THE EARLY STUDY OF *KALĀM* IN THE MALAY WORLD

By:

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ABSTRAK

Artikel ini membincangkan mengenai kesinambungan tradisi kalam di kalangan ulama' Melayu awalan bermula dari al-Fansuri sehingga al-Falimbani sebelum Syeikh Dawud al-Fatani. Perbincangan kalam atau tawhid ini telah diwarnai oleh pemahaman sufi terhadap konsep Lā ilāha illa Allāh. Tumpuan perbincangan ulama' Melayu awalan adalah tentang sifat-sifat dua puluh yang wajib diimani berasaskan kepada akidah mazhab al-Ash`arī yang dipelopori oleh Imam al-Sanūsī yang menekankan tentang yang pertama dalam agama ialah mengenali Allah dan Allah hanya boleh dikenali melalui sifat-sifatNya.

ABSTRACT

This article describes the topics of kalām that discussed by Malay ulama' beginning from Hamzah al-Fansuri to al-Falimbani before the coming of Syeikh Dawud al-Fatani in the 19th century. Kalām they produced was coloured by sorts of Sufi's traditional understanding of tawhidic word, Lā ilāha illa Allāh. But later seems that the Ash`arite doctrine of the twenty attributes of God formulated by al-Sanūsī became the main topic discussed among the early Malay 'ulamā' in maintaining that God can be known through His divine attributes on the basis that the first thing to be known in religion is to know Allah.

Keywords: *Kalam, Malay world, Dawud al-Fatani*

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INTRODUCTION

In fact the Ash`arite *kalām* had developed in the Arab world and later spread to the Malay world. It appears that the study of *kalām* in those regions was little more than the continuation of Arabic *kalām* transmitted and developed by the Malay religious scholars or Malay *ulamā'* who graduated from the growing Islamic learning centres in the Middle East. The first Malay scholar known so far to have done this was Ḥamzah al-Fanṣūrī (d. 1016/1607), followed by others such as al-Sumatrānī or al-Sumatrā'ī, al-Rānīrī and `Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Singkīlī or al-Fanṣūrī. In the early eighteenth century it became common for Malay students to travel to the Middle East starting with al-Falimbānī,[1] Shaykh Dāwūd (d. 1847) and others after them. This custom continued until very recently when the Malay world began to have Islamic Arabic schools of its own.

This article will attempt to examine the actual *kalām* that was discussed by `*ulamā'* before Shaykh Dāwūd al-Fatani, one of the famous Malay scholars in order to see how the ideas from Middle Eastern sources influenced the earlier writings on *kalām* presented in the Malay world.

ISLAMIC LEARNING IN THE MALAY WORLD

Islam is thought to have arrived in the Malay world as early as the sixth/twelfth century, brought from Gujarat.[2] On the other hand, the *batu bersurat* (documented stone) dated Rajab 702 (February, 1303), which was found later in Terangganu in northeastern Malaysia,[3] shows that Islam had been in this region. However, Islam was believed to have arrived in Samudera-Pasai (now in Indonesia) before 692-3/1292 as it was under Islamic rule during the reign of al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ, who died in 1297 A.D. Generally speaking, Islam was really established in the region by the time that Ibn Baṭūṭā travelled there in 746/1345. This Muslim traveller told that he found

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[1] Al-Falimbānī is `Abd al-Ṣamad from Palembang, now a famous province in Indonesia, who was educated in Patani. His father was a *Qāḍī* in Kedah (in present-day Northern Malaysia). In fact it is unknown exactly when he died but believed to have died in the battle in Pattani, now in Southern Thailand that occurred in the middle of nineteenth century ? So far no information that rold us about this fact.

[2] Cf. Azyumardi Azra (l992), "The Transmission of Islamic Reformism to Indonesia: Networks of Middle Eastern and Malay-Indonesian `Ulama' in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries", PhD Dissertation, New York: Columbia University, p. 28.

[3] Fatimi, S.Q. (1963), *Islam Comes to Malaysia* , (ed.) Shirle Gordon, Singapore: Malaysia Sociological Research Institute Ltd., p. 60.

the people in this region were the adherents of the Shāfi`ī *madhhab* led by al-Malik al-Ẓāhir (d. 1348 A.D.), the grand child of al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ.[4]

Nevertheless, this new religion was still in its very beginning in the region, and the scope of intellectual activities was not wide. But when Malacca (now in Malaysia) was established in 1403 A.D. and its ruler Parameswara converted to Islam, it became the first Islamic centre in the area, and continued until 1511 A.D. until the area was invaded by the Portuguese.

Concerning Islam in Malacca in the fifteenth century, we know that according to Winstedt the Malay Kingdom of Malacca during the reign of Sultan Mahmud became the centre of Islamic learning in the region soon after the decline of Pasai in 1409 A.D. Students of Islamic sciences, mostly from Java and the neighbouring states, congregated in this centre and studied *'Ilm al-Ḥadīth, Taṣawwuf, Sharī'ah* and *'Ilm al-Kalām*. Further, Winstedt mentions that *kalām* was studied and taught by a certain Abū Shukūr (his intellectual background is unclear), and the textual reference was his book, *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd* (along with *Kitāb Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* by al-Ghazālī and *Talkhīs al-Minhāj* by al-Imām al-Nawāwī).[5]

Following the invasion of the Portuguese in 1511 A.D. in Malacca, Acheh in North Sumatra became the new leading Malay Islamic centre. Many scholarly Islamic and Malay works, such as translations from Arabic to Malay were carried out in this new centre.[6] Thus, there were certainly two centres of Islamic learning, Malacca and Acheh, during the earlier period of Islam in the Malay World. After the decline of the centres one after the other, new places emerged to play the role of promoting Islamic learning. They were Java, Banjar, Riau, Patani, Terengganu and Kelantan, which benefited basically from the golden era of Acheh in terms of Islamic education.[7]   However, these new Islamic learning centres played a very important role in promoting Islamic education after the decline of Aceh in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[8] These growing centres had links

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[4] Mu'nis, Ḥusayn (1980), *Ibn Baṭūṭā wa Riḥlātuh*, Cairo: Dār al-Ma`ārif, pp. 191-192. See Auni Abdul Rahman (1971), *Islam dalam Sejarah Politik & Pemerintahan Alam Melayu*, Kuala Lumpur: Nurin Enterprise, p. 18.

[5] Winstedt, R.O. (1961), *The Malays, A Cultural History,* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., p.35.

[6] Engku Ibrahim Engku Ismail (1992), *Syeikh Dawud al-Fatani: Satu Analisis Peranan dan Sumbangannya terhadap Khazanah Islam di Nusantara*, Kuala Lumpur: Akademi Pengajian Melayu, p. 3.

[7] See Abdul Rahman Abdullah (1988), *Pemikiran Umat Islam di Nusantara,* Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, p. 63.

[8] *Ibid.,* pp. 63-64.

with the Arabs, who came to the area as traders and callers to the path of Allah (in Malay *pendakwah-pendakwah*).

During this time, growing number of Muslims from this area began to visit Mecca *al-Mukarramah*. Unfortunately we have no information about the exact dates when Malay people began arriving and studying at Mecca. However we shall see later how several prominent Malay `*ulamā'*, who graduated from this "blessed centre" played their part in the process of Islamization in the Malay world.

THE INFLUENCE OF MIDDLE-EASTERN ISLAMIC LEARNING CENTRES

The Middle-Eastern region has played a very important role in the development of Islamic scholarship in the Malay world even until today. This is natural because Islam was revealed in that part of the world, that is in Mecca where Muslims from the Malay world travelled to perform their pilgrimage but did not always return home when they got an opportunity to study in that blessed holy place. Almost all the famous Malay `*ulamā'* graduated from Mecca until the early twentieth century when al-Azhar University in Cairo began to be visited by the Malay Muslims. Historically, there were two main places, Mecca and Cairo, that produced the great number of Malay *ulamā'* whose roles are evident in contributing to the Islamic development in the Malay world.

Mecca

Muslims from all over the world visit Mecca to perform the *ḥajj*. Before performing this religious obligation, early pilgrims often took the opportunity of studying religious sciences, especially jurisprudence, in order to help them perform this religious worship correctly.[9] Even, after performing the *ḥajj,* some of them would stay in Mecca, continuing to learn, teach and compose works there.[10] It was said that some distinguished scholars took

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[9] See McDonnell, Mary Byrne (1990), "Patterns of Muslim Pilgrimage from Malaysia, 1885-1985", *Muslim Travellers: Pilgrimage, Migration, and the Religious Imagination*, (ed.) Eickelman, Dale F. and Piscatori, James, London: Routledge, p. 116.

[10] For instance, between 1853 A.D. and 1859 A.D., 13,000 Malay pilgrims went to Mecca but only 5,600 returned home. See Watson, Charles R. (1913), "The Moslem of Sumatra As a Type", *The Muslim World* 3, p. 163. I personally see that a lot of Malay people and my relatives as well have done so. They originally went to perform the *ḥajj* but did not return home. My uncle, Haji Wan Mustafa (b. 1935) for instance, was sent by his father to study in Mecca in 1950 A.D. and went back

certain corners in the grand mosque to offer their teaching to the seekers who wished to pursue religious knowledge. Even until today such traditional learning can be seen in the mosque.[11]

In Mecca the teaching was conducted through the system of circles known as *niẓām al-ḥalaqāt*. Many religious books or *kitab-kitab agama* in Malay and Arabic, mostly on *fiqh, uṣūl, tafsīr, kalām* and *ḥadīth*, were used as texts in this kind of traditional study. They would be read word by word line by line from the first page until the end of the book. The students just sat before the masters listening carefully and obediently to their lectures.

Under this system, after fulfilling several years of study certification of students' scholarly competence was given by their respective teachers who had tutored them and observed their intellectual abilities. Traditionally, a verbal certificate (*ijāzah*) would be conferred upon them, before they returned to their homelands.

We can see the fact that the same traditional system of learning based on *taqlīd* [12]was fully transmitted to the Malay world through those traditional schools popularly known as *madrasah*, or *pondok* (in Malaysia) or *pesantren* (in Indonesia) and *dayah* (in Acheh). In Minangkabau, they were called *surau (*a small hall for prayers). The master of *pondok* or *pesantren* is called *Tok Guru* in Malaysia and *Kiyai* in Indonesia. In fact, "*pondok*" literally means a hotel, from "*funduq*" in Arabic, because the students' quarters were exactly like rooms in a hotel. Even now, the so-called "*pondok* system" still exists in the Malay world, especially in Pattani, Kelantan, Kedah and Indonesia.

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in 1967 A.D. He continued to master his farther's *pondok* teachings in Gajah Mati Pendang Kedah. Many of his friends and relatives have remained in this holy place until now.

[11] In the Masjid al-Ḥarām in Mecca there were teaching activities in a corner of the mosque led by a known religious teacher or master open for the praying worshippers to come and sit. Some Malay speaking `*ulamā*' became teachers in this mosque, a practice which has continued to the present. My friend, who visited Mecca in April 1999 told me that he had attended corner teaching in the mosque of al -Ḥarām and enjoyed the teachings delivered by a Malay-Saudi born teacher named Shaykh Muḥammad `Abd al-Qādir al-Mandīlī. This teacher, he said, mostly warned the Malays about many ongoing *bidʿah* practices in the Malay community (in Malaysia and Indonesia) such as popular *mawlid al-rasūl* gatherings and *al-barzanjī* recitation.

[12] Hurgronje, Snouck (1931), *Mekka in the Latter Part of the 19th Century,* London: Luzac & Co., p. 165.

Its popularity in Malaysia in particular began to decline when the government began to establish religious schools, especially after independence in l957 A.D. However, Sharifah Zaleha argued that the establishment of such religious schools or *madrasah-madrasah* may be traced back to the ideas of reformation prompted by Wahhabī movements as well as a secularisation process Malay society entered.[13] But, with special reference to the decline of *pondok* system against the growing number of religious schools, it was important to continue the struggle of the "young group" known as "*Kaum Muda*" that was strongly influenced by Muhammad `Abduh's ideas of Islamic reformation (*tajdīd*) in Egypt.[14]

Historically speaking, the first Islamic teaching introduced through the traditional system of *pondok* was in Patani in the twelfth century, earlier than in Kedah and Kelantan. Shukri Haji Muda in his book *Detik-Detik Sejarah Kelantan* has noted that Patani `ulamā' came to spread Islam in Kelantan in 545/1150.[15] In 551 /1156 those `ulamā' who acted as *muballigh-muballigh* (Muslim callers) reached some other parts of the Malay archipelago, including Acheh and Kalimantan. In Acheh, there is an old grave known as *Keramat Binjai* (the Saint of Binjai) which probably belongs to one of the Patani `ulamā'. His connection with Semala *Pondok* in Patani may explain the name of the river Semala which runs close to the grave.

According to Wan Mohammad Shaghir Abdullah,[16] there is also a grave named *Keramat Lumbang* at Sumbas in West Kalimantan, which is thought to belong to a *Muballigh* from Patani named Shaykh `Abd al-Jalīl al-Faṭānī. He is believed to have arrived there in the fifteenth century. As a sign of the importance of Patani `ulamā', the second *muftī* (Islamic legal adviser) of Mempawah in Western Kalimantan, was a Patani scholar, Shaykh `Alī bin Faqīh al-Faṭānī (d. 1012/1603) who reportedly came from

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[13] Sharifah Zaleha Syed Hasan (1988),"From Saints to Bureaucrats: A Study of the Development of Islam in the State of Kedah in Malaysia", PhD Dissertation, Michigan: University Microfilms International Ann Arbor, p. 102.

[14] Among the leaders of *Kaum Muda* movement were Shaykhs al-Hadi and Tahir Jalal al-Din who graduated from al-Azhar. See Abu Bakar Hamzah (1981), *Al-Imam: Its Role in Malay Society 1906-908*, M.Phil Dissertation, Canterbury: University of Kent.

[15] Saad Shukri Haji Muda and Abdullah al-Qari Haji Salleh (1971), *Detik2 Sejarah Kelantan,* Kota Bharu, Kelantan: Pustaka Aman Press, pp. 27-28.

[16] He is an Indonesian reseacher working on the Malay `ulamā' now living in Malaysia. We very much appreciate his iniatiave in promoting all Malay `ulamā' through his editings and writings on them as well as making their major works available currently especially in Malaysia (republished and romanised).

Patani to this area with 40 ships.[17] This fact deserves attention, because if that is the case, Patani became a leading centre of Islamic *da`wah* and education in the Malay world such as Malacca and Acheh.

This story, in fact, shows that the Patani `ulamā' who, of course, would have been educated in the local *pondok*, spread to Kelantan and Aceh and Kalimantan of Indonesia. These `ulamā' were probably educated by Mecca-educated teachers, who are believed to have visited the Malay archipelago especially Patani in this early period knowing that there was no information telling us insofar when exactly students of Malay world began to study in the Arab world. So in the century mentioned the region received the coming of Arab teachers that led eventually to bring the students to travel to the Arab world where they were scholarly educated Islamically. Nevertheless the Patani `ulamā' through their *pondok* institutions played a very important role in contributing to the fecundity and enrichment of Islam in their region, as well as in spreading Islam to the Malay world from Kelantan to Sumatra.

Dr Safie Ibrahim, the Malay scholar, in his PhD thesis, commenting on the role of Makkan `ulamā', says that the Mecca-educated `ulamā' and their students were largely responsible for the spread of Islamic religious knowledge and practice in the Malay world or *Nusantara*. He further explains that nothing can be explained if the `ulamā' and their religious institutions did not exist, as the area was under the influence of Buddhist and Hindu culture and religion.[18]

Safie further argues that a *pondok* education was a main factor in forming religious ideas and influencing the conduct and behaviour of the Muslims. It contributed much to the transformation of traditional religious social life from early times through the nineteenth and into the twentieth century.[19] Needless to say, all the *pondok* `ulamā' were educated according to the Islamic traditional learning mostly at Mecca.[20] Even students from

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[17] W.M. Shaghir Abdullah (Rabī' al-Awwal/Rabī' al-Akhīr 1397/March/April l977), "Da'wah Islamiyyah 'Ulama' Besar Fathani", in *Pengasuh* 422, Kota Bharu: Majlis Ugama Islam dan Adat Istiadat Melayu Kelantan, p. 46.

[18] Safie bin Ibrahim (1987), *Islamic Religious Thought in Malaya 1930-1940*, PhD Thesis, New York: the Columbia University, p. 3.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 28.

[20] There were also `ulamā' educated in Kelantan and Patani. For instance, the Kedah's pondok `ulamā' such as Haji Yahya Junayd (d. 2001) of Pondok Batu 16 Padang Lumat and Haji Othman Yunus (d. 1989) of Pondok Bukit Besar, Haji Husayn (d. 2000) of Pondok Langgar were fully educated in Kelantan even they did not study either in Patani nor in Mecca. Haji Mahmud Yusuf (d. 1973) and Haji Wan Mustafa of Pondok Gajah Mati went to study in Patani and travelled

the *pondok-pondok* would go to Mecca on the suggestion and permission of their *pondok* master, and traditionally the master would send them to his former teachers at Mecca.[21]

In a much later development, after Ḥamzah al-Fanṣūrī,[22], the significance of Mecca in educating the Malay `*ulamā'* can be easily appreciated when examining Nūr al-Dīn al-Rānīrī (d. 1069/1658), a very important figure in the Malay world, both scholastically and politically. Al-Rānīrī went to Mecca and Medina to perform pilgrimage in 1030 /1621.[23] He was thought to have lived in Mecca from 1031/1621 to 1047/1637[24] where he studied under Sayyid `Umar al-`Aydrus.[25] Al-Attas suggests that while he was there he maintained contact with scholars and Sufis, especially from India and Haḍaramawt, from which he descended. At the same time, he probably had contact with scholars coming from the Malay world.[26]

Such contacts perhaps inspired al-Rānīrī to travel to the Malay world, where he may have lived for some time in Pahang before heading to Acheh in North Sumatra[27] which had become the centre of Muslim traders and merchants after the fall of Malacca in 917/1511. Acheh would be an appropriate place because it was ruled by Sulṭān Iskandar Thānī `Alā'

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then to further their studies in Mecca. Haji Wan Izzuddin of Pondok Gajah Mati as well began his studies in his father's pondok, then travelled to India (in 1965), Mecca and Cairo (came back in 1974). Al-Ustadh Azhari (d. 2001) of Pondok Batu 16 studied in India. All the scholars mentioned are quite known in the state of Kedah.

[21] For instance, I was told that Shaykh Ibrāhīm `Abd al-Qādir (d. 1968 A.D.), sent his pupil, Shaykh `Abd al-Qādir al-Mandilī (Indonesia) (d.1967 A.D.), to his brother teaching in Mecca, Shaykh Ismā`īl `Abd al-Qādir (d. 1965 A.D.) to take charge of educating him. Shaykh `Abd al-Qādir al-Mandilī became a famous teacher at the Masjid al-Ḥarām and an author of several religious books. It was said that Shaykh Ismā`īl did not recognise his brother Shaykh Ibrāhīm's scholarship but did so then when he received the coming of Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir to Mecca.

[22] Hamzah al-Fansuri also –before al-Rānīrī - travelled to Mecca and other parts of the Arabic world. But there was so far no information about his studying there as well as the masters under whom he studied.

[23] Al-Attas, Syed Muhammad Naquib (n.d.), *A Commentary on the Ḥujjat al-Siddīq of Nūr al-Dīn al-Rānīrī*, Kuala Lumpur: Ministry of Culture Malaysia, p. 4.

[24] *Ibid*., p. 7.

[25] Abdullah Arif (1987), *Tokoh-Tokoh Sastera Melayu*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, p. 86.

[26] Al-Attas, Syed Muhammad Naquib (n.d.), *op.cit.*, p. 4.

[27] It was uncertain when al-Rānīrī arrived Acheh whether in 1577 A.D. or 1637 A.D.

al-Dīn Mughayat Shāh (d. 1051/1641), who seemed concerned about the development of Islam in Acheh.

Through the Sulṭān's support, Nūr al-Dīn al-Rānirī was able to contribute widely to the process of the Islamization of Acheh. According to Shaghir Abdullah, this outstanding scholar had as many as thirty-four titles of his books.[28] In Acheh al-Rāniri began by fighting against the belief in *wujūdiyyah* (unity of being) which had been introduced by Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrāni or al-Sumatrā'i, the strong disciple of Ḥamzah al-Fanṣūrī[29]

According to al-Rāniri, the doctrine of *wujūdiyyah* was absolutely astray and misguided. Thus, all the books on it were destroyed and its adherents were punished accordingly. As a result, the doctrine ceased to spread. Ordinary people at the time were probably not in a position to understand such an abstruse matter.

Perhaps another great scholar from the Malay world to study in Mecca was Shaykh `Abd al-Ra'ūf bin `Ali al-Singkīli or al-Fanṣūri. He was born in Singkil, North Sumatra (now in Southern Acheh) in about 1024/1615 and died in 1102/1690 or 1105/1693.[30] `Abd al-Ra`ūf was considered to be the greatest Achenese religious scholar of the seventeenth century. Between 1050/1640 and 1060/1650, he reportedly travelled to Ḥijāz and Yemen to study, and was there until he returned to his homeland, Acheh, in about 1072/1661.[31]

In Medina, he learned at the foot of a prominent scholar, the Kurdish-born Ibrāhim al-Kurani. In 1072/1661, and after spending nineteen years in Mecca learning and teaching hundreds or even thousands of Indonesians studying there, he returned to Sumatra. He was then invited to Acheh to teach many Javanese who were coming there to seek religious knowledge.

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[28] See W.M. Shaghir Abdullah (1420H/1999M), *Penyebaran Islam dan Silsilah Ulama'Sejagat Dunia Melayu,* Kuala Lumpur: Khazanah Fathaniyah, p. 7.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 8.

[30] `Abd al-Ra'ūf is known as al-Singkīli (al-Singkeli) from Singkil of Indonesia. See Riddell, Peter (December 1984), "The Sources of `Abd Al-Ra'ūf's Tarjumān Al-Mustafid", *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society,* 57 part 2, pp. 113-118. He also is known as al-Fanṣūri, see W.M. Shaghir Abdullah (1991), *Khazanah Karya Pusaka Asia Tenggara,* Kuala Lumpur: Khazanah Fathaniyah, pp. 42-190. The latter seems to mention "Al-Fanṣūri" instead of al-Singkīli and does not refer to him as al-Singkīli. He argues that all the Malay works used al-Fanṣūri instead of al-Singkīli. `Abd al-Ra'ūf also was said to be a relative of Ḥamzah al-Fanṣūri.

[31] See Riddell, Peter (December 1984), *op. cit.*, pp. 113.

In addition, it was reported that many pilgrims, on the way via the Red Sea to Mecca, stopped at this place for study.

`Abd al-Ra'ūf was a Shaṭṭāriyyah master and taught at Acheh for almost thirty years.[32] His scholarship is evident from his translation of *Tafsīr al-Bayḍāwī* into the Malay language.[33] This book was published in Istanbul in 1302/1884 and Egypt in 1303/1885.[34] In fact, `Abd al-Ra'ūf tried to develop his teaching on the basis of what he received from the Middle East and especially from Mecca.

Other prominent `*ulamā'* from the Malay world who went to Mecca[35] include Muhammad Yūsuf al-Maqassarī (d. 1111/1699) and `Abd al-Ṣamad al-Falimbānī. Both these scholars may be mentioned here since their works have survived until the present. It seems that the `*ulamā'* who went to Mecca were from various places such as Acheh, Makassar and Palembang, in the present Republic of Indonesia, although al-Falimbānī was apparently raised in Kedah (now in northern Malaysia), because his father was a *qāḍī* (religious judge) there, and he studied in Patani before travelling to Mecca. As far as Patani is concerned the most famous `*ulamā'* from there is Shaykh Dāwūd bin `Abd Allāh (d. 1847 A.D.). He was said to have arrived in Mecca not long after al-Falimbānī's arrival and soon joined his study circle in Masjid al-Ḥarām, perhaps studying under the same teachers.

In sum, Mecca-educated `*ulamā'* played a very important role in the development of Islamic scholarship in the Malay world. Historically speaking, the role that was based on *pondok* education was very influential, especially when it received the support of the rulers.[36] However, in the process of modernization and political development in the region, Islamic traditional learning championed by *pondok* `*ulamā'* began to decrease

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[32] Pearson, M.N. (1994), *Pious Passengers The Hajj in Earlier Times,* London: Hurst & Company, p. 74.

[33] The original title in Arabic is *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd bi al-Jāwī* or *Tafsīr al-Bayḍāwī al-Sharīf.* See W.M. Shaghir Abdullah (1991), *op.cit.*, p. 157.

[34] See Fang, Liaw Yock (1975), *Sejarah Kesusasteraan Melayu Klasik,* Singapore: Pustaka Nasional, pp. 197-198. According to Riddell's observation the *tafsīr* does not seem al-Bayḍāwī's rather *Tafsīr* al-Jalālayn. He seems to question this fact. Riddell talked about "*Islam in the Malay world*", in the weekly seminar, Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian Muslim Relations, Selly Oak Colleges, 19.3.l997. I thank him very much for giving me his article on al-Singkīlī published by *JMBRAS.*

[35] Perhaps most of them just came to further their religious studies in Mecca as they had already learned in *pondok* before going there. Sometimes their visit was recommended by their teachers sending them to their original teacher in Mecca.

[36] It was perhaps the kind of Islamic studies being available during the time.

when the centre of Islamic learning changed from Mecca to Cairo in Egypt especially in the university of al-Azhar. The first Islamic university that Muslims ever knew or in other word they began to get educated under the systemetic Islamic learning.

Cairo

The University of al-Azhar (al-Jāmi`at al-Azhar) which was founded by the Fatimid dynasty in Cairo more than a thousand years ago (in 4/10th century),[37] had long been known as the centre for Islamic studies to which Muslims from throughout the world came to study. It is very unfortunate that there is no proper information about the history of scholarly relations between Egypt, particularly al-Azhar, and the Malay world, even though al-Azhar was founded a thousand years ago.

The relations with al-Azhar cannot be traced back earlier than 1318/1900. This date is to be assumed on the basis of what was written by one of the famous Patani `ulamā' after Shaykh Dāwūd, Shaykh Aḥmad Muḥammad Zayn al-Faṭānī (d. 1325/1908).[38] He appreciated the University of Al-Azhar as an excellent centre for Islamic studies and encouraged his people to go to Egypt to further their studies.[39] Al-Azhar was very significant in his scholarly life. This can be understood from his deep attachment to this university expressed in several lines of Arabic poetry as he says:

> *I headed to the mosque of al-Azhar which was shining brightly with the flowers of knowledge and science. I stayed here to pick up its flowers and fruits from each of its wonderful branch. I spent many years pursuing knowledge and courses (in this campus) but was not seriously studying (them) (expressing his humbleness in the way that traditional scholars mostly did).[40]*

From this, he must be assumed to be among the very earliest Malay scholars who came from Southeast Asia to study in Egypt, at Majlis Jāmi`

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[37] See Jomier, J. (1979), "Al-Azhar", *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 1, Leiden: E.J. Brill, p. 814.

[38] This scholar was born in a village named Jambu, Jerim, Patani, on 10th April 1856 (5th Sha`bān 1272) and was brought to Mecca when he was six years old. In Mecca he was a playmate of Rector Aḥmad Dahlān of Java who became a famous `ulamā' and *Muftī* of Mecca.

[39] See W.M. Shaghir Abdullah (1992), *Al-Allamah Syeikh Ahmad Al Fathani Ahli Fikir Islam dan Dunia Melayu* Jilid 1, Kuala Lumpur: Khazanah Fathaniyah, pp. 18-19.

[40] *Ibid*., pp. 20-21.

al-Azhar - as he specifically mentioned – until about 1321/1903. He was said to have been there for seven years.[41]

Shaykh Aḥmad al-Faṭānī was accompanied by his pupil Haji Muḥammad Yūsuf, locally known as Tok Kenali of Kelantan (1283/1866 – 1352/1933).[42] The latter became a very famous Malay scholar living in Kelantan (now in Malaysia) who learnt under Shaykh Aḥmad. As the founder and editor of *Majallah Pengasuh* (Magazine of the Educator), Tok Kenali spread his ideas through his writings published monthly in this periodical.[43] Fortunately, this magazine remains available in Malaysia until now published completely in *Jāwī*.

Before going to Egypt, Shaykh Aḥmad reportedly went to study at Bayt al-Maqdis.[44] If that is the case, probably he was the first Patani `ulamā known so far to have visited Masjid al-Aqṣā in Jerusalem.[45] Unfortunately, his activities in *al-Quds al-Sharīf* (now Jerusalem) and the length of his stay there were unknown. He reportedly returned to Mecca then and stayed there until he died in 1325/1908.

After Shaykh Aḥmad's encouragement, Malay Muslims increasingly sent their sons to study at al-Azhar. Then, al-Azhar began to be visited by many students from the Malay world. It was said that Shaykh Ṭāhir Jalāl al-Dīn (d. 1375/1956), whose son is now the Governor of Penang, and later Shaykh al-Hādī (d. 1353/1934), when they returned to the Malay peninsula, joined with Za`ba (d. 1390/1970), a famous author and Malay literalist, to call Malay people to the idea of *al-Iṣlāḥ wa al-Tajdīd* (Islamic Reformation and Renewal).

This idea, propagated initially by the Muslim reformist Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (d. 1315/1897) and Shaykh Muḥammad `Abduh (d. 1323/1905) in Egypt, inspired them to work in order to promote the progress of Malay mentality and actions. They, the so called "Malay Reformists" were known then as *Kaum Muda* (young group) struggling to free Malay Muslims from backwardness and so-called blind imitation (*taqlīd*). Thus, the reputation

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[41] al-`Amūdī, Muḥammad Sa`īd & `Alī, Aḥmad (1398/1978), *Mukhtaṣar Kitāb Nashr al-Nawr wa al-Ẓahar*, vol. 1, Saudi Arabia: Nādī al-Ṭā'if al-Adabī, p. 75.

[42] Johns, A.H. (1984), "Islam in the Malay World", in *Islam in Asia*, eds. Raphael Israeli and Anthony H.Johns, vol. 2, Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, p. 134.

[43] Abdullah al-Qari bin Haji Salleh (1974), "To' Kenali: His Life and Influence," in Roff, William (ed.), *Kelantan: Religion, Society, Politics in a Malay State,* Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, pp. 87-100.

[44] Johns, A.H. (1984), *op.cit.*, p. 16.

[45] It was said that Ḥamzah al-Fanṣūrī also ever visited al-Quds.

of al-Azhar began to be known as one of modernization, as opposed to the more traditional reputation of Mecca.

THE BEGINNINGS OF *KALĀM* IN THE MALAY WORLD

In fact, information regarding the precise date of the beginnings of *kalām* and the exact topics of its discussions and teachings in the Malay world is very difficult to obtain. This is because *kalām* was not discussed in its earlier and formative stages. In the Malay world discussions about *kalām* took a different form. It was introduced, discussed and studied as part of an intellectual effort to strengthen the local *tawḥīd* perspectives and as a part of general Islamic science teaching. *Kalām* was discussed together with *fiqh* and Sufism, the fundamentals supposed to be studied by every single Muslim. Sometimes, scholastic theology (*kalām*) was even regarded as a subdivision of law.[46]

On the other hand, the concern that motivated Malay `ulamā' to write works on *kalām* was the important statement, *awwal al-dīn maʿrifat Allāh* (religiosity must begin by knowing Allah), which was assumed to come from Abūl Ḥasan al-Ash`arī[47] to whom the Malay *kalām* was originated. The way to meet this obligation was through learning about *tawḥīd* (the unity of God) which is the best science providing Muslims with considerable information, leading them to know Allah as fully as possible. In the Malay world, *tawḥīd* was the essence of *kalām* discussion, to the extent that *kalām* appears to mean nothing more than *tawḥīd*, which is related to the basic faith of Islam. In this context, Abdul Rahman Abdullah argues that "*kalām* that developed in the Malay world was actually based on the teachings of the twenty *ṣifāt* of al-Sanūsī".[48]

So, the Malay *kalām* writings were introduced under the sciences of faith (`ilm al-`Aqīdah or al-Iʿtiqād) (dogma), *uṣūl al-dīn* (the roots of religion), *tawḥīd*, *ṣifāt* (the qualities of God and His essence) and, life after death.[49] On the other hand, the beginning of *kalām* in the Malay world was

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[46] *Islamic Creeds, a Selection,* transl. Watt, W.M. (1994), Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, p. 3. According to Ibn Khaldūn, the famous Muslim historian (d. 808/1402), Islam consists of two kinds of duties, those of the body (of action) which are regulated by *fiqh* (jurisprudence), and those of the heart which are duties of faith and are regulated by *kalām* (theology).

[47] Al-Maghribī, `Alī `Abd al-Fattāḥ (1994), *Ḥaqīqat al-Khilāf Bayn al-Mutakallimīn,* Cairo: Maktabah Wahbah, p. 64. However, in several *kitab-kitab Jāwī* this statement was attributed to the Prophet without mentioning any *isnād*.

[48] See Abdul Rahman Abdullah (1988), *op.cit.,* p.115.

[49] Matheson, Virginia and Hooker, M.B., *Jawi Literature in Patani: the Maintenance of an Islamic Tradition,* p. 36. See Ḥusayn Nuṣayr bin Muḥammad Ṭayyib (n.d.),

connected with the practice of Sufism known as Sufism-*tawḥīd*. We can see Malay and Indonesian authors discussing the matter in their works.

SUFI *KALĀM*

Sufi *kalām* means the *kalām* as understood and presented by practising Sufis. In the very early stage, i.e., the seventeenth century, *kalām* in the Malay world was introduced as *tawḥīd* along with Sufism, to the extent that the real understanding of *tawḥīd* should be obtained through Sufism. The early Malay scholars began to introduce *kalām* in the form of Sufi-*tawḥīd* by mainly referring to *waḥdat al-wujūd* of Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn `Arabī (d. 638/1240) and the theory of "*al-insān al-kāmil*" (The Perfect Man*)* championed by `Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī, who developed the teachings of Ibn `Arabī. [50] With regard to this typical kind of *kalām* we can refer to the two earliest known Malay scholars, the master and his disciple, who talked about Sufi *kalām*, though under the title of the unity of Allah or *tawḥīd*.[51]

Ḥamzah al-Fanṣūrī (d. 1016/1607)

The actual *kalām* of Ḥamzah al-Fanṣūrī has not yet been discovered, and his best known contribution was about mysticism. Of course, mysticism is part of Islamic tradition and its relationship to the faith is beyond question. However, we are not going to discuss in detail his particular contribution here, because he was primarily much concerned with the theories of *waḥdat al-wujūd* or *wujūdiyyah*. This became a controversial issue in South East Asia, and especially in Acheh where al-Fanṣūrī lived and taught.

In fact, Ḥamzah al-Fanṣūrī had a *kitāb* discussing the *ṣifāt* of Allah. He begins with a famous statement "*man `arafa nafsahu faqad `arafa rabbahu*" meaning "he who knows himself knows his Lord".[52] Here Ḥamzah al-Fanṣūrī seems to refer to the quality of thinking which brings someone to know his God. Thus, in the sixth chapter of his treatise (78 pages) he highlighted the understanding of *ṣifāt* in accordance with *ahl al-sulūk* (Sufis) that the

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Uṣūl al-Tawḥīd,(Penang: the United Press, p. 6.

[50] Abdul Rahman Abdullah (1988)*,op.cit.,* pp. 149 and 153.

[51] *Tawḥīd* which literally means the unity (of Allah), is central to *kalām* and it is concerned with the unity and attributes of Allah. In the Malay world, the popular term is *tawḥīd* instead of *kalām*, because Muslim people in the area seemed more concerned to understand than to argue and debate.

[52] This was also assumed to be one of *Aḥādīth* (Ḥadīths) of the Prophet, peace be upon him. See W.M. Shaghir Abdullah (1420H/1999M), *op.cit.*, p. 32. This statement is also attributed to the Muslim philosophers. See Khulayf, Fatḥ Allāh (1974), *Ibn Sīnā wa Madhhabuh fī al-Nafs,* Beirut: Dār al-Aḥad, p. 138.

ṣifāt of Allah are His own *Dhāt* (*ʿayn al-dhāt*) in which His Living and His Knowledge are the same as Himself.[53] He disagreed with al-Ghazālī's idea that *Sifāt* of Allah are not Himself and not the others.[54] As we know, the Muʿtazilites and philosophers or *al-ḥukamā'* held the same idea that the attributes are Himself. But according to the Ashʿarite scholars, the attributes are superadded (*zā'idah*) to Allah.

Generally, Ḥamzah al-Fanṣūrī had the view that the real understanding of *tawḥīd* should be grasped through the concept of Sufism through a group of Sufis namely *ahl al-sulūk* as he suggested. The same understanding of *tawḥīd* was defended later by Shaykh Burhān Pūrī (d. 1030/1620), a Sufi from India,[55] and Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrānī (d. 1040/1630).

In fact, the key concept of Fanṣūrī's *tawḥīd* was "*lā ilāha illā Allāh*" (there is no god but Allah). This formula was always known as the word of *tawḥīd* (*kalimat al-tawḥīd*), which was based on the Unity of Existence (*waḥdat al-wujūd*).[56] The formula seems to be simple, but it was very significant to the Sufis as they tried to interpret the hidden meaning of the negation of any other god prior to accepting Allah. Al-Fanṣūrī's attempt to spread this conception of *tawḥīd* based on Ibn `Arabi's idea seems to have been continued by al-Sumatrānī.

Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrānī (d. 1039/1629)

Along with al-Fanṣūrī, another controversial figure in Acheh was his disciple Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrānī. The latter had dominated the religious-intellectual life of the Malay-Indonesian Muslims before the rise of Nūr al-Dīn al-Rānīrī.[57] Perhaps his position as foreign minister of Acheh during the reign of Sultan Iskandar Muda (d. 1046/1636) had influenced his intellectual situation.[58] He was known as a Sufi and his writings on Sufism

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[53] See Hamzah al-Fanṣūrī, *Manuscript MSS 2538,* Kuala Lumpur: Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia (PNM), pp. 18-19.

[54] *Ibid*., p. 19. This became the issue discussed by many Muslim theologians. It seems here that al-Imām al-Ghazālī was already known in the Malay world and perhaps paved the way for al-Falimbānī and later Shaykh Dāwūd to translate al-Ghazālī's work.

[55] He was Muḥammad bin Faḍl Allāh a student of Shaykh Wajīh al-Dīn al-`Alawī. See Abdul Rahman Abdullah (1988), *op.cit.*, p. 154.

[56] See Preface in al-Attas, Syed M. Naquib (1963), *Some Aspects of Sufism as understood and Practised among the Malays,* Singapore: Malaysian Sociological Research Institute Ltd..

[57] Azyumardi Azra (l992) *op. cit*., p. 350.

[58] Johns, A.H. (1991), "From Coastal Settlement to Islamic School and City: Islamization in Sumatra, the Malay Peninsular and Java", *Hamdard Islamicus*, 4, p. 11.

were considered suitable only for the particular group of Sufis who had reached the highest level of Sufism (*muntahā* level).[59] He seems to have been influenced by the ideas of Muḥyi al-Dīn ibn `Arabī, especially about *al-qalb* (the heart). His key work was *Anwār al-Daqā'iq,* which explains Ibn `Arabī's ideas of Sufism.[60]

Needless to say, the ideas of Ibn `Arabī raised disputes among Muslim scholars, and some of them condemned the concept totally. Actually the ideas of Ibn `Arabī were abstruse, and the masses found them difficult to understand. Most important was the fact that Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrānī introduced Sufi terms into the Malay language, translating them from the Arabic writings of Ibn `Arabī. It seems that al-Sumatrānī had followed the ideas of his antecedent, Ḥamzah al-Fanṣūrī.

In sum, the *kalām* that grew in the Malay world meant *tawḥīd*, which was interpreted in a Sufi way in accordance with the concept of *waḥdat al-wujūd* of Ibn `Arabī that seemed to have influenced both these early scholars. Other Sufi figures influencing them were `Abd al-Karim al-Jīlī and Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī.[61] However, the teaching had become unpopular by the time of al-Rānīrī, who centered his attack against such mystical understanding of *tawḥīd*.[62] Nevertheless, after al-Rānīrī, *waḥdat al-wujūd* seems to have returned to Acheh when the outstanding `Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Fanṣūrī came and defended it.

THE TOPICS AND STYLES OF MALAY *KALĀM*

The topics and styles of Malay *kalām* are those which came into the Malay world in the earliest period of Islam especially if compared to the *kalām* discussed in the Arab world. Early Malay `*ulamā'* and theologians took up the six traditional articles of faith, belief in God, His angels, His Scriptures, His apostles, the last day and predestination, and discussed them and their relevance in time and space.[63] In his book on the topics of Malay theology, Mohd Nor Ngah lists them as follows:

    a)   the twenty attributes of Allah

    b)   the essence of Allah

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[59] W.M. Shaghir Abdullah (1991), *op.cit.,* pp. 30-32.

[60] See his "Risālat Jawāmi` al-A`māl", *MS 1556,* Kuala Lumpur: Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia. In the *Risālat*, al-Sumatrānī used to refer to many Sufis such as Ibn `Arabī, al-Ghazālī, al-Rāzī, al-Qushayrī and Sa`ad al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī.

[61] See W.M. Shaghir Abdullah (1420H/1999M), *op.cit.*, p.5.

[62] W.M. Shaghir Abdullah (1990), *Faridatul Fara-id Syeikh Ahmad al-Fathani,* Kuala Lumpur: Khazanah Fathaniyah, p. l.
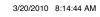
[63] Matheson and Hooker, *op.cit.,* p. 35.

c) the attributes of the Messengers of Allah

d) the origins of man and the creation of the universe

e) the process of creation

f) the creation of Adam and Eve

g) the soul of man

h) the punishment in the grave

i) Paradise and Hell

j) the communication with Allah

k) the freedom of man

l) the purposes of the creation of man and others

m) Angels

n) The Jinns[64]

Those topics were arranged within a framework of *kalām* discussed by almost all Malay ʾ*ulamā'* in their works introducing them as works on *kalām*. It seems that the attributes of Allah became the most popular topic discussed in Malay books on *kalām*. Generally, the *kalām* teachings, as with the other Islamic sciences, were presented for the purpose of teaching or imparting religious information rather than for theological discussion or debate.

For the style of *kalām* presented in the Malay world*,* we can find that the basic teachings regarding prayer, fasting, pilgrimage etc., were presented alongside with *kalām* topics, apparently because the approach to both sciences was biased towards practical aspects for Muslims in this area whose main interest was a basic knowledge of Islam in order to help them know their God. In doing so, the necessity of accepting the consensus of the *ummah*, especially with regard to controversial issues was emphasized.

The popularity of Ashʿarism among the Malay ʾ*ulamā'* in the Malay world was due to its three aspects of *kalām, fiqh and taṣawwuf*.[65] These three aspects were very important to every Muslim personally. Thus, Ashʿarite scholars, especially al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) discussed the three matters mentioned, and his ideas were known and influential in the Malay world.[66] Al-Ghazālī was known as a theologian, jurist and Sufi

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[64] Mohd. Nor Ngah, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-20.

[65] Hurgronje (1931), *op. cit*., p. 200. Hurgronje also noted that the three sacred sciences (Law, Dogma and Mysticism), had contributed to the maintenance of the religious political ideal of Islam, *Ibid*., p. 209, Safie bin Ibrahim (1987), *op. cit*., p. 106.

[66] According to Haji Abdul Aziz Ambak, ʾ*ilm al-kalām* in the Malay world was influenced by al-Ghazālī' who supported the importance of studying this science

accordingly. Al-Falimbānī and later Shaykh Dāwūd translated part of his work into Malay *Jāwī*.

Professor Mohammad Kamal Hassan, now the rector of the International Islamic University Malaysia, commented that many great figures of Islamic learning in the Malay World from the 17th century through the 19th century had inherited a tradition of Islamic intellectual life in which *fiqh, taṣawwuf and uṣūl al-dīn* had become integrated in a harmonious synthesis.[67] This combination can be found in many works of Malay `ulamā' such as in Shaykh Dāwūd's *al-Durr al-Thamīn* and *Ward al-Zawāhir.*

EARLY MALAY DISCUSSION ON *KALĀM* AND DIVINE *ṢIFĀT*

We have already mentioned the most prominent early Malay scholars, Ḥamzah al-Fanṣūrī and Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrānī, who contributed to the *kalām* discussion based on Sufism. According to Abdul Rahman Abdullah, the first treatises on *kalām* systematically written in the Malay world were composed by al-Rānirī and `Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Fanṣūrī,[68] the most famous scholars who came after Ḥamzah al-Fanṣūrī and al-Sumatrānī. According to their works which have survived to the present day, the following Malay scholars appear to have discussed *kalām* and divine *ṣifāt* in the Malay world.

Al-Rānirī's *Kalām* and Divine *Ṣifāt* Discussion

Nūr al-Dīn Muḥammad b. `Alī b. Hasanji al-Ḥāmid (or al-Ḥumayd) al-Shāfi`i al-Ash`arī al-`Aydarūsī al-Rānirī was born in Gujerat, India, and died in 1068/1658. He was regarded as a Malay speaking scholar, not as an Indian or Arab scholar. His mother was said to be a Malay. He was the adviser to the king of Acheh, al-Sulṭān Iskandar Thānī (1636 A.D.-1642 A.D.), and at the same time was a *Muftī* of the Acheh government.[69]

Al-Rānirī wrote extensively on *kalām* and Sufism. He discussed the relationship between the realities of God and the universe and man. He

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as a means to defend the Islamic faith. Interview with author, Kuala Terangganu, 15.2.1996.

[67] M. Kamal Hassan (17-19 December 1989), *Islamic Intellectual Life in the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago*:*A Preliminary Observation,* Kuala Lumpur: International Islamic University Malaysia, p. 10.

[68] See Abdul Rahman Abdullah (1988), *op.cit.*, p. 107.

[69] Abu Hassan Sham (1991), "Pengaruh Karya-Karya Syeikh Daud Fatani dalam Sastera Melayu," a working paper, Nadwah Ilmiah Tokoh Ulama' Keempat, Pusat Islam, Kuala Lumpur, p. 2.

delineated al-Ash'arī's doctrine of the differences between God and the universe, the origin of the world in time, God's absolute transcendence vis-à-vis man.[70] Thus he seems to be the first who introduced Ash'arism into the Malay world, as well as being the first Malay *'ulamā'* who talked about *kalām* in a specific way. This is to say that the earlier Indonesian scholars Ḥamzah al-Fanṣūrī and al-Sumatrānī did not promote al-Ash'arī's *madhhab,* but were more concerned with the ideas of Ibn 'Arabī and his followers.

Apparently, al-Rānīrī's main reputation arose from his fight against the issue of *Wujūdiyyah* which was introduced by Ḥamzah al-Fanṣūrī and then al-Sumatrānī as previously stated. He accused the followers of *Wujūdiyyah* of being heretics and threatened them with prosecution if they refused to repent.[71] Al-Rānīrī perhaps used his position as the *Muftī* of Acheh under the patronage of Sulṭān Iskandar Thānī to issue such a threat.

This was possibly due to his understanding of *kalām* and that to him *Wujūdiyyah* appeared to pose an insoluble theological problem. Al-Rānīrī did refer to Ibn 'Arabī, the author of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, though he was interested in the latter's idea regarding the unity of God as "there is no real being in the world other than He". This did not mean that a man could unite with God, as understood by some Indonesian *Wujūdiyyīn*; as Majid Fakhry remarks the notion "is entirely different from identity with Him (*ittiḥād*)".[72] Thus, al-Rānīrī's attack on the concept of *waḥdat al-wujūd* was against the idea of uniting with God. Al-Rānīrī thought that his predecessors had wrongly understood the concept of *waḥdat al-wujūd*. that a man can be able to unite with Allah (annihilating in Him) reaching the degree of pronouncing "I am God" (Anā Allāh). The statement that is popularly attributed to Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī and Abū Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj.

A great contribution of al-Rānīrī in developing *'ilm al-kalām* in the Malay world was his translation and commentary on the *Mukhtaṣar al-'Aqā'id* of Najm al-Dīn al-Nasafī.[73] The title of al-Rānīrī's commentary is *Durar al- Farā'id bi Sharḥ al-'Aqā'id*, the early Malay translation or partial translation of al-Taftāzānī's *Mukhtaṣar al-'Aqā'id*. Syed Naquib al-Attas regards this translation as a major contribution of al-Rānīrī to the development of Ash'arite theology in the Malay world. He further asserts that without this translation it would be difficult for later students

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[70] Azyumardi Azra (l992), *op. cit.*, p. 367.

[71] *Ibid.*, p. 369.

[72] Fakhry, Majid (1983), *History of Islamic Philosophy,* New York: Columbia University Press, London: Longman, p. 250.

[73] Azyumardi Azra (l992), *op. cit.*, p. 378.

of theology to understand the creed of al-Nasafī.[74] Al-Attas later produced his own commentary on al-Rānirī's commentary.[75] It was published in Malaysia in 1988 by the University of Malaya.

Abū ʿUmar Najm al-Dīn al-Nasafī (d. 537/1142), was a great Sunnī and Ḥanafī jurisconsult and theologian belonging to the school of al-Māturidī (d. 333 /944),[76] who developed similar doctrines to al-Ashʿarī.[77] Thus al-Māturidī was also considered as the founder of Sunnī *Madhhab* along with Abū Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī.

In this commentary, al-Rānirī discusses many issues regarding Islam in general, and not merely theological issues. The issue of the *Imām*, for instance, is fully discussed and the term is simply translated by him as king (*raja*). Earl Elder who commented on al-Taftāzānī's later text of the *Mukhtaṣar* does not seemingly do this.[78] It was perhaps connected with al-Rānirī close relationship with the King of Acheh at the time. He completely defends the system of monarchy in Islam, arguing that the king should be defended and cannot be dethroned for any reason unless he becomes physically disabled. Thus he translates the phrase *al-imām al-ʿādil* as said by the Prophet, peace be upon him, in the Tradition, as to be "a just king".[79]

However, he suggests that the king must implement Islamic law according to the Qur'ān as well as respect ʿulamā' and obey their advice. The bad ʿulamā' (ʿulamā' al-sūʾ) who desire to gain from worldly interests should

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[74] Al-Attas, Syed Muhammad Naquib (n.d.), *op.cit.*, pp. 46-47.

[75] Al-Attas, Syed Muhammad Naquib (1988), *The Oldest Known Malay Manuscript: A 16th Century Malay Translation of the ʿAqāʾid of al-Nasafī,* Kuala Lumpur: University Malaya, pp. 99-148. It seems that this is the only translation of al-Nasafī's *Mukhtaṣar* in this book. Besides Syed Naquib's manuscript mentioned, there was another *manuscript of Durarul Farāʾid* of al-Rānirī copied by Maḥmūd bin Muḥammad Yūsuf, a famous Malay writer, who copied the works of several Malay ʿulamā' of the past. See W.M. Shaghir Abdulllah (1993), *Jurnal Filologi Melayu,* vol. 2, Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia (PNM), pp. 42-47.

[76] Al-Attas, Syed Muhammad Naquib (1988), *op.cit.*, p. 7.

[77] Al-Māturidī, Abū al-Thanāʾ Maḥmūd bin Zayd al-Lāmishī al-Ḥanafī (1995), *Kitāb al-Tamḥīd li Qawāʿid al-Tawḥīd*, (ed.) Turkī, ʿAbd al-Majīd, Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, p. 211.

[78] Elder, Earl Edgar (1950), *A Commentary on the Creed of Islam Saʿad al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī on the Creed of Najm al-Dīn al-Nasafī,* New York: Columbia University Press,, p. 146.

[79] See *Durarul Faraid* of al-Rānirī in W.M. Shaghir Abdullah (1996), *Tafsir Puisi Hamzah Fansuri Dan Karya-Karya Shufi,* Kuala Lumpur: Khazanah Fathaniyah, pp. 187-122.

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be kept away from the palace.[80] At the end, he talks about the signs of the last day such as the appearance of Imam al-Mahadī, al-Dajjāl and so on.[81]

It seems therefore that al-Rānīrī was a leading religious scholar, thinker, politician and writer. He always emphasized the importance of the *ahl al-Sunnah* and the Shāfiʿī *madhhab* upon which he based his ideas. Compared to his predecessors, al-Rānīrī appears to have written many works which contributed to the development of Islamic knowledge in the region in general.

Al-Rānīrī rejected the ideas of the Mu`tazilites, Rafidites and Jabarites, and recognized Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī as *al-Imām* in *kalām*, as well as al-Shāfiʿī in *fiqh* and al-Junayd in *taṣawwuf*.[82] The other topics he discussed are: first, that the Qur'ān is uncreated (*qadīm*), and second, that Allah will be seen on the last day. On this point, he argued against the Mu`tazilites, Rafidites, Kharijites and philosophers, who said that to see Allah meant that He is at a certain place as physically as the place itself, and made a distinction between the mundane world and the last day. He supported this point with verses from the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth.[83] This actually represents the attitude of the people of the *Sunnah* led by Ash`arite theologians.

Al-Rānīrī on the Twenty Divine *Ṣifāt* Discussion

As a Sunni `ulamā', al-Rānīrī gave special attention to *ṣifāt* discussion. In his book, *Durarul Farā'id,* he refers to the twenty attributes of Allah, dividing them into:

1. *Ṣifāt nafsiyyah (wujūd, qidam, baqā', waḥdāniyyah, mukhālafātuhu li-al-ḥawādith, qiyāmuhu bi-nafsih)*,
2. *Ṣifāt salbiyyah (ḥayyun bi-ḥayātih, `ālimun bi-`ilmih, samī`un bi-sam`ih, baṣīrun bi baṣarih, qādirun bi-qudratih, murīdun bi-irādatih, mutakallimun bi-kalāmih* and
3. *Ṣifāt ma`nāwiyyah (ḥayāh, `ilm, sam`, baṣar, qudrah, irādah* and *kalām)*.[84]

By this time, *nafsiyyah, salbiyyah and ma`nawiyyah* had become the main division in *kalām*. Abdul Rahman Abdullah argued that both *ma`ānī* and

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[80] *Ibid*., p. 124.

[81] *Ibid*., p. 123, and see Elder, Earl Edgar (1950), *op. cit*., p. 165.

[82] We can find in later period that Shaykh Dāwūd al-Faṭānī declared the same statement in his books.

[83] W.M. Shaghir Abdullah (1996), *op.cit.*, p. 177.

[84] *Ibid*, pp. 180-182.

*ma`nawiyyah* show Māturīdīte influences because a majority of al-Ash`arī scholars rejected such divisions.[85] Of course, al-Rānīrī was translating the book of al-Taftāzānī, who was a Māturīdī follower. In further presenting the attributes, al-Rānīrī wrote a book entitled *Hidāyat al-Imān* in which he discussed the *dhāt*, attributes and the actions of Allah.[86]

Al-Rānīrī seems therefore that his translation of al-Nasafī's *Mukhtaṣar* was a major contribution to the spread of Sunnī *tawḥīd* in the Malay world. This is indicated by the fact that several other Malay `ulamā' later refer to al-Nasafī and al-Taftāzānī knowing that no other source in Malay was available in discussing the matter.

`Abd al-Ra 'ūf al-Fanṣūrī's *Kalām* and Divine *Ṣifāt* Discussion

The second early Malay scholar who contributed to discussions on *kalām* and *ṣifāt* was `Abd al-Ra'ūf bin `Alī (al-Singkīlī) al-Fanṣūrī. We mentioned him in the beginning of this article when exploring the relationship between Mecca and the Malay world. Shaghir Abdullah, in his book, *Khazanah Karya Pusaka Asia Tenggara*, lists twenty-five of his writings in which he discusses many topics regarding the Qur'ān, Ḥadīth, *kalām, sharī`ah,* and Sufism. Apparently, he discussed all the topics as a practising Sufi and a *ṭarīqah* master. For instance, he divides fasting into three levels; *sharī`ah* fasting, *ṭarīqat* fasting and *ḥaqīqat* fasting,[87] showing how he tried to integrate *tawḥīd* and Sufism as al-Fanṣūrī and al-Sumatrānī had previously done.

His view was that *kalām* was a "compulsory innovation" (*bid`ah wājib*) in the same manner as Arabic grammar (*naḥw*) and the principles of jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*). However, he took the view that the Mujassamah and the Murji`ites were "unlawful innovations" (*bi`ah ḥaram*) and he totally disagreed with these two important groups in earlier Islamic *kalām*, supporting instead the Ash`arite trend.

In his book *Kifāyat al-Muḥtajīn*, `Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Fanṣūrī divides *al-tawḥīd* into four degrees: *Tawḥīd Ulūhiyyah* (Divine Unity), *Tawḥīd Af`āl* (Unity of God's acts), *Tawḥīd ṣifāt* (Unity of God's Attributes) and *Tawḥīd Dhāt* (Unity of the Essence).[88] He defines all the concepts of each degree, but appears to focus mainly on *Tawḥīd Dhāt.* In this regard, he remarks that none can reach this degree (*maqām*) but one who is sinking

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[85] Abdul Rahman Abdullah (1988), *op.cit.*, pp. 107-108.

[86] See al-Rānīri, "Hidāyāt al-Imān", *Manuscript MSS 2166,* Kuala Lumpur: Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia (PNM), p. 9.

[87] W. M. Shaghir Abdullah (1991), *op.cit.*, p. 46.

[88] *Ibid*., p. 119*,* see Azyumardi Azra (l992), *op. cit*., p. 409.

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in remembering or pronouncing (*dhikr*), "there is no God but Allah" (*lā ilaha illā Allāh*). To do so one should have the highest degree of moral character (*adab*) and know the ways to perform remembrance perfectly.[89]

It may be understood that ʿAbd al-Raʾūf al-Fanṣūrī had a very typical concept of *tawḥīd* which is based on the "certain practices". According to him, *tawḥīd* was not subject to any argument or theoretical discourse because it is strongly related to *ʿibādāt* (the religious practices). He claimed that the correct *tawḥīd* could be achieved by performing certain rituals under his *ṭarīqah* (Sufi path). As the master of the Shaṭṭāriyyah *ṭarīqah*, he proposed Sufism to be the climax of his concept of *tawḥīd*.[90] Here we can observe that *tawḥīd* and Sufism cannot be separated and all the Sufi practices are fruits of interpreting *tawḥīd* itself.

ʿAbd al-Raʾūf on the Twenty Divine *Ṣifāt* Discussion

In his *ʿUmdat al-Muḥtājīn ilā Sulūk Maslak al-Mufradīn*, ʿAbd Al-Rāʾuf mentioned the twenty attributes of Allah, *nafsiyyah*, *salbiyyah*, *maʿānī* and *maʿnawiyyah* and stressed that all those attributes were necessary for Allah. He then translated them into Malay.[91] Thus, Shaghir Abdullah tells us that ʿAbd al-Raʾūf discusses very briefly the twenty attributes of Allah. In discussing those *ṣifāt*, al-Fanṣūrī refers to his teacher, Shāfiʿ al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Qushashī, who wrote *Sharaḥ Nasafiyah*, saying that the matter should be referred to Ibn ʿArabī and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawānī and all the feeling people (*ahl al-dhawq*) who had merit in the science of Realities (*Ilmu hakikat*).[92] It can be seen that Sufi *tawḥīd* was still vigorous even though it had come under stern attacks from al-Rānīrī before him.

ʿAbd Ṣamad al-Falimbānī's *Kalām* and the Divine *Ṣifāt* Discussion

Al-Falimbānī was one of the eighteenth century scholars who spent most of his working life in Mecca, apparently studying under Muḥammad al-Sammānī (d. 1190/1776).[93] Al-Falimbānī was originally from Palembang

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[89] W.M. Shaghir Abdullah (1991), *op.cit.*, pp. 119-120.

[90] *Ibid*., p. 120.

[91] ʿAbd al-Rāʾuf al-Fanṣūrī, "ʿUmdat al-Muḥtājīn ilā Sulūk Maslak al-Mufradīn", *Manuscript MS 1314* Kuala Lumpur: Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia (PNM), pp. 1-5.

[92] *Ibid*., p. 66.

[93] Johns, A.H. (1981), "From Coastal Settlement to Islamic School and City: Islamization in Sumatra, The Malay Peninsular and Java", *Hamdard Islamicus*, 4, Winter, p. 17. See Voorhoeve, P. (1960), "ʿAbd al-Ṣamad B. ʿAbd Allāh al-Palimbānī", *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 1, n. edition, Leiden: E.J. Brill, London: Luzac & Co., p. 92.
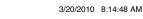
in Indonesia, but his father was said to be an Arab of Yemen. As his father was appointed a *Qāḍī* of Kedah (in Northern Malaysia) `Abd al-Ṣamad was raised there and received his early education probably in this state and Patani as well, before going to Mecca.[94] In Mecca he wrote his book, *Zahrat al-Murīd* and translated part of al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā'*, which was the first time that al-Ghazālī's work was translated into Malay.[95] Unfortunately, the birth and death of al-Falimbānī remain uncertain but he was believed to have died in the battle against Siam in the nineteenth century that led to the fall of Patani.

According to one account, he translated al-Ghazālī's *Lubab Iḥyā' `Ulūm al-Dīn* into Malay, under the new title, *Sayr al-Sālikīn `ilā 'Ibādat Rabb al-`Ālamīn.* He stated that he translated this book between 1193 A.H. and 1203 A.H.[96] However, Mohd Nor says that al-Falimbānī wrote *Hidāyat al-Sālikīn* in 1193/1778 translating from the *Bidāyat al-Hidāyah* of al-Ghazālī.[97] These two different statements concerning the titles of al-Ghazālī's and al-Falimbānī's books have been the cause of some confusion.

In his translation of the *Iḥyā'*, al-Falimbānī first of all explains the creed `*aqīdah* beginning from the twenty attributes of God to the characters of the Prophet. He also discusses intercession, death, weight, angels, hell, paradise, grave punishment, position of all the companions who are entirely just, and so on. In this chapter, he asserts that *ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā`ah* are the only true group saved from innovation and deviation.[98] He presents every topic with a brief explanation.

With regard to theological argument, al-Falimbānī suggests that this is only necessary for those who are skilled (*māhir*) in the sciences of instrumental knowledge (`*ilm al-ālat*), Arabic literature (*adāb*), grammar (*naḥw*), logic (*manṭiq*), `*ilm al-ma`ānī wa al-bayān* (rhetoric), roots of jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) and *kalām*.[99] By referring to Shaykh Jalāl al-Dīn al-Maḥalli in *Sharḥ Jāmi` al-Jawāmi`*, he further suggests that

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[94] Azyumardi Azra (l992), *op. cit.*, p. 494.

[95] Both al-Ghazali's works were *Bidāyat al-Hidāyah* and *Iḥyā' `Ulūm al-Dīn*. These translations were entitled *Hidāyat al-Sālikīn fī Sulūk Maslak al-Muttaqīn* and *Sayr al-Sālikīn fī Ṭarīqat al-Sādāt al-Ṣūfiyyah.* See `Abd al-Ṣamad al-Falimbānī (1982/83), *Hidāyat al-Sālikīn fī Sulūk Maslak al-Muttaqīn*, (ed.) Shamshuddin bin Sidiq, Bangi: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, pp. 33-34.

[96] Voorhoeve, P. (1960), *op.cit.,* p. 92.

[97] Mohd. Nor Ngah, *op. cit*., p. 5.

[98] See W.M. Shaghir Abdullah (1996), *Hidayatus Salikin Syeikh Abdus Shamad al-Falimbani,* Kuala Lumpur: Khazanah Fathaniyah, pp. 27-36.

[99] *Ibid*., pp. 182-183.

inexperienced Muslims should not become involved in controversial issues, and they are definitely prohibited (*ḥaram*) from doing so. Al-Falimbānī notes that the main instrument for *tawḥīd* is *manṭiq,* as was previously said by al-Ghazālī, *man lā manṭiqa lahu lā thiqata bi `ilmihi wa sammāhu mi`yār al-`ulūm (*whoever is not skilled in the science of logic his knowledge is not convincing and he named it (logic) as the light of sciences).[100]

He argues that it is difficult to understand *tawḥīd* without understanding the science of *manṭiq* because *tawḥīd* itself is a rational science. Further, he says that the formula *lā ilāha illā Allāh* (no god but Allah) cannot be understood correctly without skill in these sciences.[101] The understanding of the formula is strongly related to `ilm al-ma`ānī, that is *qaṣr ḥaqīqī* which absolutely relates divinity to Allah alone. In this regard, he refers to Sa'ad al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī in his *Sharḥ Talkhīṣ*. As discussed above, al-Rānīrī before him translated and commented upon this *Sharḥ*. This shows the importance of *manṭiq* and `ilm al-ma`ānī as a means to understand *tawḥīd*.

In this regard, al-Falimbānī classifies the Muslims into two groups; firstly "common Muslims" who were required to know the attributes of Allah in brief and, secondly, the group of scholars who excelled in *manṭiq* and Arabic literature. This second group was permitted to become involved in theological argument or *kalām.*

Here al-Falimbānī tries to emphasize the importance of Arabic literature in understanding this Islamic doctrine, knowing that every Arabic word or term used in Scripture must be related to Arabic culture and literature.[102] He says that the ideas were taken from Shaykh Aḥmad al-Damanhūrī (from Damanhūr, one of the provinces of Egypt), who was the commentator (*Shāriḥ) of al-Sullam fī `Ilm al-Manṭiq wa al-Riyāḍī fī `Ilm al-Tawḥīd*. He also mentions two other Egyptian scholars, Shaykh Aḥmad Razzah, and his student, Shaykh Fāris.[103] Of course, his opinion about the importance of `ilm al-mantiq resulted from al-Ghazālī's influence on him.

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[100] Al-Falimbānī, *Zahrat al-Murīd*, p. 7.

[101] *Ibid.*.

[102] The emphasis on studying Arabic language and literature was evident in Islamic traditional learning as far as the *pondok* system was concerned. Arabic grammar, *mantiq* and *balāghah* (rhetoric) were greatly emphasized in this traditional system. Al-Falimbānī's writings became a very popular source of study in the *pondok* system and his ideas probably contributed to this emphasis in terms of suggesting Arabic language and literature as a necessary means to understand Islamic concepts. It is clear that Arabic language cannot be segregated from Islamic studies.

[103] W.M. Shaghir Abdullah (1996), *op.cit.*, pp. 177-178.

`Abd al-Ṣamad noted that he wrote this book at the request of some of his friends (*ba`ḍ al-muḥibbīn*) who wanted to understand al-Damanhūrī's lectures.[104] He discussed the concept *lā ilāha illā Allāh* "No god but Allah", explaining the ideas of Imām al-Sanūsī in his *Sharḥ Umm al-Barāhīn*, Shaykh Muḥammad Suḥaymī in his book, a commentary on al-*Hudhudī* and Shaykh `Aṭā' in `*Aqd al-Farīd fī Taḥqīq Kalimat al-Tawḥīd*.[105]

In the first chapter of the book he introduces *kalām* based on `*aqīdah ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā`ah*.[106]

Al-Falimbānī on the Twenty Divine *Ṣifāt* Discussion

Al-Falimbānī's book entitled *Zahrat al-Murīd fī Bayān Kalimat al-Tawḥīd* ("The Flower for a student in explaining the concept of *Tawḥīd*") can be considered as a *kalām* treatise which discusses the *ṣifat* of Allah. In this treatise, al-Falimbānī asserts that it is an obligation for every Muslim to know the necessity, impossibility and possibility of Allah with a brief proof (*dalīl ijmālī*).

Similarly, it is religiously required to know every one of the twenty attributes of Allah, the prerequisite for discussing *tawḥīd* among Malay `*ulamā'*. This is, he said, according to al-Imām al-Sanūsī in *Matn Umm al-Barāhīn* and Shaykh al-Suḥaymī in *Sharḥ al-Hudhudī*. In this case, al-Falimbānī seems not to argue too much. He explains very briefly that the proof of all the attributes of Allah from His "existence" (*wujūd*) to "He is powerful, willing, knowing, living, hearing, watching and speaking", is the createdness of the world. He says, "the proof of the existence of Allah is the createdness of this world, the proof of the eternity of Allah is the createdness of this world".[107]

Al-Falimbānī proposes that the Muslim is obliged to know the attributes of Allah briefly (*ijmālī*). This means that it is quite enough to

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[104] *Ibid*., p. 189.

[105] *Ibid*., p. 178.

[106] Al-Falimbānī, *Zahrat al-Murīd*, p. 4. This book also talks about *fiqh* practices, and suggests some recommended ways to perform religious obligations and other worship. The rest of the book talks about the recommended prayers such as ṣ*alāt al-istikhārah, ḥājah*, etc. He also discusses the ideas of avoiding the visible or manifested evil (*ma`ṣiyat ẓāhir*) and hidden evil (*ma`ṣiyat bātin*). Further, he seems to focus on hidden sections, evil and obedience, as to remark that something hidden, precisely, that related to the heart, is a real field of Sufis' concern. He suggested the worships in the heart such as repentence (*tawbah*), fear (*khawf*) of Allah's punishment, patience (ṣ*abar*), willing (*riḍā*) and so on. *Ibid*., pp. 4-5.

[107] *Ibid*., p. 5, see W.M. Shaghir Abdullah (1996), *op.cit.*, p. 184.

know that the createdness of the world (in Malay: *baharu `alam ini*) is a proof of all the twenty attributes of Allah. This is what he means by *dalīl ijmālī* (a brief proof) and it is *farḍ `ayn* that every single Muslim must know them, except for someone who excells in the instrumental sciences such as *manṭiq* and Arabic literature as we discussed above. However, according al-Falimbānī, it is *farḍ al-kifāyah* to know the attributes in detail (*al-tafṣīl*), meaning that among the Muslims (perhaps living in a community) there is a person supposed to excel in the sciences such as logic (*manṭiq*) and Arabic literature (*naḥw*, *ṣarf* and *balāghah*), etc. Apparently, the divine *ṣifāt* are not discussed by al-Falimbānī in any theological depth. However, his fellow Malay *'ulamā'* Shaykh Dāwūd bin 'Abd Allāh al-Faṭānī (d. 1847) as far his books were concerned seemed to have discussed the matter in quite intensively.[108]

CONCLUDING REMARKS

It seems certain that Arabic *kalām* was transmitted to the Malay world by *`ulamā'* who studied in Mecca, for all the earlier scholars beginning from Ḥamzah al-Fanṣūrī, al-Sumatrānī, al-Rānirī and `Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Fanṣūrī to al-Falimbānī had traveled there to further their studies. The same style of education conducted in that holy place was put fully into practice when they came home and established the traditional system of religious education centres known as *pondok* or *pesantren*. Through these centres, Islamic knowledge, especially *kalām* was spread and disseminated in the region.

Beginning in the early seventeenth century it seems that *kalām* in the form of *tawḥīd* based on *ṣifāt* doctrine, developed in the Malay world championed by Ḥamzah al-Fanṣūrī and Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrānī. All their teachings, externally and in their hearts, were intended to emphasize the concept of *al-tawḥīd*. The most popular *`ulamā'* they referred to was Ibn `Arabī. We find that Ibn `Arabī's ideas reached the Malay world when *waḥdat al-wujūd* was the concern of the earlier scholars such as Ḥamzah and al-Rānirī and later of Shaykh Dāwūd.

However, this kind of *tawḥīd* Sufism did not develop further after al-Rānirī condemned the doctrine as misguided. He argued that the people had misunderstood the real meaning of *waḥdat al-wujūd* of Ibn `Arabī, which was "the unity of God", not "uniting (*al-ittiḥād*) with God" as was understood by Ḥamzah al-Fanṣūrī and al-Sumatrānī, as well as their followers. Thus, he attacked the people of *wujūdiyyah* as a deviating

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[108] His major works on the matter are *al-Durr al-Thamīn* and *Ward al-Zawāhir* in publish until today.

group, even using Ibn `Arabī's own statement against them.[109] It seems here that Ibn `Arabī was respected as a celebrated *`ulamā'* and the *waḥdat al-wujūd* championed by those early Malay *`ulamā'* probably differed in some ways from Ibn `Arabī's original ideas.

All the Malay *`ulamā'* in the early period of Islam in this region discussed *kalām* and *ṣifāt,* but al-Rānīrī and `Abd al-Ra'ūf began to discuss them systematically compared to their predecessors al-Fanṣūrī and al-Sumatrānī who merely advocated *kalām* on the basis of Sufism. Considering the twenty divine *ṣifāt*, al-Rānīrī also came up with the idea but on the basis of the al-Maturidite's idea. However, declaring himself al-Ash`arite, al-Rānīrī tried to combine both founders of Sunnī *madhhab*. So, the *kalām* and *ṣifāt* continued to be discussed later by `Abd al-Rā'ūf al-Fanṣūrī and al-Falimbānī as they used them to introduce the idea of the twenty divine *ṣifāt* originated by al-Ash`arī and al-Māturīdī and further developed by al-Sanūsī.

However al-Falimbānī, who translated al-Ghazālī's work, seemed to focus on the importance of the instrumental sciences in Islamic knowledge such as logic (*manṭiq*) Arabic literature (*naḥw*, *ṣarf* and *balāghah*), the principles of jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), etc. and that a Muslim should be skilled in these before proceeding to discuss theological precepts in detail (*tafṣīl*). Perhaps al-Ghazālī's ideas became the model for Muslim scholars in accordance with al-Falimbānī's perception. According to him, common people just have to know the attributes of Allah in brief (*ijmāl*) and the proof that Allah has all the twenty attributes are simply the existence of this world. In other words, this existing world is a sign showing that Allah is existent. Perhaps the importance of al-Falimbānī here is that he referred to several figures such as al-Hudhudī and al-Suḥaymī to whom some great Malay *'ulamā'* such as Shaykh Dāwūd refer in their works of *kalām*.

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[109] Al-Attas, Syed Muhammad Naquib (n.d.), *op.cit.,* pp. 90-91.