Middle-East Journal of Scientific Research 11 (9): 1244-1249, 2012

ISSN 1990-9233

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DOI: 10.5829/idosi.mejsr.2012.11.09.22707

## Linking Prophetic Tradition to Theological Issues as Discussed by Malay *Ulama*': A Study on 'Aqidah Al-Najin

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**Abstract:** Malay *ulama*' (Muslim scholars) have contributed to produce a number of major and influential written work that formed the framework of Islamic thinking which cover various branches of knowledge. This study examines the tradition of Hadith writing by one of the Malay muslim Scholar (*ulama*') Tuan Minal, which this study focuses on his masterpiece 'Aqidah al-Najin. They were active in producing works of various Islamic disciplines such as 'Aqidah, Fiqh, Tasawwuf and so forth. In order to reinforce their reasoning against the contention raised, they have provided various arguments and evidence including Hadith. The main factor for the selection of this work as a case study is due to the fact that it is one of the best major written works produced by a Malay scholar. This study implies that although many Muslim Scholars in the past from Malay Archipelago had live in rural area, they have contributed to the tradition of producing major writing in Muslim world.

Key words: Malay ulama % `Aqidah al-Najin % Tuan Minal % Hadith % `Aqidah % Malay world

## INTRODUCTION

The advent of Islam in the world is the main contributor to the birth of manuscript writing. If we look back into the past, in the era before Islam, it can be said that the influence of Hinduism was very strong in the Malay community which included various aspects of belief, art, literature and social system [1, 2]. Islam has reformed the influence by replacing it with Islamic elements through various approaches, including compositions that are associated with akidah, tasawuf, fegah, tauhid and so forth. Not only that, the use of Jawi as a scripture is also known to be linked with the arrival of Islam. Islam introduced Jawi inscriptions; consisting of Arabic alphabets which have been modified, with some additions made. Thus, manuscript writing was carried out vigorously in the Malay World through the Jawi scripture. An evidence of this statement is the establishment of centres for manuscript writing in the

Kings' palaces. The Malay Kings had their own author who would write when given consent by the King [3]. Furthermore, the Jawi scripture has various forms and styles. Sometimes it is hard to match the style of writing with some of the Islamic inscriptions such as Nasakh, Thuluth and Rig'ah. On the other hand, the use of calligraphy also includes these types of inscriptions and in addition; Diwani and Kufi [4]. Malay manuscripts are part of the heritage of thought and culture of the nation and the country from the past. Malay manuscripts, whether using Jawi or tribal scripture, was not only written on papers, but other writing utilities as well such as stones, lontara leaves, deluang barks, on animals' skins and rawhide, bamboo stems, bones, horns and metals [5]. Ever since the first Jawi-written books was introduced to the public, it had been used as the source in learning Islam [6]. According to Ismail Hussein, the traditional Malay literature is pre-printed Malay literature. He divided pre-printed literature into two categories, oral and written.

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He also said that the Malay literature which were written in the pre-print era are largely the manuscripts gathered in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century [7]. All manuscripts produced by the previous ulama' comprehend various forms of knowledge from the people who in turn received various influences from the outside, especially from Islam, covering various branches of knowledge such as literature, Malay and ethnic languages, history, medical science, culture and tradition and morality [5].

It is through the introduction of the Jawi scripture that the development of Malay writing tradition flourished, in various fields of book literature, folk literature, folklores, epic literature, historical literature, history of law and nationality, manuscripts and sermons, prose and poetry, classical and modern literature. At the end of it, Jawi scripture had become an official form of writing for the Malay community of the period [8].

Dr. Muhammad Yusoff Hashim said that in 1996, the number of traditional Malay works in form of writing found in the world was approximately five thousand manuscripts of 800 titles. From the 800 titles, 46 are Islamic, 47 are historic, 41 are on laws, 116 are traditional poetry, 300 are on theology and Islam and 100 more are of comprehension [5].

Based on this fact, the author feels that it is a must for him to develop this Malay heritage, as it is a characteristic of the Malay heritage that it will be lost if no collection and in-depth investigation process is carried out.

When mentioning the works of Malay ulama' in the Hadith field, a historian, Haji Wan Mohd Saghir who specifically focuses on the history of Malay region ulama' asserted that the Hadith writing by South-East Asian ulama' was initially carried out by two great ulama'; Syeikh Nuruddin al-Raniri and Syeikh Abdul Rauf bin al-Fansuri. The earliest works of Hadith found, written in Malay, was Kitab *al-Fawaid al-Bahiyyah fi AHadith al-Nabawiyyah* written by Syeikh Nuruddin al-Raniri [9]. In addition to the two ulama' mentioned above there were other traditional Malay ulama' who participated in the world of Hadith writing as well.

Among the famous figures are Syeikh Abdullah bin Abdul Mubin al-Fatani, Syeikh Daud bin Abdullah al-Fatani, Syeikh Nawawi al-Bantani, Syeikh Wan Ali bin Abdul Rahman Kutan al-Kalantani, Syeikh Ahmad bin Muhammad Zain al-Fatani, Syeikh Ahmad bin Muhammad Yunus Lingga, Syeikh Uthman bin Shihabuddin al-Funtiani (Pontianak), Syeikh Muhammad Mahfuz al-Tarmasi, Tuan Hussain Kedah, Syeikh Uthman Jalaluddin al-Kalantani, Syeikh Idris al-Marbawi, Haji Nik Abdullah bin Haji Wan Musa and many more [10].

The development of Hadith studies in Malaysia began to grow vehemently when a foreign scholar emigrated to Kelantan. The arrival of Tok Khurasan had reformed the style of Hadith studies in Malaysia especially in Kelantan. In Patani, among the famous ulama' who produced their works including Hadith was Syeikh Daud bin Abdullah al-Fatani and also other al-Fatani ulama' as well. On the north side of Malaysia, one of the ulama' who contributed a lot for the development of Hadith studies is Syeikh Mohd Idris al-Marbawi. His real name is Abu Abdullah Sayid Hasan bin Nur Hasan, he came to Kelantan around 1911-1912. He was a Malay yet born in Mecca in 1893. While furthering his studies at Universiti al-Azhar, al-Marbawi studied Hadith until he completed learning the Sahih Muslim [11]. Among his contributions in the Hadith field is the production of Bahr al-Mãzi. This work is a translation, reorganization and full review of Sahih al-Turmudhi [10]. This study aims to analyse the pattern of Hadith writing in the works of Malay ulama', with the focus on 'Aqidah al-Najin.

`Aqidah Al-Najin: `Aqidah al-Najin is a theology themed work focusing on the Usuluddin discipline; which is one of the most important disciplines in Islam. This work also lays out the principles of Usuluddin or also called *ilmu Kalam* which combines both naqli propositions (al-Quran and al-Sunnah) and aqli (logic propositions) for the reference of future generations. This book which consists of one hundred and forty pages was completed in 1308H/1890M [12]. It was Tuan Minal's third work as it was composed seven years after his first work; *Kasyf al-Ghaybiyyat* which discusses belief was produced in 1301H\1883M and a year after the completion of *Kasyf al-Litham* `an As'ilah al-Anam in 1307H\1889M.

By naming this work as `Aqidah al-Najin fi `Ilm Usul al-Din, translated by Tuan Minal himself as "the conviction of all the people who elude from getting astray and bid'ah in discussing Usuluddin", he expressed his real intention of composing this book [13]. The description of the title (maudu') shows that Tuan Minal had important messages to convey. One of his aims was to eradicate all forms of bid'ah thinking which had infiltrated and spread in the community. Bid'ah which means introducing new things that are not in the religion [14], is a very perilious epidemic. If it is not treated immediately, it will bring a great danger to the society. Through this paper Tuan Minal also tried to deflect occult teachings which were spreading fast and to deal with it seriously. The misguided teachings mentioned here are a few cults which deviate from the faith of Ahl al-Sunnah, such as Philosopher, Zindiq, Barahimah [13] and so forth. Tuan Minal payed a lot of attention to these two aspects, as both of them are dangerous and capable of ruining one's faith.

Apart from these two maladies, another threat that 'Aqidah al-Najin tries to combat is taqlid. Taqlid; which means following something blindly without the required knowledge is indeed a severe virus, because it can lead people astray [15]. Although he forbade taqlid in faith, he still believes that people who perform taqlid are still mu'min based on the rajih (known) opinion. In order to deal with this problem, Tuan Minal suggested several steps of prevention to treat this malady. First, it is compulsory for each individual to learn akidah, particularly relating to the compulsory, impossible and possible (wajib, mustahil and harus) characteristics of Allah SWT. Second, learn from teachers who are truly knowledgeable and recognized as Mursyid (known for their steadfastness in religion) [13].

`Aqidah al-Najin is also an adaptation and elaboration of *Umm al-Barahin* composed by al-Sanusi, as stated by Tuan Minal,

"I've written for them a book on explaining Usuluddin, which I translated from Muqaddimah al-Sanusi and I added some elaboration and explanation and its hasyiah so that the meaning of the Sheikh's words are clear. And if I am no expert for that, my i'itimad is to taufiq Karim al-Wahhab" [13].

The above statement explains the real status of this work which is a translation and elaboration on a great Arabic book; *Umm al-Barahin* [10]. Not only did Tuan Minal explain that he did not just translate the book, he even added some comments and explanation to the text. In addition, he expressed his absolute admiration of *Umm Barahin* as although it is small in size, it is really valuable, as he said.

"...and Sheikh Sanusi's muqaddimah and though it is minute in size yet the knowledge it contains is abundant compared to other aqaid and it has more fawaid and thus it is much better than whatever associated with tauhid and it is very pure than dust and the person who wrote it was extremely special. He is a saint of Allah, no doubt; and his name was Muhammad the son of Yusuf al-Sanusi al-Husni ..." [13].

This statement answers the question why he chose this work and not others to be translated and elaborated The honour is not only due to the author, who is regarded a saint; even the paper work itself is considered among the best faith-themed work ever produced [10].

The Author of 'Aqidah Al-Najin: This book was composed by one of the prominent Patani Malay ulama'; the famous Sheikh Zainal 'Abidin bin Muhammad bin Muhammad Dahhan bin Syeikh Wan Syamsuddin bin Syeikh or more recognized with the title "Tuan Minal". He was born in Bendang Badang, a village located in the valley of Sungai Patani, close to Pekan Binjai Lama which in turn, is located between Patani and Yala, Thailand [12].

Tuan Minal received an informal education in the madrasah in his own village. During those days, pondok (hut) education was a popular choice for young people interested in learning religion. With determination and realization to improve his knowledge on religion, Tuan Minal took the initiative to further his studies in a *pondok* centre. His choice was Pondok Bendang Daya. During the stay, Tuan Minal had the greatest opportunity to study from several prominent ulama' of the period. Among his teachers were Sheikh Wan Mustafa bin Muhammad Faqih al-Patani @ Tok Wan Pa, the founder of the madrasah [12] and Sheikh Abdul Rashid al-Fatani who was known as "Keramat Pulau Bidan" (The Saint of Bidan Island). Tuan Minal also had the opportunity to study Usuluddin with Syaikh Muhammad Thaiyib bin Mas'ud al-Banjari al-Qadhi (Kedah) [10].

With a strong determination to seek for knowledge, Tuan Minal furthered his studies overseas. This time; his choice was Masjid al-Haram, Mecca. At that time, Masjid al-Haram was famous as a center of education both formally and informally and had been visited by a lot of Malays with the aim of gaining religious knowledge for the world and the Hereafter [16]. While in Mecca Tuan Minal had the opportunity to learn from a few prominent Arab and Patani famous ulama' at the time, such as Syeikh Muhammad bin Sulaiman Hasb Allah al-Makki, Sheikh Wan Ali bin Ishak al-Fatani, Sheikh Abdullah bin Abd al-Rahim al-Fatani and many more [17]. He was also taught by Sheikh Daud al-Fatani [10]. Tuan Minal's stay in Mecca was not as long as his friends' who continued to reside there. This is because after finishing his studies he returned to his homeland [12].

The Importance of Hadith in `Aqidah Al-Najin: In order to ensure that the discussion in `Aqidah al-Najin was truly superior and its validity guaranteed, Tuan Minal was very careful in selecting his sources of reference. Among

the most important source of knowledge is *Khabar Sadiq* which contains al-Qur`an al-Karim, al-Hadith and news from the mutawatir. The prominence of these sources is clearly stated in Tuan Minal's words,

"(Do know) that the new knowledge comes due to three factors, first, the sadiq news which is the news from Allah Ta'ala and then the news from the Prophet and the news from the mutawatir..." [13].

In the above passage Tuan Minal explains that one of the most important sources for obtaining pure and quality knowledge is through the "news from the Apostle" or Hadith. This is because the Hadith acts as a supporter to the knowledge in the Qur'an. Hence, the need to learn al-Hadith is at the same level with learning al-Qur'an [18]. Another evidence that clearly shows the importance of al-Hadith as a knowledge source is when Tuan Minal said, "...( And the source) is from Allah's Book and Hadith and the mind" [13].

Based on this fact, Tuan Minal explained that the second main source of knowledge after al-Qur'an is al-Hadith, whereas logical thinking is at the third position.

Categories of Hadith in 'Aqidah al-Najin: In general, there are 91 Hadith contained in 'Aqidah al-Najin. All the Hadith have been divided into several topics such as the Divinity (al-Ilahiyyat), Prophethood (an-Nubuwwat), al-Sam'iyyat, Tasawuf and so forth. The division is as follows:

No.	Topic of Discussion	Frequency
1	Divinity (al-Ilahiyyat)	20
2	Prophecy (al-Nubuwwat)	15
3	Al-Sam`iyyat	14
4	Other topics (the benefits of learning, the world,	42
	Tasawuf and etc.)	
	Total	91

Based on the above division, it shows that each of the topics discussed by Tuan Minal in 'Aqidah al-Najin' are supported by evidence from al-Hadith. Although in this book the use of the logical argument predominates the testimony from al-Qur'an and al-Hadith, the argument is not incompatible with al-Qur'an and al-Hadith; it even acts as a complement to the arguments of both.

**The Writing Style of Hadith:** Looking at the style of Hadith writing in 'Aqidah al-Najin, it seems that Tuan Minal was more interested in translating and explaining

each Hadith he wrote. This is understandable as it was his goal to give clear and firm understanding for those who are weak in Arabic. It is indeed one of his main objectives of writing this book.

Moreover, most of the Hadith stated by Tuan Minal are comprised of Sahih Hadith quoted from several Sahih Hadith books such as Sahih Bukhari, Muslim, Abi Dawud, al-Turmidhi and so forth. In explaining a Hadith's status, Tuan Minal used some expressions such as "Hadith Sahih" to explain the validity of the Hadith, "Prophet (PBUH) said" and so forth. Some examples of Hadith which began with the phrase "Hadith Sahih" written in his book are [13],

**Meaning:** "Our Lord came down every night to the lowest heaven at *thuluth* (one third) of the last night and said, whoever requests from me in a prayer, I would grant him, if anyone asks from Me, I will deliver and whoever asks for forgiveness, I forgive him".

However, the number of Hadith started by this phrase is small compared to the Hadith which used the expression "Prophet (PBUH) said". The examples of the latter are, in his book as shown below [13],

**Meaning:** "Whoever has been promised onto him by Allah the reward for good deeds is given the consideration for its implementation thereof. And whoever has been promised onto himthe punishment for evil deeds, then that is the *khiyar* (optional), He will punish and forgive him if required".

**Meaning:** "The worst wrath onto you that is Anbia' the Aulia' and the like of Aulia' among religious and the pious and then accompanying them is the lowest of them".

Although this form of Hadith is frequently found in 'Aqidah al-Najin, there is a difficulty to determine its validity and incompetence (sahih or dhai'f). This is because the author did not explicitly state its narrator and source. From other aspects, in order to explain the status

of the Hadith, Tuan Minal put its narrator's name either at the beginning or at the end of each Hadith [13]. For example,

**Meaning:** "Starting from the Magian Qadariyyah of this nation, which is like Zoroastrianism of my disciples. If they are sick then do not visit them and if they are dead, you shall not attend their funeral" this hadith by Abu Dawud and Hakim from Ibn `Umar. (And) a narration from Ibn `Umar; Prophet (PBUH) said [13],

**Meaning:** "That when the devil comes it would be among you, who will then say that Allah has created the sky and the earth. He who the would ask who is the creator of Allah. So when you can be this person then be said "amantu billah wa rasulih". So that when alleged he then fled away from it".

He was narrated by Ahmad and Syaikhan [13],

**Meaning:** "That when a man hit is servant, he shall be prohibited by the Prophet, who then said that Allah made him in the appearance of the descendents of Adam".

He was narrated by Ahmad and *Syaikhan* by the phrase [13],

**Meaning:** "So when killed by a brother, he then shall turn his face away. So that Allah will make him in the appearance of Adam.".

The Hadith above indirectly discloses its own status. This is because by stating that the Hadith was narrated by "Syaikhan" Bukhari and Muslim, the validity (sahih) of this Hadith is clearly seen. Other than Hadith written in Arabic, there are also Hadith cited by Tuan Minal in the form of its meaning or mafhum only. However, the number of these Hadith is really small. Some examples of these Hadith in this book are such as below [13],

Sabda Rasulullah s.a.w, "barangsiapa menyakiti akan muslim, maka sungguhnya menyakiti ia akan daku (dan) barangsiapa menyakiti ia akan daku maka sungguhnya menyakiti ia akan Allah Ta`ala".

**Meaning:** The Prophet (PBUH) said, "whoever hurts Muslims, he hurts me and whoever hurts me he hurts Allah Ta'ala".

Sabda Nabi s.a.w, "Sebaik-baik dunia itu kenderaan bagi orang yang mukmin dengan dia sampai ia kepada kebajikan, (dan) dengan dia lepas ia daripada kejahatan".

**Meaning:** The Prophet (PBUH) said, "The greatest of the world is if it becomes the vehicle of mu'min leading it to good deeds, (and) with it he is safe from the evil deeds".

The above discussion describes some of the forms of Hadith in `Aqidah al-Najin. Most of the Hadith in this book are Sahih Hadith.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the above explanation, it can be concluded that the Hadith writing tradition among Malay ulama' has developed in line with other Islamic studies traditions, such as ilmu kalam, tasawuf, tales and etc. However its use may not be too apparent due to the influence of the use of logical reasonings through ilmu kalam and the practice of tasawuf. The use of Hadith in 'Aqidah al-Najin can be seen as more of a support to logical reasonings which have been the main factor of the problems discussed. This approach is a method frequently used in writing ulumul-Kalam among the followers of Imam al-Asya`ari. There are many versions of Hadith writing in Aqidah al-Najin, a detailed analysis of these hadiths has revealed that most of them were proven to be valid. Although there are several weak Hadith (daif) that is incompetent, but Tuan Minal considers that it is not a wrongdoing to practice the Hadith in good conducts (fada'il al-A`mal).

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