

# Muslim Specula Principum: The Art of Islamic Governance

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**Abstract:** The genre of *specula principum* or mirror for princes is an important literary genre that provides valuable guidance on how to be an effective and virtuous ruler. The advice offered includes matters of lifestyle preferences, obligatory duties, and religious afflictions which manifest in the respective ruling institutions in place at the time. The teachings of Islam are considered to be comprehensive, i.e. they encompass every aspect of life, making it the foundation of all Islamic governance mechanisms. This paper focuses on aspects of *specula principum* that give advice to rulers who are misguided to the extent where their reign may be deemed oppressive. The works chosen for this analysis include *Bustan al-Salatin* by Nuruddin al-Raniri, who was from Gujrat, India; *Nasihah al-Mulk* by al-Ghazzali, a Persian; and *Mau'izah-i Jahangiri* by Muhammad Baqir Najm-i Sani, from India. These three works have been chosen because of the similarities in their content, despite being from different eras and parts of the Muslim world. The main objectives of this study are: to examine the impacts of Arab-Persian culture on Indian Muslim civilisation, which then permeated the Malay world via India; to identify the similarities of the virtuous qualities of rulers mentioned in these works; and finally, to understand how Islamic cultures that are based on the concepts of Islamic universality, openness and flexibility, exist not in isolated chambers, but rather, within a continuum of expanding culture.

**Keywords:** Universality, Islam, Virtuous Rulers, Mirror for Princes, Continuum.

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## Introduction

*Specula principum* is the Latin equivalent of the mirror for rulers. Technically, it can be defined as a literary genre of political writing that emerged during the Middle Ages. Simply put, it is a collection of texts that highlight the dos and don'ts of governing, or an instruction manual for kings on how to rule their subjects and kingdoms. The Islamic tradition of intellectualism during the Abbasid period developed when Caliph Harun al-Rashid established *Bayt al Hikmah*. This institution became the centre for translations and book production. Starting from the 7<sup>th</sup> century, Islam started to spread to India and later expanded with the establishment of several sultanates and empires (Anjum, 2014).

The newly established Islamic civilisations were open to accept sciences, philosophy and art of the Hellenistic and Persian civilisations. Among the significant contributions of Persian knowledge in the Pahlawi language was *Adab* literature, or the art of governance, that gave birth to the genre of *specula principum* or mirrors for princes. They covered not only the art of governance but technical knowledge as well. At one point in history, the Abbasids were accused of trying to promote Persian ideas of kingship over the Islamic notion of the caliphate. This was subjected to a theological debate by Muslim thinkers in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, culminating eventually in the incorporation of Islamic values in *Adab* literature, which had traditionally utilised a Persian framework. This fusion of Hellenistic, Persian and Islamic knowledge took proper form in the 10<sup>th</sup> century (Robinson, 2009).

The *Adab* literature, or Persian ideas of kingship, was closely related to the Zoroastrian religion. The Zoroastrians believed that religion is the foundation of kingship and it is the primary duty of the king to protect religion. They also regarded their religion as the word of god. They held that each man was apportioned his due place on earth as per the wisdom of god. Thus, it was deemed that god operated on earth through these men, i.e. the kings are the representatives of god on earth, requiring that they be virtuous and just kings. The notion of 'just kings' being 'god's shadow on earth' was appreciated by Islamic jurists who considered it to be analogous to Islamic theories, additionally highlighting the similarities between the two religions (Lambton, 1962). Thus, this concept was integrated into Islamic political thought. This idea is the highlight of this paper.

Since Islam places emphasis on the notion of a just ruler, in fact, considering that an essential tenet of Islamic politics, this genre is especially significant. The mirrors for rulers' genre finds its roots in Arab-Persian culture, which was brought over to India. Persian works such as *Qabus Nama*,<sup>2</sup> *Siyasat Nama*<sup>3</sup> and *Nasihah al-Mulk* are among the most significant works that influenced this genre in India. This was subsequently transmitted to the Malay world.

### **The Malay World, India and the Arab-Persian Liaison**

Islam entered India by means of three ways, one of which was via sea trade. India and Arabia had trade relations prior to the birth of Islam, as being surrounded by seas fostered trade activities between the regions. Products from West India were transported to Arab regions. Arab traders settled down in the coastal Malabar region. The commercial relations between the two familiarised the Arabs with the Indian coastal region, thus making propagation of Islam easier.

Long before the arrival of the Aryans in India, the latter already had contact with Persia. Archaeological data shows that the artefacts discovered in Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa resemble the artefacts found in the Iranian Dejleh and Forat rivers. This theory has been reinforced by archaeological data from 2000 A.D. found around the Silk Valley of Kashan, Persia, which was the meeting point of the Persian and Indian civilisations. The Indo-Iranian tribes, in search for better livelihood, travelled to India (and what is now Pakistan). Ever since these migrations, the cultural and racial connections between Persia and India flourished. This was a continual relationship that can be observed in terms of the similarities between the Persian and the Indo-Aryan languages, myths, and customs. The most interesting aspect is that Sanskrit, Avestan, and the ancient Farsi language share the same roots (Esfahani, 2013).

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<sup>2</sup> Unsurulmaoli Keykavus ibn Iskandar ibn Qabus ibn Voshimgir ibn Ziyar wrote *Qabus Nama* in the 11<sup>th</sup> century as a didactic text for the son of the ruler of Tabaristan, known as Gilanshah.

<sup>3</sup> *Siyasat Nama*, called *Siyar al-Mulk* in Arabic, was written for Malik Shah, the ruler of Seljuq empire. The book is an advice for the ruler written by Abu 'Ali Hasan Tusi, or Nizam al-Mulk, in the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

The Arab conquerors and their immediate successors maintained the social structure of Sind and adopted the Sindhi language alongside Arabic. This amalgamation extended to other cultural aspects such as clothing and food. Under the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughals, Persian culture flourished as these rulers encouraged literary and intellectual activities in the Persian language (Islam, 2017).

The Malay world had vital trade entrepôts, with people of various nationalities visiting them even before the advent of Islam. Archaeological discoveries establish Indian contact with this region as early as the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. Diverse Indian populations, in terms of languages and castes, were in constant contact with the Southeast Asian maritime kingdoms. They had their own settlements all across this region, with the Hindu-Buddhist cultures later replaced by the Islamic culture (Hoogervorst, 2015).

Islam had gained a strong foothold in India by the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and it started to arrive in the Malay Archipelago. The Indian Muslims traders were the first to Islamise the Malay populace. The former is believed to have been from Gujarat, based on the archaeological data found on the tombstone of Malik Ibrahim, which was believed to have been imported from Gujarat. This was followed by people from other regions of India, such as the Deccan and the Coromandel, also travelling here. The Indians laid the foundation for Islamisation, which was later built upon by the Arabs during the second wave of Islamisation (Hamid, 1982).

The Malay world has a strong Indian influence; this is established by the fact that there are hundreds of Malay words which have a Sanskrit origin. Religious Sanskrit words like *puasa* (fasting), *sembahyang* (prayers), *syurga* (heaven) and *neraka* (hell) were maintained even after the advent of Islam. Indian scripts like *Pallava* and *Devanagari* were used widely, which can be seen in the pre-Islamic stone inscriptions found across the Malay world. The arrival of Islam brought Muslim scholars to this part of the world and led to the innovation in the Malay script. They did not merely introduce a new writing system but also brought Arab-Persian influence to Malay literature (Sulaiman, Rashidi & Seong, 2015).

The advent of Islam in the Malay world made it a necessity to have a functioning script to teach Islam to the locals. Thus, the Arabic script with its intimate connection to Islam was chosen to be the

base for this new Malay script. However, some modifications were done to accommodate Malay phonetics, which eventually gave birth to the Jawi script. The gradual Islamisation of the Malay world led to the establishment of Islamic learning centres. These centres began promoting Islamic education in the respective areas. Religious books used in teaching Islamic knowledge were authored by religious scholars mainly in the Malay Jawi script. Among the prominent authors of the time were Hamzah Fansuri, Abdul Rauf Singkel and Nuruddin al-Raniri (Othman, 1997).

Pre-Islamic Malays were not too keen when it came to writing academic works. Most of the historical works contain myths and legends, and the main medium was stone inscriptions. The tradition of book writing emerged with the coming of Islam. Under the Islamic Malay Sultanate, learning institutions were established and the people started religious learning via manuscripts. However, these early writings were not locally produced. They were brought in from India, Arabia and Persia. These institutions flourished since they attracted Muslim scholars from all over the world who brought with them influential academic works (Hamzah A. H., 2017).

### **Arab-Persian Mirror for Princes**

In Islam, history is part of the divine plan of God. The religion advocates that God created Adam and Eve as vicegerents on earth. Consequently, mankind, as their descendent, has the responsibility to continue the legacy of being a vicegerent. The primary duty of mankind is to worship Allah, about which they will be questioned by God on the Day of Judgement. The temporal nature of human life, which is merely a platform to earn rewards for the ultimate day of resurrection, is the central theme of the Islamic mirror for princes. Kings and leaders are bestowed with power by God, and thus they will be held more accountable on the Day of Judgement. Supreme Justice will be served in the Hereafter, therefore, rulers must be wary of their actions on earth.

The concept of mirror for princes in Persian tradition finds its foundation in the Zoroastrian doctrine of kingship. According to this doctrine, kings are seen as humans chosen by god, and are thus deemed to be god's shadow on earth and, as such, must behave like shepherds that guide the people to the way of god. To be a good vicegerent of god,

a king must not be oppressive and must instead be a just king (Harun, 2009). The mirror for princes is a voluminous text that provides advice and guidance to rulers about matters of administration and governance. These texts not only emphasise the importance of being pragmatic rulers but also insist that rulers set a moral example for their subjects to emulate.

The mirror for princes was a Persian literary genre that was later adopted and adapted by the Arabs. During pre-Islamic times, the Arabs did not possess a concept of written history, rather it consisted of orally-transmitted myths, legends and historical accounts of tribal warfare. After the spread of Islam in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, the literary genre of *Sirah* and *Maghazi* started to surface. *Sirah* encompassed the history of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), while *Maghazi* covered the detailed records of the Prophet Muhammad's battles. The compilation of the *Sirah* gave rise to the field of *isnad*, i.e. the detailed account of the chain of transmitters to ensure that each narration can be accurately traced back directly to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) himself. During the time of the Umayyads and the Abbasids many written works of history were produced. It is during the 10<sup>th</sup> century that Persian influence became apparent in Islamic writings (Harun, 2009).

Persian mirrors for princes also flourished in Muslim-ruled India. This genre specifically is known as the Indo-Persian mirrors for rulers. Among the writings produced in this genre are *Mau'izah-i Jahangiri*, *Zakhirat al-Mulk* and *Akhlaq-i Hakimi*. *Mau'izah-i Jahangiri* is a contemporary to al-Raniri's *Bustan al-Salatin* (Harun, 2009).

### **The *Adab* of writing Mirrors for Rulers**

The concept of *Adab* is very important in Islam. *Adab* has a long history and is closely related to ethics in human interactions with each other. *Adab* in the modern world refers to the discipline of the practical intellect of putting something where it belongs according to its proper values. Literature is seen as the keeper of civilisation and thus called *Adabiyyat* in Islam. The cultured man is the collector of the teachings and statements that educate the self and society with *Adab*. The recognition and acknowledgement of the rightful and proper place for every word in a written or uttered sentence so as not to produce a dissonance in meaning, sound and concept is considered as *Adab* towards language.

*Adab* is also the display of justice (*'adl*) as it is reproduced by wisdom (*hikmah*) (Mohd Shahril, 2015).

The dictionary of Islam defines *Adab* as the discipline of the mind and manners, good education and good breeding, politeness, deportment and a virtuous mode of conduct and behaviour. In terms of Muslim historiography, Lichtenstadter divided *Adab* into two parts: first, as Arabic poetry with commentaries, and second as a handbook or list of instructions for pragmatic governance and an archetype of exemplary morality for kings and court officials (Harun, 2009).

Generally, mirrors for rulers are divided into two main parts. The first part is concerned with duties and responsibilities of, and expectations towards, kings and court officials. This is accompanied by excerpts from the Quran and Hadith or quotes from scholars to support these advices. The second part consists of didactic stories. These stories are represented in anecdotal forms to explain the rules and regulations laid out in the first part. Many of the anecdotes are based on historical events, including stories of the prophets, and previous caliphs and rulers. The lead character or the hero exemplifies a role model of justice and honesty in a religious society. Didactic stories in *Adab* literature serve as practical examples to rulers and kings to explain dos and don'ts under various circumstances.

The didactic stories are written to provide subtle philosophical explanations, in a beautiful and appealing manner. These same methods were later transmitted from the Arab-Persian tradition to the Indo-Persian culture, and later to Malay-Islamic literature (Harun, 2009).

### **Al-Ghazzali**

Al-Ghazzali's full name was Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Mohammad al-Tusi al-Ghazzali. He was born in Tus, Khorasan, which is modern day Iran, around 1058 CE. After the death of his father, he was put under the tutelage of Imam Ahmad al-Radhkani, a teacher of jurisprudence, before he joined a madrasah. He later joined Nizamiyyah College and became the pupil of Imam al-Juwayni (Sa'ari, 1999).

After the passing of Imam al-Juwayni, an influential Seljuk vizier, Nizam al-Mulk, invited al-Ghazzali to his court. He was impressed with al-Ghazzali and appointed him as a Professor of Nizamiyyah College. Al-Ghazzali produced a lot of writings mainly focusing on theology,

Sufism and philosophy. Like al-Raniri, he also authored a mirror for princes, *Nasihah al-Mulk*. This book was written in Tus around the year 1106 or 1109, during his time in Nishapur. He is said to have been influenced by Nizam al-Mulk who had written his own mirror for princes, *Siyasat Nama*. *Nasihah al-Mulk* was either written for Sultan ibn Malik Shah, known as the king of the East and the West, or the king's brother Muhammad (Kamarudin, 1997).

### **Muhammad Baqir Najm-i Sani**

Around the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Mughals' courts in India received numerous Iranian immigrants. One of them was Muhammad Baqir Najm-i Sani. Baqir was recruited into the elite *Mansabdari* services. The *Mansabdari* was a system where bureaucrats served in the state's military during wartime and continued their bureaucratic functions in peacetime. It is in the *Mansabdari* service where he rose in ranks from a mere soldier to bureaucratic services. The Mughals later appointed him as a governor of one of their provinces. Baqir was married to the niece of Emperor Jahangir's wife, Nur-i-Jahan. Thus, he established himself as kin of the emperor (Sani, 1989). Baqir was a highly cultured man who had a penchant for writing and was mainly engrossed in writing poetry. His didactic work, *Mau'izah-i Jahangiri*, or his advice to the Indian emperor Jahangir, was written in three days. Although it is often argued that Baqir's work is rather secular in comparison to al-Ghazzali's, yet, there is no doubt that the essence of Baqir's work is similar to that of other Islamic scholars. In spite of belonging to a different denomination in terms of religious schools of thought, Baqir's work carries the universal message of the Islamic concept of just rulers (Morony, 1989).

### **Nuruddin al-Raniri**

Nur al-Din ibn Ali ibn Hasanji ibn Muhammad Hamid al-Raniri was born towards the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century to a diaspora of Hadrami descent in Ranir, Gujarat. This Hadrami family was known as the Hamid clan (Hamzah N., 2015). The Hamid clan came from Zuhra, considered one of the ten Quraysh tribes. He had mixed Indo-Arab ancestry. The name al-Raniri is taken from the place he was born i.e. Ranir, Gujarat. It is believed that al-Raniri had close contact with the Islamic Kingdom of



Aceh and some believed he was well trained in the Malay language even before his arrival in Aceh (Majid, 2015).

His arrival in Aceh was not well received by the then Sultan of Aceh, Sultan Iskandar Muda because of his opposition to the teaching of *Wujudiah* by Fansuri which the sultan had taken quite a liking to personally. Thus, al-Raniri travelled to Pahang where he met the future Sultan of Aceh, Sultan Iskandar Thani (Majid, 2015).

The early Muslim preachers conveyed the teachings of Islam orally, as such al-Raniri played a vital role in documenting Islamic teachings in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. These works, written in Arabic and Malay, expounded the basic tenets of Islam. While his writing mainly focussed on the subject matter of theology with particular references to Sufism, he also wrote the mirror for princes, *Bustan al-Salatin* or Gardens of Kings (Hamisi, 2017). In the genre of mirror for princes, *Bustan al-Salatin* is regarded as the most important literary work in Malay literature. It was written for al-Raniri's patron, Sultan Iskandar Thani, the ruler of Aceh around 1637 (Rody, 2015).

### **Kings as God's Shadow on Earth**

In the Islamic world, the concept of mirror for princes is very significant, attributing the ruler as someone of a special class i.e. someone with a chosen purified lineage. These lineages were considered to be bestowed upon a ruler by God himself. The citizens are obligated to obey the ruler as the latter is metaphorically considered to be God's shadow on earth. To disobey a ruler is to disobey God himself. Rulers are considered shepherds, making them responsible to guide those under their rule (Harun, 2009).

If a nation can be compared to a ship, then a ruler is the captain of the ship. The ruler is responsible to command the ship and control the voyage. A lack of experience would cause the destruction of not only the ship but the lives of the crew. A citizen of a country relies on the wisdom of the ruler to lead the country. For these reasons, the ruler is expected to be well read and wise so as to be able to lead his people (Zakaria, 2016).

The ruler is entrusted to administer a state and its citizens, and to ensure that the people can live in peace and harmony. The main duties of a ruler are to ensure the safety of the citizens, to protect the sanctity of

religion, to provide for the establishment of the rule of law, to do justice and to care for the citizens. A ruler that is accepted by the people is given the right to be obeyed by the people. This empowerment facilitated the political obligation to be obeyed by the people. Obedience to rulers is equated to the obedience to God (Zakaria, 2016). This notion is supported by a Quranic verse in Surah al-Nisa, verse 59, “O ye who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those charged with authority among you. If ye differ in anything among yourselves refer it to Allah and His Apostle if ye do believe in Allah and the Last Day: that is best and most suitable for final determination.”

The same verse was used by al-Ghazzali in *Nasihah al-Mulk* and al-Raniri in *Bustan al-Salatin* to justify the position of a ruler as God’s shadow on earth. In *Nasihah al-Mulk*, al-Ghazzali specifically referred to the kings as shadows of god on earth:

You should understand that God on High selected two classes of the son of Adam and endowed these two classes with superiority over the rest: the one being prophets, blessing and peace be upon them, and the other kings. To guide His slaves to Him, He sends prophets; and to preserve them from one another, He sends kings, to whom he bound the welfare of men’s lives in His wisdom and on whom He conferred high rank. As you will hear in the traditions, “the Sultan is God’s shadow on earth”, which means that he is the high-ranking and the Lord’s delegate over His creatures. It must therefore be recognised that this kingship and the divine effulgence have been granted to them by God, and they must accordingly be obeyed, loved and followed. To dispute them is improper and to hate them is wrong (Bragley, 1964).

Al-Raniri wrote concerning the obligation of following the rulers’ instructions that, “to follow the instruction of kings is compulsory unless it is against the *syarak* (teachings of Islam)” (Harun, 2009).

Similar ideas can also be found in *Mau’izah-i Jahangiri*, a mirror for princes written for the Mughal emperor of India, Emperor Jahangir, accordingly, “Therefore, it is necessarily incumbent upon the Almighty’s chosen creation, whom they call emperor (*badshah*), to inculcate in himself the morals of the custodian of the Shari’ah (the Prophet

Muhammad). Waging his campaigns and conducting the business of his dominion (*mulk*) and sovereignty (*dawlat*)” (Sani, 1989).

Thus, from these examples it can be concluded that the relationship between the ruler and the ruled is considered to be one of the most important tenets in Islam after the concept of prophethood. It is viewed as a continuum of the prophetic institution. Aside from being a symbol of political Islam, it is closely related to Islamic governance. Leadership, as in any other social structure is a vital social concept. In Islamic teachings, to have good leadership is considered compulsory. A good ruler with good leadership skills will guide the ruled towards success not only in this world but in the afterlife as well (Ali, 2016). The success of a nation relies on good leadership, as such, one should obey an elected ruler and should not go against their orders. The position of kings as god’s shadow on earth is quite popular not only in Malay tradition but in Islamic culture as a whole (Zakaria, 2016).

The genre of mirror for rulers has created a new discussion on the role of rulers in the Islamic world, in light of Islamic teachings. The development of this genre across the Arab-Persian and the Indo-Persian cultures with the advent of Islam in India eventually brought it to the shores of the Malay Archipelago. These elements of good governance based on the Quran, Hadith and the ideas of Muslims scholars, trained in theology, Sufism and jurisprudence, have disseminated the universality of Islamic governance transcending geographical and cultural barriers.

### **The Concept of Just Rulers**

Islam in the context of the Malay world is synonymous with the Malay race. Islam is considered as the way of life of the Malays. The mirrors for rulers have frameworks that provide insights on how to rule using this principle. The central theme of such works is just rulers (Ali, 2016). The concept of just rulers based on Islamic teachings is the foundation of mirrors for rulers not only in the Malay world but the whole Muslim world. Justice is the gist of good leadership in Islam. It acts like a force field that generates energy in Islamic leadership. The authors of these works not only explain the concept of justice but also provide examples of oppressive unjust rulers in the didactics section to serve as reminders and deterrents (Harun, 2009). The concept of just rulers is so important that we have various Quranic verses discussing it, for example in Surah al-Nahl, verse 90, it is said that, “Allah commands justice, the doing

of good and liberality to kith and kin and He forbids all shameful deeds and injustice and rebellion: He instructs you that ye may receive admonition.”

The relationship between the ruler and ruled is a relationship that begets ownership. The rulers own the ruled by managing them so that they can live in a harmonious environment. At the same time, the ruled subjects have rights upon their rulers. These rights include fair treatment. A ruler’s performance is measured based on how he handles his subjects. If a ruler is just and gentle towards his subjects, he is considered to be a just ruler. However, if he is unjust and oppressive, he is considered a bad ruler. A good ruler understands that he belongs to the people (Zakaria, 2016).

This responsibility to be a just ruler is considered to be an *amanah* (responsibility). This *amanah* should be directed towards those who deserve it, i.e. the subjects of the state. To be just is a concept so pertinent in Islamic leadership that it extends not only to non-Muslim subjects but also to enemies of the state. This notion is vital to maintain a harmonious state (Zakaria, 2016).

In the mirror for princes’ genre, the concept of a just ruler is emphasised using verses from the Quran and the Hadith of the Prophet (PBUH). A king is continually cautioned against oppressive behaviours. Justice is viewed as actions that bring glory and prosperity. A just king would find it easy to maintain his rule and face less munity, rebellion or usurpation of power. Being unjust and oppressive would only result in his own destruction and loss of power. This reminder is given in didactic forms using harsh and strong languages, while on the other hand, a just ruler is praised using *belle lettres*.<sup>4</sup> A just ruler is always welcomed and loved by their subjects. This is because his justice would ensure they lived in harmonious and blissful conditions. Thus, the subjects would not hesitate to protect the ruler from any enemy. Another means of caution used by these authors is to remind the rulers that they are subjected to Allah’s ultimate judgement. The just ruler would receive Allah’s blessing both in this life and the afterlife. The retribution for oppressive rulers would also be severe in the afterlife (Harun, 2009). Justice is the most important aspect of being a ruler because a ruler is expected to regulate the affairs of the people. If a ruler is a tyrant then

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<sup>4</sup> Artistic and beautiful literary works, can be fictional or non-fictional.

this would lead to the birth of a rebellious movement to topple him and this would not only affect the tyrannical ruler and the complicit nobility but also the innocent people of the land (Sani, 1989).

Both al-Raniri and al-Ghazzali emphasised on this issue of justice. The priority of a ruler is the welfare of the people. They both made references to the righteous Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab in their didactic stories. The rightly guided caliphs were the four rulers that came after the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and strictly followed the Prophet's teachings in all affairs. They discharged their duties faithfully and are considered as ideal role models for Muslim rulers (Khan, 1978).

An example from *Bustan al-Salatin* expresses the story of Caliph Umar helping a woman with her children. This story also finds mention in *Nasihah al-Mulk* (Harun, 2009),

One night, Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab was walking around Madinah with Zaid ibn Aslam and found a hungry woman with three children sheltering outside the city. The woman had placed a pot on a fire, but the pot only contained water. The woman did this just to make her children patient. The Caliph then went back to the city and brought a sack of flour which he slung over his shoulder. Zaid ibn Aslam wanted to help but the Caliph replied, "If you carry this load, who will carry my load of sin before God?" (Bragley, 1964).

Al-Ghazzali, in *Nasihah al-Mulk*, when mentioning Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab, writes, "And look to Umar and his attitudes, o kings. He is feared for his firmness and strictness, but still he fears the wrath of Allah on the day of reckoning. While you o kings, forget the affairs of your subjects, and you forget the real owner [God] of the government" (Bragley, 1964).

While al-Raniri upon ending the story of Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab writes that "Rightly so, to all kings to follow the behaviour of *Amirul Mukminin* Umar (*radiallahuanhu*) hence would inherit *Amirul Mukminin* (*radiallahuanhu*) just behaviour" (Harun, 2009).

The importance of being just was also advocated by Baqir in *Mau'izah-i Jahangiri* as he said that, "Therefore, it is necessarily incumbent upon the Almighty's chosen creation, whom they call an emperor (*badshah*), to inculcate in himself the morals of the custodian of the Shari'ah (the Prophet Muhammad). Waging his campaigns

and conducting the business of his dominion (*mulk*) and sovereignty (*dawlat*)” (Sani, 1989).

Although there are slight differences among these three works, for instance al-Raniri and al-Ghazzali gave the example of Caliph Umar and Baqir used the example of the Prophet (PBUH), overall they all have a similar message. To conclude, although the rulers’ right to power is acknowledged and upheld, they are constantly cautioned not to be oppressive and tyrannical, since not only would this create disharmony on earth but the rulers would be held strictly accountable for all their actions by the King of all dominions, Allah. Thus, a ruler must follow the example of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the righteous caliphs that governed after him, fearing God’s retribution on the Day of Judgement.

### **Conclusion: Mirrors for Rulers as Muslim Universal Teaching**

While the purpose of this article has been to discover the impact of the Arab and Persian cultures on the Indian Muslim civilisation, which then subsequently impacted the Malay world, one must not overlook the most important feature which is that the universality of Islamic teachings is what enables the occurrence of such a phenomenon.

The Islamic civilisation is the civilisation which embraces all of humanity and, by doing so, professes the equality of all human beings irrespective of their ancestries, races, nationalities and colours. This unique characteristic encouraged and fostered the contribution of all members of the Muslim *ummah*, indiscriminately, as well as that of non-Muslim citizens. This paved the way for another concept, which is openness. People of different races and ethnicities contributed to Islamic civilisation via human experience thus making Muslim civilisation a joint endeavour of all citizens (Ashimi, 2016).

The wealth of Islamic knowledge has been derived from strands of various cultures such as Semitic, Hellenistic, Persian and Indian. This genre of mirrors for princes, pertaining to the art of governance was thus derived from Islamic civilisation’s interaction with Sassanid civilisations, prior to which this literature was known as *Adab* literature in Persian. The subject matter of the Persian moralistic fables ranged from animal life to mirror for princes. This specific kind of literature then gained importance in the Abbasid court. The advent of Islam

encouraged the Persian authors to produce a genre that incorporated Persian ideas of kingship with the notion of the Islamic caliphate, thus the mirrors of ruler's genre was born (Robinson, 2009).

As Islamic teaching spread from Arabia to India, it brought along the cultural influences from both Arab and Indo-Persian traditions. The universality and openness of the Islamic civilisation created a new amalgamated Islamic/Muslim culture. This culture further assimilated with Malay culture and produced literary genres and mirrors for princes is one of them particular to Malay culture. The concept of Dewa-Raja or godly kings in Hinduism was replaced by the concepts of 'Gods' shadow on earth' and 'just kings.' The Malay mirrors for princes are an example of how the universality of Islamic teaching leads to a continual progression of culture that evolves with every society it interacts with. Despite Indian missionary efforts to syncretise Islam with existing beliefs to make it easy to accept in the Malay world, to say that Islam comes from India exclusively is quite impossible, as there is ample evidence of the existence of such a literary genre as mirrors for princes that clearly originates from Arab and Persian traditions. The unique aspect of Islamic religious expansion was fusion. The religion and culture, as it expands, incorporated local features where the teachings of Islam integrated with other cultures. This is demonstrated in example of how the Islamic Shari'ah deems appropriate local traditions as Islamically sanctioned legal rulings. Islamic teachings are inherently universal not only in terms of dogma but also in terms of culture. However, this does not mean that one culture copied from another but rather the universality of the teachings, which was the centre of Muslim life, acts as a catalyst to absorb different cultures that are in line with Islamic teachings. In short, it is important to note that the nature of the Islamic polity beginning from the establishment of the first Islamic state of Madinah was essentially egalitarian in nature. Unlike the Western concept of the nation state, in Islamic teachings there is no concept of class distinction where one human is higher than the other. Being a Muslim has always meant being part of an egalitarian polity because the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was not merely a religious preacher but the leader of the first Islamic state of Madinah. These unique characteristics of Islam have allowed for the creation and development of academic and literary works, such as those highlighted in this paper, to be written by scholars and bureaucrats from across various cultures and epochs.

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