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Muhammed Haron & Ardhya Erlangga Arby (Eds.). *Evaluating Shaykh Yusuf Al-Makassari and Imam 'Abdullah Tidore's Ideational Teachings: Reinforcing Indonesia – South Africa's Relations*. Pretoria: Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia, 2021. 266pp. ISBN 978-1-991223-71-5 (Print) and ISBN 978-1-991223-72-2 (Electronic).

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Books on South Africa tend to focus on the British colonial period starting in the nineteenth century. This focus has been reinforced by “liberation history” which zeroes in on the formation of the African National Congress (ANC) and the long twentieth century of struggle that finds vindication in the inauguration of Nelson Mandela as the first democratically elected president in 1994. But as the shine of liberation loses its gloss, greater attention is being paid to South Africa's history in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the slave trade and the impact this had on the making of what is seen today as “Cape culture”. As Robert Shell put it:

The complexity of early Cape culture was in part the result of a constantly changing oceanic slave trade to the Cape. Slaves were drawn from a multitude of starkly different geographic and cultural origins, constituting the most diverse population of any recorded slave society (1994: 11).

Anybody paying the briefest visit to Cape Town would attest to the diversity of cultures and religions. Inscribed into the landscape of the city is the powerful influence of Islam. Where did it come from? Who were the very first proponents? What were their life trajectories and how did they plant the first seeds of Islam in the most hostile of environments? A new edited collection in the most beguiling of ways begins to answer these questions and lays the foundation for more research.

This important and timely collection, edited by Muhammed Haron and Ardhya Erlangga Arby, examines aspects of the biographies and philosophies of two Indonesian Islamic scholars who resisted the Dutch/United East India Company (Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie; VOC), Shaykh Yusuf Al-Makassari (1626-1699) and Imam Abdullah ibn Qadi Abdus Salam (1712-1807), and their role in helping to lay the foundation of Islam in South Africa.

The editors are well suited to the task of drawing together the most interesting and relevant voices in the field. Ardhya Erlangga Arby is an Indonesian career diplomat at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who was the Head of Chancery at the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Pretoria from 2018 to 2021. Professor Muhammad Haron is a respected academic who taught at the universities of the Western Cape and Botswana. Now retired, he is an Associate Researcher at Stellenbosch University and a Senior Researcher for South Africa's Al Jama-ah Party. Not only has Professor Haron published widely, but he comes from a family with a tradition of activism. His father Imam Abdullah Haron was a well-known anti-apartheid activist who died in police

detention in September 1969 after being held incommunicado for 123 days by the apartheid-era South African Police Force.

Official diplomatic relations between South Africa and Indonesia were instituted in August 1994, a few months after Nelson Mandela was inaugurated as the first President of a democratic South Africa. It was in many ways a joining of the dots as Indonesian President Sukarno was a leader of the non-aligned movement during the Cold War, and his country hosted the conference in Bandung in 1955 which condemned racial discrimination in general and specifically called on apartheid South Africa to 'eradicate' racism. He was also instrumental in forming a short-lived left-wing alternative to the United Nations in the 1960s, the Conference of the New Emerging Forces.

Two South Africans, Moses Kotane and Molvi Cachalia, left the country without passports and went to Indonesia on travel documents provided by India. Kotane was very impressed with what he witnessed and wrote in the *New Age* newspaper:

"Although the conference has been in close session for a week, the interest of the local population in it is unflagging. Every day crowds collect in front of the hotels and houses where the delegates are staying. They stand there from six o'clock in the morning to ten o'clock at night. There is great excitement whenever ministers or heads of delegations come and go.... There are many unofficial observers here and hundreds of pressmen. There are unofficial delegations from the French colonies at Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, and from South Africa.... [South Africans] have a legitimate case, and everybody concerned here recognises and acknowledges this fact. They enjoy the sympathy and support of all the delegates."

What emerges clearly from this co-edited collection is that the link between Indonesians and South Africans dates to the seventeenth century through the many slaves, religious leaders, and political activists who were sent to the Cape. In the case of Shaykh Yusuf and Imam 'Abdullah, Islam is the glue that binds the people of the Cape with those of Makassar and Tidore respectively, from where they came, even though both were as much political activists as they were Islamic scholars.

The bare outline of the central figures is well known but bears repeating. Shaykh Yusuf Al-Makassari (1626-1699) was born in what is today Makassar, Indonesia. In 1644 he embarked on the Hajj to Makkah and spent time in Arabia where he deepened his knowledge of Islam through study. When he decided to return to Makassar in 1664 it was under the control of the VOC which was bent on securing a monopoly of the gold and spice trade. Shaykh Yusuf went to Java where he was welcomed by Sultan Agenf Tirtayasa. He married the Sultan's daughter and was appointed his advisor and chief religious judge. There was an uprising in Java around 1680 but Shaykh Yusuf managed to escape and embarked on resistance to the new regime. The Dutch promised him a pardon if he surrendered but when he did so in 1684, he was imprisoned at the castle of Batavia; transferred to Ceylon (Sri Lanka), and exiled to the Cape in 1694. There, he was placed on a farm outside of Cape Town which became a sanctuary for slaves and the site of the beginnings of an Islamic community. After Shaykh Yusuf died in 1699, the area around the farm was renamed Makassar. A shrine was erected over his grave and in 2005, he was posthumously awarded the Order of the Companion of O.R. Tambo in Gold for his contribution to the struggle against colonialism. The Indonesian Government honoured Shaykh Yusuf by acknowledging him as an Indonesian National Hero in 2008.

Imam ‘Abdullah ibn Qadi Abdus, known popularly as Tuan Guru, was from Tidore in Indonesia’s Ternate Islands. He was born in 1712 to a Qadhi and Prince and traces his genealogy to the Prophet Muhammad. He was brought to the Cape in 1780 as a “state prisoner” and incarcerated on Robben Island. Imam ‘Abdullah was a hafidh of the Qur’an and whilst in prison, he handwrote, from memory, several copies of the Qur’an. In 1781 Imam ‘Abdullah completed work on Islamic jurisprudence, *Ma’rifatul Islami wa’l Imani*, which dealt with ‘ilm al-kalam (Asharite principles of theology). After being freed from Robben Island in 1793 Imam ‘Abdullah married Kaija van de Kaap, and they had two sons Abdol Rakiep and Abdol Rauf. Imam ‘Abdullah established a madrasah at the Cape and it was through his teaching that he gained the appellation ‘Tuan Guru’, meaning mister teacher. After the British takeover of the Cape in 1795, Tuan Guru obtained permission from the Governor to build the Auwal Masjid, the first in South Africa. Tuan Guru passed away in 1807 at the age of 95 and lies buried at the Tana Baru Cemetery in Bo-Kaap, Cape Town.

Shaykh Yusuf and Tuan Guru were both recognised for their piety, the former concentrating on Sufi mysticism (tasawwuf), with the latter also inclined towards spirituality but specialising in establishing Islamic institutions and rituals. Both leaders were respected during their lifetimes and their Karamats continue to attract large numbers of visitors and pilgrims. This edited work is important on several levels. One of them is memory, which is a critical tool against forgetting. Both Shaykh Yusuf and Imam ‘Abdulla’s histories filter a deeply social and collective history and their biographies help forge a sense of community identity. The collective identity created through this collective memory can help to provide meaning and purpose for the present generations, while simultaneously helping us to grasp a past long gone but which lives on through their writings and the examples they set.

As the two editors note, there were few scholarly studies of note until the mid-20th century. As Shaykh Luqman Rakiep laments in his poem ‘Beacon of Light’:

these men of God – Auliya  
Allah – unsung heroes, by  
history books denied Yet have left  
on life at the Cape  
an indelible mark. (p. 40)

The few works that existed on Shaykh Yusuf were mostly short in length and appeared in newspapers and magazines, lacking in-depth and critical analysis. The 1980s and early 1990s saw a few dissertations being published, some of which were based on myth. Tuan Guru received even less attention with his life being studied from the late 1980s at a time of heightened anti-apartheid activism in South Africa, which led some Muslims in the Cape to search for “authentic” anti-colonial resistance models. University of South Africa academic Gerrie Lubbe, Suleman Dangor of the then University of Durban-Westville (UD-W), one of the foremost historians of early Cape Muslim history and chairperson of the Shaykh Yusuf Tricentenary Commemoration, Achmat Davids, Bunyamin Marasabessy, and Auwais Rafudeen, amongst others, examined different aspects of the life, works and legacy of Shaykh Yusuf and Imam ‘Abdulla, including the role of the mosque and madrassah in transmitting religious and cultural ideas in the community. The period since the mid-2000s saw more in-depth studies, such as the biographies of Tuan Guru by Bunyamin Marasabessy and Mohammad Amin Fareok and Shafiq Morton, an award-winning journalist and radio broadcaster with the community radio station Voice of the Cape.

The editors have brought together an impressive array of voices. Azyumardi Azra is a senior Professor of Islamic History and Culture at the Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University (UIN) of Jakarta; Baharuddin Abd Rahman is a lecturer at Jakarta's Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam (STAI); David Rawson is an experienced translator of Indonesian; the now-retired Ebrahim Rhoda, who was principal of the Strand Moslem Primary School in the Cape, holds an MA in Historical Studies and founded the Strand Moslem Council, Macassar Moslem Council, and the Cape Family Research Forum (CFRF); Ebrahim Salie is an independent South African based historian who has published extensively via academia on Muslims in the Cape during the colonial, segregation, apartheid and post-Apartheid periods; Brothers Muttaqin and Luqman Rakiep, descendants of Tuan Guru, are graduates of the International Islamic University of Medina and the University of Cape Town; Mustari Mustafa is a Professor of Philosophy at Alaudin State Islamic University in Makassar, South Sulawesi; Muzdalifah Sahib holds a PhD degree from the University of South Africa (UNISA) and teaches at Alaudin State Islamic University in Makassar, South Sulawesi; Suleman Dangor is an Emeritus Professor at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and Yousuf Dadoo is an Emeritus Professor at the University of South Africa (Unisa).

These contributors come from different backgrounds but all have impressive credentials as seen through their publications in international academic journals, as well as their work in the public sphere as diplomats, journalists, public lecturers, radio broadcasters, or through their involvement in community organisations. The book is organised in two parts, the first explores the work of Shaykh Yusuf and the second that of Imam Abdullah. There are many similarities: both were important religious personalities, both resisted the Dutch, both helped consolidate the nascent Muslim communities in the Cape, and the legacy of both continues into the present in both South Africa and Indonesia. The section on Shaykh Yusuf includes a bibliographic review; a discussion of his intellectual religiopolitical networks; his key ideas and philosophies; key teachings regarding Tawhid (oneness of God); an analysis of his Sufi concepts; and his treatises. The section on Imam 'Abdullah has chapters on his life journey and ideas of resistance which are rooted in the Sufi *Ba'Alawi* tradition, his educational philosophy as outlined in his *Compendium*; Tuan Guru's educational influence on the colonial Cape Muslim community; the impact of the Imam's ideas on his successors; and the relevance of his ideas in the contemporary period. If Luqman Rakiep was rightly concerned at the lack of recognition of these religious personalities, this excellent edited collection helps to fill some of the scholarly gaps; though much more work remains to be done on them as well as the many others who contributed to the establishment of Islam in South Africa.

Their examples and ideas echo loudly into present times. Just as colonial powers were seeking to subjugate Muslims and destroy Islamic beliefs, culture and political systems, many Muslims looking at the world today would likely experience the same sense of an onslaught on their beliefs and ways of living. The lesson from Shaykh Yusuf and Imam 'Abdullah is that to persevere for their suffering was a worldly test from God. Their example also touches on a broader theological debate within the Sunni world, whether it is permissible to resist unjust rulers, including Muslim ones. Some Ulema, usually in the employ of the state, argue that Muslims cannot rebel against authoritarian rule in societies where leaders conduct unjust policies that are clearly against the interests of Muslims as long they permit Islamic practices like prayer and fasting. When confronted with tyrannical leaders and unjust leaders, Shaykh Yusuf and Imam 'Abdulla take the view that to be a Muslim is to be a seeker of justice.

The next time you are in Cape Town, spare a thought for those who fought to build Islam and a way of life that refused to submit to the dictates of those who tried to erase their religion, and who declined to turn their gaze away from the broader racist oppression that was the lot of those who were defined as “non-white”, and in the case of slaves, as “non-people”.

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