORM

Internal reform is part of a well-established dynamic visible throughout the histories of various societies in the Muslim world. During the first half of the twentieth century, Henri Laoust remarked insightfully on the importance of the legacy of the medieval Ḥanbalī scholar Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328) to the modern Salafiyya movement,[1] and later historians have since ventured more general reflections on the role of Ḥanbalism, Sufism, and other established modes of Islamic religious understanding in the dynamics of reform movements throughout Muslim history. These developments established

[1] Henri Laoust, *Essai sur les doctrines sociales et politiques de Takī-d-dīn Aḥmad b. Taimīya, canoniste Hanbalite né à Harrān en 661/1262, mort à Damas en 728/1328* (Cairo: Imprimerie de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1939), 541–63.

legacies that became accessible in new ways to successive generations of Muslim reformers who worked in increasingly complex contexts not only of internal Islamic religious debates, but also of the increasing encroachment of European imperial interests and cultural challenges in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Aspects of all of these factors contributed to complex dynamics of "modernization" among Muslim communities of Southeast Asia and elsewhere in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In particular the introduction of steam-powered transportation and the print revolution in communications technology facilitated by European expansion into various Muslim societies during the second half of the nineteenth century fostered the formation of new constellations of people and ideas that made for creative re-imaginings of the world, and set new historical processes in place. The various elements in this social transformation thus worked together to radically alter not only the physical and economic landscapes of the region, but its intellectual and cultural vistas as well.

In his unfinished magnum opus *The Venture of Islam*, Marshall Hodgson discussed this phenomenon in general terms as the "Great Western Transmutation" – a systematizing revolution of bureaucratization, rationalization, and "technicalization" of Muslim societies, and much of the rest of the world during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[2] However, while many of the technological and organizational aspects of these transformations were originally introduced to Muslim societies from Europe – most often in the context of projects of imperialist expansion and colonial control – the diverse ways in which they interacted with local established practices and newly felt local needs show that Muslims in these rapidly modernizing societies were not merely passive objects in these processes initiated by the West. In fact, these various new technologies and institutions were not only important because of the ways in which they facilitated European expansion into Muslim societies in the nineteenth century, but also for the ways in which they created new opportunities for connections and the exchange of ideas between Muslims from different regions.[3] These interactions, in turn, contributed to the development of new ways of thinking about religion, law, and society all across the Middle East, Africa, and Asia.

[2] Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), III, 176–222.

[3] I have discussed these developments in relation to the Indonesian Archipelago, the Arabian Peninsula, and the broader Indian Ocean world in R. Michael Feener, "Islam, Technology and Modernity in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries," in *The New Cambridge History of Islam*, vol. VI (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

In Muslim Southeast Asia during the last decades of the nineteenth century a number of exterior influences, although previously in evidence both from the West and various areas of the wider Muslim world itself, were becoming increasingly pronounced as they interacted with a complex array of local institutions to produce new expressions of Malay-Muslim culture. While these changes were many, some general pattern of their effects can be seen in the appearance of three new, or newly reformulated, institutions in Muslim Southeast Asia: voluntary associations, educational reform, and the print media. These three facets of modernization comprised the primary foci for William Roff's pioneering study of Malay nationalism. Together they form a constellation of categories that can prove useful in other studies, including the present one, aimed at tracing the relationship of technological and institutional developments to intellectual history.[4] While indebted to Roff's model for establishing the contexts out of which modern Indonesian Muslim thought emerged, this book is not simply a reworking of his study with comparable data from the neighboring archipelago. His now classic work was more directly concerned with understanding the growth of a new national elite in the Malay peninsula, whereas the work in hand attempts to trace a considerably different trajectory that highlights both the content and contours of twentieth-century Indonesian Islamic religious and intellectual debates.

The space for these discussions was established in the interstices of new schools, new readings, and new communities fostered by educational reform, print, and voluntary associations. In an attempt to highlight their extensive inter-connections, the material discussed in this chapter will be arranged topically, rather than strictly chronologically, with overlapping discussions of the respective aspects of these three developments. Of these changes proliferating across Muslim societies during the latter half of the nineteenth century, print was paramount, as it was largely through this medium that other new institutions were first imagined and increasingly incorporated into local practice.

TEXTS AND TEACHERS OF THE *PESANTREN* TRADITION

By the time that these transformations were taking place, local traditions of Islamic religious scholarship in Arabic as well as in Malay, Javanese, and

[4] William Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, 2nd edn (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1994, originally published by Yale University Press, 1967).

other languages of the archipelago were already well established.[5] Scholars bearing the name (*nisba*) al-Jāwī appear in Arabic sources as far back as the thirteenth century,[6] and a recently revised death date for the author of some of the oldest surviving works of Sufi literature in Malay now places the oft-cited Ḥamza Fanṣūrī in the middle of the sixteenth.[7] The surviving textual record expands considerably after that with works not only of *taṣawwuf*, but also in the Islamic religious sciences of *tafsīr, uṣūl al-dīn,* and *fiqh*, well represented in texts produced in Muslim Southeast Asia during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[8]

We have increasing numbers of texts surviving from an even wider range of local centers in the region over the course of the nineteenth century, ranging from Bima in the east of the Archipelago to the Malay areas of what is today southern Thailand in the west. In the later nineteenth century, it was a scholar hailing from this region, Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Zayn b. Muṣṭafā al-Faṭānī, who was placed in charge of printing Malay language materials at the Ottoman government press at Mecca.[9] Nevertheless in print, as well as in manuscript, the writings of many nineteenth-century Southeast Asian scholars in the field of Islamic jurisprudence still tended to follow in well-established traditions of the Shāfiʿī *madhhab*.[10] It was texts of this type that formed the heart of the curricula at *pesantren* and analogous institutions of Muslim learning across the Archipelago, and it is to such constellations of Shāfiʿī *fiqh* scholarship, *pesantren* education, and its associated complexes of religious and cultural praxis that I refer in this study as "traditionalism."

Pesantren is the Javanese designation for a traditional Muslim educational institution of a type similar to that referred to in other parts of the region by various other names including *pondok, surau,* and *dayah*.

[5] For an overview of these developments, see R. Michael Feener, "Southeast Asian Localisations of Islam and Participation within a Global *Umma*, c. 1500–1800," in *The New Cambridge History of Islam,* III (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

[6] R. Michael Feener and Michael F. Laffan, "Sufi Scents across the Indian Ocean: Yemeni Hagiography and the Earliest History of Southeast Asian Islam," *Archipel* 70 (2005): 185–208.

[7] Claude Guillot and Ludvik Kalus, "La stèle funéraire de Hamzah Fansuri," *L'Horizon nousantarien: Mélanges en hommage à Denys Lombard* IV, *Archipel* 60 (2000): 3–24.

[8] For introductions to major works and authors of this period, as well as an extensive bibliography of extant published texts and secondary scholarship, see Peter Riddell, *Islam and the Malay-Indonesian World: Transmission and Responses* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001).

[9] C. Snouck Hurgronje, *Mekka in the Latter Part of the Nineteenth Century* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1931), 286–87.

[10] In fact, Martin van Bruinessen has noted that the list of works in this tradition commonly studied in Southeast Asia very closely resembles the standard works of *fiqh* traditionally taught in Shāfiʿī areas of Kurdistan. *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren dan Tarekat: Tradisi-tradisi Islam di Indonesia* (Bandung: Mizan, 1995), 112–30.

Although some such schools were earlier associated with local sultanates in seaports or other urban areas, over the course of the nineteenth century *pesantren* increasingly became a phenomenon of rural areas. Linking these schools scattered through the countryside were elaborate webs of intermarriage between many of the leading families of religious scholars. Beyond this, there was great emphasis placed on the highly valued bond between students and their teachers, and these ties also linked rural scholars with colleagues living in disparate areas.[11] Students and teachers associated with these schools were thus linked in scholarly networks that extended from local circles to the broader community of scholars in Mecca, Medina, and the maritime Muslim cities ringing the Indian Ocean littoral. Prior to the mid-nineteenth-century expansion of steamship routes across the archipelago and connecting beyond to Arabia, however, participation in such networks was the privilege of only a relatively small circle of scholars. Only with the diffusion of more efficient means of communication and transportation was travel between the Middle East and Southeast Asia a possibility for greater numbers of Muslims in the region.

Study in *pesantren* and similar institutions of Islamic education in nineteenth-century Southeast Asia was an intensely interpersonal affair under the close direction of one's teacher (Jv. *kyai*). Students (Jv. *santri*) began their studies with memorization of the Qur'ān and Arabic grammar, and then centered on the study of *fiqh*.[12] The texts of Islamic religious sciences studied in this milieu have come to be referred to as *kitab kuning*, a body of texts composed not only in Arabic, but also in Arabic-script forms of various Southeast Asian languages. Studies of Islamic law in such a curriculum were limited almost exclusively to the study of *furū'* (particular rulings) with very little surviving evidence of systematic education in the more theoretical discourses of jurisprudential methodology (*uṣūl*). In the early twentieth century, however, a new awareness of alternative approaches to interpreting the sources of, and actively reformulating Islamic law developed as increasing numbers of Southeast Asian Muslims came into contact with reformist colleagues in the Middle East. Upon their return to the

[11] For a brief introduction to the *pesantren* milieu, see Martin van Bruinessen, "Pesantren and Kitab Kuning: Continuity and Change in a Tradition of Religious Learning," in *Texts from the Islands: Oral and Written Traditions of Indonesia and the Malay World*, ed. Wolfgang Marschall (Berne: University of Berne Institute of Ethnology, 1994), 121–46.

[12] L. W. C. van den Berg, "Het Mohammedaansche Godsdienstonderwijs op Java en Madoera en de daarbij gebruikte Arabische boeken," *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 31 (1886): 518–55. A century later another Dutch scholar conducted an even more extensive survey of literature used in *pesantren* curricula, which showed considerable continuities among the changes since the later nineteenth century, Martin van Bruinessen, "Kitab Kuning: Books in Arabic Script Used in the Pesantren Milieu," *BKI* 146 (1990): 226–69.

Archipelago, they engaged their coreligionists, and not just those technically trained in the Islamic religious sciences, to expand local conversations on Islamic law and society.

With the spread of modern Islamic reformist sensibilities in the region over the course of the early twentieth century, *pesantren* came to be viewed by increasing numbers of Southeast Asian Muslims as places of deferential submission to the authority of barely comprehended Arabic texts which were uninspiringly glossed by *kyai* who attracted students as much by the potential of gaining blessings, as for any educational benefit. The *santri* were (so it was charged) rarely encouraged to ask critical questions relating to the interpretations of the texts being studied. Thus what had earlier been perceived as a culturally valued system of transmitting authoritative readings of religious texts was now viewed by reformists as uncritical submission to fallible human tradition that had come to block clear understandings of the meaning of revelation. What the reformers proposed, in short, was the circumvention of traditional learning through an idealized conception of the unmediated encounter between individual readers and the pure text of scripture.

In recent years a number of scholars have remarked upon such changes in the patterns of Muslim religious and cultural discourse in terms of the emergence of more heterogeneous voices who have come to challenge the position of the established *'ulamā'* as authoritative interpreters of Islamic tradition.[13] The context in which this has occurred has recently been described as one of "increasingly open contests over the authoritative use of the symbolic language of Islam."[14] The developments have had epistemological as well as social and political implications, as Eickelman and Piscatori have noted. They observe that since the texts produced by these new Muslim intellectuals:

> often refer to published sources and provide arguments that invoke recognizable authorities, the implication is that the audience is familiar with the texts and the principles of citation. Not all in the audience can follow such arguments in detail, but they recognize the forms of authority. This form of argument may even be more important for religious leaders not primarily identified with traditional learning . . .[15]

[13] For a concise overview of these developments, see Dale F. Eickelman, "The Coming Transformation in the Muslim World," 1999 Templeton Lecture on Religion and World Affairs delivered at the Foreign Policy Research Institute in Philadelphia on June 9, 1999. This text is available online at: www.drsoroush.com/PDF/E-CMO-20000100-Eickelman.pdf

[14] Dale F. Eickelman and Jon W. Anderson, "Redefining Muslim Publics," in *New Media in the Muslim World: The Emerging Public Sphere* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 1.

[15] Dale F. Eickelman and James Piscatori, *Muslim Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 39.

Such changes were facilitated by the revolutions in communications technology that made possible unprecedented increases in the amount of interaction between previously unconnected or voiceless parties, and reconfigured conceptualizations of scholarly and religious authority. Print also served to bring texts to new audiences such as that of an expanding newspaper readership. In this way, for example, published *fatwās* could now be addressed to broader segments of society well beyond the small circles of classically trained Muslim religious scholars, including the largely secular-educated elite that formed the constituencies of Salafi reformists in the early twentieth-century Middle East.[16] Within the Indonesian Archipelago too, the spread of literacy and print culture – particularly in roman-script forms of vernacular languages – expanded the number of people who could directly engage with the interpretation of Islamic religious texts.

THE PRINTED WORD IN A CALLIGRAPHIC ARCHIPELAGO

Printing had been known in the archipelago since the seventeenth century through the work of Dutch-controlled presses at Batavia. The first productions appear to have been public legal texts in the form of broadsides (Dt. *plakkaten*), followed by religious works in Latin and Portuguese, as well as Dutch. Texts were also produced there in Malay – at first in transliteration and later in the Arabic script (*jawi*), one surviving early example of which is a compendium of Muslim inheritance law published together with a Dutch translation in parallel columns in 1760.[17] However there was a lag of nearly two centuries between the establishment of the first presses in Batavia, and the wide-scale adoption of print among Muslim populations of the Archipelago. By the early nineteenth century, printing and the distribution of printed texts had spread across the region through the activity of Christian missionary societies in cities ranging from Malacca and Bengkulu to Kupang and Ambon.[18] The earliest evidence of Muslim printing in Southeast Asia dates from the 1840s, and as Ian Proudfoot has noted, until the turn of the twentieth century Muslim religious texts there were produced almost exclusively through lithograph technology

[16] Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen, *Defining Islam for the Egyptian State: Muftis and Fatwas of the Dār al-Iftā* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997), 78–79.
[17] Katherine Smith Diehl, *Printers and Printing in the East Indies to 1850 – vol. 1, Batavia* (New Rochelle: Aristide D. Caratzas, 1990), 3–56.
[18] A. T. Gallop, "Early Malay Printing: an Introduction to the British Library Collections," *JMBRAS* 63.1 (1990): 85–124.

that could replicate many of the conventions of established chirographic cultures.[19]

Islamic religious texts (referred to in Malay as *kitāb*) were an important part of a wide range of works produced by Malay presses during the second half of the nineteenth century. However, a surviving Singapore catalog from *c.* 1893 lists only more popular literary texts in indigenous poetry (*syair*) and prose (*hikayat*) genres. Such evidence has led one historian to posit that over the latter decades of the nineteenth century Islamic values and identity were transmitted through such popular forms of Islamic literature to "the general book-buying public."[20] While this may be true on one level, these very same decades correspond to the careers of a number of prominent and prolific Southeast Asian *'ulamā'* writing in the *kitāb* genre, including Aḥmad al-Faṭānī (d. 1906) and Muḥammad 'Umar Nawawī al-Jāwī (a.k.a. Nawawi Banten, d. 1897). Thus what we may actually be seeing here is more a reflection of marketing strategies than of moving inventories, for *kitāb* authors wrote technical works for quite specialized, scholarly readerships. What is certain is that there was a phenomenal increase in the number of printed works of all kinds in the Malay world between 1886 and 1920. During this period, however, the relative importance of *jawi* script Malay books in the Straits Settlements, for example, began to experience a relative decline in relation to Chinese, English, roman-script Malay, and periodical publications.[21] Thus over the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, new kinds of texts for new kinds of readers suddenly seemed to explode onto the scene, setting a stage for a substantive transformation of the traditional epistemologies that had heretofore been framed by constraints on the accessibility of texts in what Ian Proudfoot has described as "the manuscript economy." As he describes these developments, "Reading material, once costly, scarce, and sequestered had become cheap, plentiful, and accessible. This change could not occur without affecting the way reading materials were thought about, and located in society."[22]

The proliferation of print culture in the later nineteenth century in short contributed to the spread of new reading habits and the creation of new

[19] Ian Proudfoot, "Mass Producing Houri's Moles, or Aesthetics and Choice of Technology in Early Muslim Book Printing," in *Islam: Essays on Scripture, Thought, and Society – A Festschrift in Honour of Anthony H. Johns*, ed. Peter G. Riddell and Tony Street (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997), 161–84.

[20] Ian Proudfoot, "A Nineteenth-Century Malay Bookseller's Catalogue," *Kekal Abadi* 6.4 (Dec. 1987): 6; Proudfoot, *The Print Threshold in Malaysia* (Clayton: Monash University Center of Southeast Asian Studies, 1994), 26.

[21] Ian Proudfoot, "A Formative Period in Malay Book Publishing," *JMBRAS* 59 (1986): 101–32.

[22] Ian Proudfoot, "From Recital to Sight-Reading: The Silencing of Texts in Malaysia," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 30.87 (2002): 119.

cultural conversations in Southeast Asia as in many other Muslim societies at the time. Rather than the reading out loud of Islamic religious texts in formal educational settings such as those of the *pesantren* milieu, new practices of silent reading developed among new literate sectors of society. Over the course of the twentieth century, print came to serve as the medium for the publication of texts in other new genres, including novels, short stories, and modern forms of bureaucratic manuals. The rise of new, modern genres of printed texts was, however, just one of a number of ways in which rapid technological changes of the period were to have pronounced impact upon the very nature of language and textual authority in various Muslim societies. In his pioneering study of modernizing transformations of Islamic legal documents in Ottoman Yemen, Brinkley Messick has demonstrated that the shift from spiral to straight-ruled texts involved more than just matters of graphic stylistics. For, as he argues, the adoption of the layout conventions of modern printing technology signaled "changes in the basic epistemological structure of the document, with the principles underpinning the document's construction and its authority."[23] Such social transformations accompanying the technological innovations of modern text production were to have an immense influence on understandings of Islam in Southeast Asia and elsewhere during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Aside from the creation of new texts for new readers, the spread of print technology also had significant impacts within traditional literate sectors of Muslim Southeast Asia such as those of the *'ulamā'* and the courts of the region's myriad local sultanates. For example, the late nineteenth-century ruler of Riau, East Sumatra, Muḥammad Yūsuf, had devoted considerable energies during his forty-two-year reign to the establishment of a library of over 500 religious books collected from Mecca, Medina, India, and Cairo.[24] These works were kept in the Penyengat Mosque, and most of them seem to have been print editions, rather than manuscripts.[25] During that period, Pulau Penyegat and other regional centers such as Langkat developed their own facilities for the publication of printed texts in Arabic as well as

[23] Brinkley Messick, *The Calligraphic State: Textual Domination and History in a Muslim Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 234–36.

[24] Before this time, the majority of Arabic-script books available in the region were imported from the Middle East: Mecca, Istanbul, and especially Cairo. Yves Gonzalez-Quijano, "Le livre arabe dans les pays du subcontinent sud et sud-est asiatique," *Archipel* 40 (1990): 45.

[25] Virginia Matheson, "Pulau Penyengat: Nineteenth Century Islamic Centre of Riau," *Archipel* 37 (1989): 162.

Arabic-script forms of Malay and other regional languages.[26] The titles produced at such places were a diverse lot, but among the various novelties produced by these presses at the turn of the twentieth century were works in the traditional Islamic religious sciences. However, even in texts of this type, print had the effect of making more widely available a range of titles and authors that were not typically included in established *pesantren* curriculum.

In the field of *fiqh* in particular, an important aspect of these changes was the increased availability of works outside of the Shāfi'ī *madhhab* that had been historically dominant in Muslim Southeast Asia. While we do have some manuscript evidence of earlier works discussing the variant rulings of different schools (*ikhtilāf*),[27] the comparative study of different *madhhab*s was considerably facilitated by the appearance in print of works such as Shams al-Dīn Langkatī's *Ikhtilāf al-madhhab yang empat,* of which there are extant copies of 1904 and 1905 editions.[28] Encounters with such texts contributed to the relativization of the authority of the traditional school of *fiqh* in the region in relation to other established sets of rulings and jurisprudential methodologies. However, beyond this, traditional Shāfi'ī dominance on local interpretations of Islamic law were also confronted with other, more dramatic challenges during this period in the form of modern reformist agendas that called for the outright rejection of the models of *fiqh* connected to established *madhhabs*. This became a central plank in the platform of a new, "young" generation of reformers known as the *kaum muda*.

IJTIHĀD JOURNALISM

When, at the turn of the twentieth century, Haji Abdullah Ahmad (d. 1933) returned home to the Minangkabau region of West Sumatra after a four-year period of study in Mecca he began attacking what he perceived as *bid'a* (blameworthy innovation) in its local manifestations through various means. His primary venue for these campaigns, however, was through print

[26] U. U. Hamidy, *Riau Sebagai Pusat Bahasa dan Kebudayaan Melayu* (Pekanbaru: Bumi Pustaka, 1983), 67–70; Jan van der Putten, "Printing in Riau: Two Steps Toward Modernity," *BKI* 153.4 (1997): 717–36. H. A. Fuad Said, *Syekh Abdul Wahab, Tuan Guru Babussalam* (Medan: Pustaka Babussalam, 1983).

[27] For example, the *Khilāf al-Shāfi'ī wa Abī Hanīfa* (Cod.Or. 1253), and *Kitāb ikhtilāf al-madhāhib* (Cod.Or.1986). E. P. Wieringa, *Catalogue* of *Malay and Minangkabau Manuscripts in the Library of Leiden University and other Collections in the Netherlands* (Leiden: Legatum Warnerianum, 1998), 15–16, 209.

[28] Ian Proudfoot, *Early Malay Printed Books A Provisional Account of Materials Published in the Singapore-Malaysia Area up to 1920, Noting Holdings in Major Public Collections* (Kuala Lumpur: Academy of Malay Studies, 1993), 264.