

PERSIAN QUOTATION IN THE  
*HAQQ AL-YAQĪN FĪ AQĪDAT AL-MUHAQQIQĪN*  
*FĪ DHIKR ASRĀR ŠUFĪ AL-MUHAQQIQĪN*  
OF SHAYKH SHAMS AL-DĪN AL-SUMATRA'Ī (D. 1639 CE)<sup>1</sup>

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Preferring to concentrate on influences from the Arab world, scholars have done little to explicate the Persian connection in Southeast Asian Islam.<sup>2</sup> This is understandable because religious scholars in Southeast Asia have tended to emphasize the teachings of Arab masters. This has been the case since the eighteenth century, when it became customary for Malay religious scholars to journey to the Hijāz and its surrounding regions to study under great scholars such as Aḥmad Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī and his disciple, al-Qushāshī and their followers. Azra,<sup>3</sup> in an excellent study on the networks of connections between the Arab and Southeast Asian worlds, shows how these Arab scholars guided their Malay students in the study of Arabic grammar, Islamic law and Taṣawwuf.

Notable Malay scholars such as 'Abd al-Ra'ūf Singkilī, Shaykh Yūsuf Makassarī and 'Abd al-Šamad Palembangī, were all

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Prof. Ahmad Kazemi Mousavi and Prof. Hamid Algar for reading an earlier draft of this paper.

<sup>2</sup> The few pioneering articles which attempted to study the general connections between these two worlds, though outdated, still provide us with a useful starting point to discuss this contact. See Brian E. Colless, 'Persian merchants and missionaries in medieval Malaya,' *JMBRAS*, vol. 42, part 2, 1969; L.F. Brakel, *Persian Influence on Malay Literature, Aḥr-Nahrain* IX, pp. 1-16; G.E. Marrison, 'Persian Influences in Malay Life (1280-1650),' *Journal Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, vol. 28, pt.1, 1955, pp. 52-69. Recently, Dr Christoph Marcinkowski had written a few articles on the connections between Siam and Iran in the Safavid era; see in particular the article mentioned in ff18 below.

<sup>3</sup> Azyumardi Azra, *The Origins of Islamic Reformism in Southeast Asia: Networks of Malay-Indonesian and Middle-Eastern 'Ulama' in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Australia: Allen & Unwin, 2004).

direct or indirect students of the two towering Meccan personalities mentioned above. The prevalence of scholarship on these Malay figures served to strengthen the impression—even among scholars—that Southeast Asian Islam is exclusively Arabic Islam. Practically no scholarly notice has been given to the *multi-faceted* character of Islam in this region.

The Persian influence on the language and culture of Southeast Asian Muslims has been nothing less than significant. Many Malay words and phrases, such as *anggur*, *dewan*, *pahlawan* and *kutub khanah*, are directly borrowed from Persia.<sup>4</sup> And Persian literature, especially writings on mysticism and narratives about prophets and other Muslim heroes, has had a strong impact on the Malay understanding of Islam.<sup>5</sup>

However, direct studies of Malay mystical treatises with the view of tracing Persian influences are rare.<sup>6</sup> The treatises themselves are still not edited and the present writer knows of no scholar in Malaysia who is willing to undertake this scholarly task. This is not surprising as the study of Islam in Malaysia is still limited to fiqh and other legalistic aspects, with hardly any attention given to philosophy or mysticism. Indeed, many present-day Malay Muslim scholars shun the latter subjects.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> For more words incorporated into Malay from Persian, see Muhammad Bukhari Lubis and Hamid Algar, *Catatan Mengenai Kata-Kata Parsi dalam Bahasa Melayu-Indonesia oleh Alessandro Bausani* (Bangi: Institut Bahasa, Kesusasteraan dan Kebudayaan Melayu, The National University of Malaysia, 1988); Bukhari Lubis and Hamis Algar, *Persian Loan-words in Malay* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>5</sup> R.O. Winstedt has studied this aspect in a more than general manner. See his *History of Malay Literature* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1990).

<sup>6</sup> However after a recent trip to Jakarta, I managed to meet Prof. Dr Abdul Hadi W.M., Professor of Malay-Javanese Literature, Yayasan Paramadina, and also a famous literary figure in Indonesia, who informed the writer that he is currently finishing his book on tracing the influences of Persian literature upon Malay Sufi authors.

<sup>7</sup> The state department of religious affairs (JAKIM) is known to have banned many mystical treatises, including the interesting mystical writing of Nafis Banjari titled 'al-Durr al-Nafis' which had discussed the systematic cosmology of