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A Historical Account on Ibn Arabi's Doctrine in the Indonesian Archipelago the 1700s and 1800s

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Abstract

Ibn 'Arabi is a well-known Sufi whose teachings and influence have reached almost every Muslim country. Although he is considered a Sufi figure with a controversial doctrine of Sufism, his teachings have been adopted and further elaborated by his followers worldwide, including the Malay-Indonesian archipelago. There are two objectives of this article: firstly, to provide a historical account of the spread of Ibn 'Arabi's teachings in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago in the 1700s and 1800s; and secondly, to show the adoption and reaction of the Malay religious scholars to Ibn 'Arabi's teaching. This essay employs a historical method based on historical data contained in the *Kitab Jawi*, a Malay religious book written in Arabic and Malay. This writing proves that the teachings of Ibn 'Arabi reached the Malay-Indonesian archipelago as early as the fifteenth century AD. Ibn 'Arabi's teachings were recorded in the works of Malay religious scholars (Malays: *ulama*), and their writings were instrumental in spreading the teachings among the Malay population in the archipelago.

Keywords: Ibn 'Arabi, Kitab Jawi, Martabat Tujuh, Sufism, Malay-Indonesian Archipelago

Introduction

It is uncertain when Sufism was introduced to the people of Malay-Indonesia archipelago. This is mainly because there is little historical evidence of the early arrival of Islam and Sufism in the region. There have been many discussions about the arrival of Islam, both Western and Malay scholars, in the archipelago. However, until now, they have not been able to agree on a common conclusion. The existence of archaeological and epigraphic evidence from before the thirteenth century is undeniable. However, they do not indicate whether the people mentioned were locals or foreigners. Thus, they could have been Arabs who settled there and were later buried there by their own community (Shafi'i, 1980).

The first known eyewitness account of some parts of Sumatra is by Marco Polo, who visited North Sumatra in 1292. Of the eight kingdoms of Sumatra, which he refers to as Little Java, only one, Ferlec (Perlak), was Islamic, as he writes: "The people of Ferlec used all to be idolators, but owing to the contact with the Saracen merchants, who continually resort here in their ships the people in the city have all become Muslims". The people in the mountains,

according to Marco Polo, continued to live "like animals" (Yule, 1926). This statement shows that Islam became part of the Malay-Indonesian community by the end of the thirteenth century. The above evidence leads to the general conclusion that although Muslims have lived in the archipelago for a long time, the Islamization of the people of the Malay-Indonesian archipelago was not intensively pursued until the thirteenth century.

In clarifying the intensity of Islamization of the native population of the archipelago from the thirteenth century onward, Johns (1961) suggested that it was the migrating Sufis who were largely responsible for the mass conversion. He argued that although Arab and Muslim traders had been visiting the region regularly since the eighth century, there was no evidence of Muslim communities until the thirteenth century. He further asserted that from that point on, not only did Muslim communities grow significantly larger in one particular enclave, but Islam began to take root throughout the Malay-Indonesian population and exert a formative influence on civilizations. It is likely that Sufism was introduced to the Malays in the thirteenth century at the same time that Islam was introduced to the region (Hurgronje, 1906).

This assumption becomes even more convincing when one takes into account the role that the Sufis played in spreading Islam among the native population. The reason, according to Johns (1961), is that the Sufi orders did not gain a dominant influence in the Muslim world until after the fall of Baghdad to the Mongols in 1258. Citing Gibb, *Muslim World*, the Sufis, who countered the tendency to fragment the territories of the caliphate after the fall of Baghdad, played an increasing role in preserving the unity of the Arabic, Persian, and Turkic-speaking areas. It is no coincidence that during these years the Sufi orders gradually became stable and disciplined institutions and associated themselves with the trade and craft guilds or corporations (*tawa'if*) that made up the Muslim urban region (Al-Attas, 1963).

This affiliation enabled Sufi masters and disciples to travel from the centres of the Muslim world to the outlying regions, carrying Islamic beliefs and ideas across language barriers and thus accelerating the spread of the religion. Against this background, many of the local sources mention the story of the arrival of various *shaykhs*, *sayyids*, *makhdums*, and similar figures from the Middle East or elsewhere in the archipelago to spread Islam. The main motive for conversion, according to Johns, was the ability of the Sufis to present Islam in an attractive form and to emphasise continuity rather than change in their sermons (Johns, 1961). Because of the Sufis' charismatic authority and magical powers, according to Johns (1961), some Sufi teachers were able to marry the daughters of the Malay-Indonesian nobility and bestow upon their children the prestige of royal blood in addition to the divine aura of religious charisma. Johns therefore concludes that it was only through the preaching of the Sufis that Islam was able to take root among the people of the island states and win the loyalty of their rulers. These did not become a dominant influence in the Muslim community until the thirteenth century.

The Doctrine of Ibn 'Arabi in the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago

Ibn 'Arabi is well-known for his *wahdat al-wujud* (the unity of being) doctrine. The Arabic term, *wahdat al-wujud*, usually translated literally as "Oneness of Being." Only Allah, God Himself, has absolute existence in the eyes of Ibn 'Arabi. Other things beside God, which is the phenomenal world, only exist in a derivative manner. Ultimately, to the extent that they do exist, their existence is due to God's existence. This explanation, however, is not meant to

suggest that everything that exists in the phenomenal world is identical with God. In other words, God's relationship with the phenomenal world, including man, is that God manifests in accordance with a plethora of possibilities held within His knowledge ('ilm). Therefore, anything that exists in the phenomenal world is in fact a particular mode within which the One Being displays and manifests His Will (*Iradah*) and Power (*Qudrah*). In short, Ibn 'Arabi has steadfastly maintained that there is only one real existence, and that is God. As for all other existences, their existences have been explained as the manifestations or theophanies (*tajalliyyat*) of God (Chittick, 1982), not the existence of God Himself, or one with God (Akbar, 2016).

One thing that is worth mentioning here is that the term itself has undergone numerous misunderstandings of Ibn 'Arabi's teaching and controversy among Muslim scholars throughout the ages. As a response to the controversy surrounding the term "*wahdat al-wujud*," some sufis such as 'Ala al-Dawlah al-Simnani (d. 736/1336) and Ahmad Faruq al-Sirhindi (d. 1034/1624) have introduced and used another term to describe the doctrine, which is considered to be more accurate to the teachings of Ibn 'Arabi and in line with the teachings of Islam, called "*wahdat al-shuhud*" (Kartal, 2013; Faruque, 2016).

Ibn 'Arabi never developed the concept of God's manifestations as a separate teaching in his writings. In fact, he only discussed the grades, which he called *hadarah* (presence), individually, and did not state clearly and explicitly how they were related to each other or how they formed a single whole. It was Sadr al-Din al-Qunawi, Ibn 'Arabi's closest student and great spokesman, who meticulously explained his master's teachings on the manifestation of God systematically. His elaboration later became known as *al-hadarat al-ilahiyyah al-khamsah* (The Five Divine Presences); the *hadrat al-'ilm* (The Presence of Knowledge); the *hadrat al-arwah* (The Presence of Spirits); the *hadrat al-mithal* (The Presence of Images); the *hadrat al-hiss* (The Presence of Sensory); and the *hadrat al-insan al-kamil* (The Presence of the Perfect Man) (Chittick, 1982).

Ibn 'Arabi's teachings, along with the concept of God's manifestations, were then brought and spread throughout Central Asia, India, and other parts of the Muslim world, eventually becoming widely accepted as a core doctrine in Sufism. A History of Sufism in India (1983) by Sayyid Athar Abbas Risvi is a useful and informative book about the spread of Ibn 'Arabi's teachings in the Indian subcontinent. It is widely assumed that Ibn 'Arabi's teachings were introduced into the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago via the Indian subcontinent through the role of the sufis in sea trade routes.

An important historical Malay literary work entitled *Sejarah Melayu* (Malay Annals), written in the fifteenth century AD, records that a certain Sufi *shaykh* in Mecca, Abu Ishaq, wrote a work entitled *Durr al-Manzum*. It was originally written in two parts: the first is a discourse on the nature of God's essence, or *al-Dhat*, and the second is on the nature of the attributes of God, or *al-Sifat*. Having completed the tract, the author then instructed his disciple, *Mawlana* Abu Bakar, to bring it to Malacca. However, before leaving his master, the latter is said to have asked him to add another discourse about the Acts of God (Ar. *Af'al Allah*) to the work. The book was then brought to Malacca where it and *Mawlana* Abu Bakar were received with great pomp and ceremony and drummed all the way to the Malaccan court. The king of Malacca at that time, Sultan Mansur Syah, took a keen interest in the study of the book. He

even had it sent to Pasai to ask for an esoteric and deeper meaning of its contents from a resident scholar by the name of *Makhdum* Patakan. We are told by the *Sejarah Melayu* that the Sultan and *Mawlana* Abu Bakar were very satisfied when *Makhdum* Patakan sent back his esoterical interpretations on the contents of the work (Al-Attas, 1966).

In addition, we are told by the *Sejarah Melayu* (Malay Annals) that the Sultan Mansur Syah had also sent another court representative, named Tun Bija Wangsa, to Pasai, along with presents that were to be given to any scholar of Pasai who could give a satisfactory answer to the King's question as to whether the damned and blessed will stay in Heaven and Hell for all eternity. At first, a resident scholar of Pasai, known as *Makhdum* Muda, gave his answer according to the exoteric teachings of the Qur'an. But then, it became obvious to him that that was not the answer that the representative of Malacca was expecting. So, on another, this time private occasion, he gave an esoteric answer to the question, telling the representative that the suffering of the damned would be turned to pleasure. The answer was accepted by Tun Bija Wangsa and eventually he gave all the presents to him (Al-Attas 1966: 7). According to Johns (1963), it is believed that the answer given to the representative of Malacca by *Makhdum* Muda was based on the mystical teaching of `Abd al-Karim al-Jili (d. 1417), who is known for his inclination towards the teachings of Ibn `Arabi.

If this is the case, it is possible that Ibn 'Arabi's ideas made their way to Pasai, and possibly Malacca as well. This is because al-Jili was known as an ardent follower of Ibn `Arabi's teachings. Indeed, al-Jili's ideas about the ideal man are a continuation and systematic elaboration of Ibn 'Arabi's. However, we cannot, at present, say anything further concerning this matter as our evidence and knowledge of the period before the fifteenth century are inadequate. However, until the seventeenth century, the name Ibn 'Arabi was not mentioned in Malay mystical literature.

Ibn 'Arabi's teachings were first found in the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago in the teachings of a Malay sufi, Hamzah of Fansur. He is generally believed to have flourished between c. 1550 and 1600 and may have written many works in Sufism. Unfortunately, only some of them are known to have survived through the centuries. Many of his writings are concerned with metaphysical Sufism, which is based primarily on the idea of *wahdat al-wujud*. His teaching is nothing more than a Malay reproduction of Ibn al-Arabi's ideas, from whom he undoubtedly drew much inspiration (Al-Attas, 1970; Wasino et al., 2020).

Hamzah of Fansur prose, *Asrar al-`Arifin fi Bayan `Ilm al-Suluk wa al-Tawhid*, contains a number of poems which could be said to have been modelled approximately on Ibn `Arabi's *Tarjuman al-Ashwaq*, *Lama`ah* of Farid al-Din 'Iraqi, and *Lawa'ih* of `Abd al-Rahman Jami. His *Sharab al-`Ashiqin* is considered to be the earliest Malay work on philosophical Sufism, as well as the earliest complete prose work by Hamzah. He also wrote many poems, which could be collectively called *Ruba`i Hamzah Fansuri*, but are sometimes referred to as *Syair Burung Pingai*, *Syair Sidang Faqir* (Al-Attas, 1970).

Hamzah, like Ibn 'Arabi, believes that there was only one being in the beginning, God. Only through His manifestations did creations come into being. Based on his ideas on Ibn `Arabi's and `Abd al-Karim al-Jili's exposition of the process of God's manifestation (*tajalliyyat*), he wrote in the *Sharab al-`Ashiqin* (Al-Attas, 1970):

Know that the Innermost Essence of the Truth, Glorious and Exalted is called by the People of the Path 'indeterminacy' (*la ta`ayyun*). It is called indeterminacy because our intelligence and skill in verbal exposition, knowledge and gnosis are unable to reach It. Let alone our knowledge and gnosis, even the Prophets and the Saints are struck with awe of It. Hence the Prophet (God bless him and give him peace) says: 'Glory be to Thee, we cannot really know Thee'. And the Prophet (God bless him and give him peace) says further: 'Contemplate upon God's creation, not upon His Essence'. This is why the People of the Path call this (Essence) indeterminate, meaning: non-manifest.

The first (stage of) determinacy is four-fold: Knowledge (*`Ilm*), Being (*Wujud*), Sight (*Shuhud*) and Light (*Nur*). All these four are called the first determination (*ta`ayyun awwal*), for by virtue of Knowledge, the Knower and the Known become manifest; by virtue of Being, That which causes to be and That which becomes are manifest; by virtue of Sight, the Seer and the Seen become manifest; by virtue of Light, the Illuminator and the Illuminated become manifest. All these, the Knower and the Known, the First and the Last, the Outwardly Manifest and the Inwardly Hidden - acquire their names in (the stage of) the first determination.

The Known is called by the People of the Path the Fixed Essence (*al-a`yan al-thabitah*). Some call it the Reality of Things (*haqiqat al-ashya`*), some call it the Cognitive Forms (*al-suwar al-`ilmiyyah*) and other call it the Relational Spirit (*ruh idafi*). All these are the second determination (*ta`ayyun thani*). The human spirit (*ruh insani*), the animal spirit (*ruh hayawani*) and the vegetal spirit (*ruh nabati*) are the third determination (*ta`ayyun thalith*). The fourth and the fifth determinations (*ta`ayyun rabi`* and *ta`ayyun khamis*) are determination *ad infinitum* encompassing the realm of physical things in its entirety, comprising the whole universe and all created things (therein).

It is clear from the poem that Hamzah sees creation as the result of successive determinations or manifestations of a single underlying reality. Hamzah's system consists of five stages: *la ta`ayyun*, *ta`ayyun awwal*, *ta`ayyun thani*, *ta`ayyun rabi`* and *ta`ayyun khamis*. Employing poetic imagery, Hamzah compares the fivefold manifestation process to the ocean, the waves, the clouds, the raindrops, and finally the river. The last four remain identical with the ocean in terms of their reality (i.e. water), but yet have emerged and are different from the ocean (Al-Attas, 1970).

Aside from the teaching of God's manifestations mentioned above, another version of Ibn 'Arabi's *wahdat al-wujud* known as *Martabat Tujuh* (The Seven Grades of Being) existed in the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago. This explanation is essentially an extension of Ibn 'Arabi's doctrine of *wahdat al-Wujud*. The term arose in the early seventeenth century in a book written by a sufi scholar from India, Shaykh Muhammad Fadl Allah al-Burhanpuri, entitled *Tuhfah al-Mursalat ila Ruhiyy al-Nabiyy* (A Gift Addressed to the Spirit of the Prophet). This later term has become popular ever since its inception in the region and has continued to do so until the present (Johns, 1965).

The first Malay Sufi known to have employed the *Martabat Tujuh* system was Shams al-Din of Pasai. He may indeed have been the "Archbishop" with whom the English sea captain,

James Lancaster, negotiated in 1603. Shams al-Din probably served as foreign minister under the rule of Iskandar Muda until his death in 1630 (Johns, 1980). There are many works that have been positively attributed to him, both in Arabic and in Malay, such as *Jawhar al-Haqa'iq*, *Nur al-Daqa'iq*, *Tanbih al-Tullab fi Ma`rifat al-Malik al-Wahhab*, *Mir'at al-Haqqiqah*, and *Sharah Ruba`i Hamzah Fansuri* (Nieuwenhuijze, 1945).

Like Hamzah, Shams al-Din also belonged to the mystical tradition of Ibn `Arabi. Hamzah and Shams al-Din were close contemporaries, though the latter was slightly younger than the former. It is uncertain, however, whether they in fact ever met or that Shams al-Din ever studied with Hamzah, since we do not have any information to draw a master-student relationship between the two figures. Some scholars consider Shams al-Din to be Hamzah's student (Drewes, 1955). This is probably based on the fact that he accepted Hamzah's inclination toward philosophical Sufism and wrote commentaries on Hamzah's works, as well as being a contemporary of Hamzah. Shams al-Din himself, however, never mentioned, either implicitly or explicitly, that he ever met Hamzah. The fact that he commented upon Hamzah's works should, thus, be understood in terms of the fact that he was aware of, read, and interpreted the latter's ideas and, at the same time, taught his own teaching close to that of Hamzah.

Shams al-Din diffused the Sufi's doctrine of God's manifestations through his works, which centred around the doctrine of *wahdat al-wujud*. In this sense, Hamzah probably had some influence on him, but his description of the process of God's manifestation differed from Hamzah's scheme and portrayed the greater influence of Muhammad b. Fadl Allah's *Tuhfah*. Nevertheless, Johns noted that Shams al-Din's elaboration of the system of *Martabat Tujuh* is far more developed and better constructed than that of Muhammad b. Fadl Allah's. Given this, one might be tempted to suggest that Muhammad b. Fadl Allah's work, or at least part of it, was an elaboration of that of Shams al-Din, and not *vice versa* (Johns, 1965). This brings us to a question: Could the doctrine of *Martabat Tujuh* be a Malay invention?

When one looks at the *Tuhfah*, it is obvious that it is a short treatise that requires interpretation of the ideas contained within it. The author, Muhammad Fadl Allah seemed to acknowledge this. Eventually, the author himself had to supply a commentary on his own work entitled "*al-Haqqiqah al-Muwafaqah li al-Shar`iyah* (The Reality Brought into Harmony with the Law) for two reasons: to further explain the principles he laid down in the *Tuhfah*, and to maintain his view that the *haqqiqah* (reality), achieved through the spiritual intuition, does not contradict the *shari`ah* (law) if it is understood correctly (Johns, 1965; Azra, 1995). Based on the circumstances, the same could be said of Shams al-Din's clear elaboration of the system of *Martabat Tujuh* as an interpretation of the Seven Grades of Being explained in the *Tuhfah*, in spite of the fact that the work was not the only one from which he drew his teachings. His exposition of the *Martabat Tujuh* can be found in three of his works entitled *Jawhar al-Haqa'iq* (The Essence of Realities), *Nur al-Daqa'iq* (The Subtle Light), and *Mir'at al-Mu'minin* (The Mirror of the Believers).

A contemporary of Shams al-Din, Muhammad Jilani b. `Ali b. Hasanji al-Raniri, also utilised the system of *Martabat Tujuh* when giving his version of the idea of the manifestation of God. Popularly known as Nur al-Din al-Raniri, he was originally from India, where he was born in Ranir or Rander, Gujarat (Gujarat), on the west coast of India (Rosele & Abdul Rahim, 2017).

al-Raniri was appointed as mufti in Aceh during the reign of the Aceh king at that time, Sultan Iskandar al-Thani. Al-Raniri belonged to a category of Sufis who believed in the teaching of the "Oneness of Being" and exposed the idea of God's manifestation using the framework of the *Martabat Tujuh's* system in some of his works, such as *Ma`rifat al-Saniyyah li ahl al-Shu'un al-Zakiyyah*, *Jawahir al-`Ulumi fi Kashf al-Ma`lum*, and *Hill al-Zill* (Abdullah, 1990).

Another Malay Sufi who employed the system of *Martabat Tujuh* as an approach for explaining the Sufi's concept of God's manifestation in his writings was `Abd al-Ra'uf of Singkel (1615–1693). `Abd al-Ra'uf was one of the outstanding Malay scholars who flourished in the seventeenth century and served as a *Shaykh al-Islam* or Mufti under four Achenese queens in the second half of the seventeenth century. He was a student of two Medina scholars, Shaykh Ahmad al-Qushashi (1538–1661) and al-Qushashi's prominent and influential student, Shaykh Ibrahim al-Kurani (1616–1690). *Daqa'iq al-Huruf*, *Kifayat al-Muhtajini ila Mashrab al-Muwahhidin al-Qa'ilini bi Wahdat al-Wujud*, *Bayan al-Itlaq*, and *Risalah A'yan Thabita* were among the books in which he discussed the *Martabat Tujuh* system as well as the basic principles of the teaching of the *wahdat al-wujud*.

Apart from his writings, `Abd al-Ra'uf was also instrumental in spreading the system in other parts of the Indonesian Archipelago *via* his disciples. They must have been initiated by Abd al-Ra'uf in Aceh after his return from Medina and came into contact with him either on their way to or from the Middle East. One of `Abd al-Ra'uf's disciples who is said to be responsible for spreading the *Martabat Tujuh* to Java was Abd al-Muhyi of Pamijahan. Rinke mentions that he met `Abd al-Ra'uf in Aceh on his way back from pilgrimage and became his student before receiving formal permission (*ijazah*) from `Abd al-Ra'uf to spread the Shattariyyah in Java (Johns, 1965). After that, he is said to have spread the order's teachings there, and he was later followed by his most famous student, Bagus Nurdjain of Ceribon, and his sons, Bagus Anom (Mas Pekik Ibrahim) and Hajji 'Abd Allah (Johns, 1965).

Furthermore, Werner Kraus writes that, in addition to knowing and studying under 'Abd al-Ra'uf, 'Abd al-Muhyi befriended another well-educated Malay Sufi of his time, Shaykh Yusuf al-Makassar, and was credited with spreading the mystical system of the Seven Grades in Banten (Kraus, 1995). Although the spread of *Martabat Tujuh* to Java, and particularly Banten, has been connected to the efforts of `Abd al-Muhyi, none of his writings are known to have survived to support this assertion. However, there is a Javanese manuscript on the *Martabat Tujuh* authored by a certain Kyai Haji Muhyiddin, who was a grandson of `Abd al-Muhyi (Santri, 1987). Hence, it is plausible that `Abd al-Muhyi's mystical thinking is recorded in this untitled text (Kraus, 1995; Santri, 1987). In addition, it is possible that the system also reached Sukapura through `Abd al-Muhyi's favourite student, Subamanggala, the later Wiradedaha IV, the fourth Bupati of Sukapura (r. 1723–1745) (Kraus, 1995).

The dissemination of the *Martabat Tujuh* in Java may also be attributed to the introduction of the *Tuhfah* to the Javanese. It is unclear how long the Javanese were aware of the work. It may indeed have been known to them through their contact with `Abd al-Ra'uf in Aceh because it was an important halting place for almost all the pilgrims from the region on their way to and from Mecca, as well as an important centre for Islamic education in the seventeenth century. Hence, many of the pilgrims, including those from Java, must have stayed there for a considerable time while on their way to and from Mecca. While staying at

Acheh, the Javanese, like those from other regions of the archipelago, must have come into contact with `Abd al-Ra'uf and might have been initiated into the latter's order. Therefore, according to Johns, one of the major interpolations in the Javanese translation of the *Tuhfah*, written around 1680, is a lengthy quotation of `Abd al-Ra'uf's *Daqa'iq al-Huruf* (Johns, 1965).

Apart from the translation of the *Tuhfah* by an anonymous Javanese translator, the *Martabat Tujuh* also found its way into *Suluk* literature, a modern Javanese verse work on religious subjects. There are two Javanese manuscripts kept in the University Library at Leiden, Cod. 1795 and Cod. 1796, in which the system is also expounded in the Javanese language. The system is also said to have greatly influenced the writing of *Serat Centini* by Yasadipura II (d. 1844) during the Surakarta period and the thought of his grandson, Ranggawarsita (1802–1833), particularly in his work, *Serat Wirid Hidayat Jati* (Simuh, 1988).

Like Java, the system also spread to Minangkabau through `Abd al-Ra'uf's Minangkabau student, Burhanuddin. He is believed to have brought his master's order, Shattariyyah, from Acheh to Ulakkan sometime in the latter part of the seventeenth century. From thereon, it moved up the trade routes to the villages of Kapas Kapas and Mensiangan, close by modern Padang Panjang, to Kota Lawas, and to the rich *sawah* country of southern Agam, in particular to Kota Tua near Cangking. Beside the Shattariyyah, the Naqshabadiyyah and Qadiriyyah orders were also active in the Minangkabau during that period (Dobbin, 1983). There were not many differences among the followers of these three orders except that Shattariyyah practitioners strongly believed in the *Martabat Tujuh*, a distinct feature of the brotherhood, that distinguished it from the others. However, the Naqshabadiyyah followers were opposed to the "martabat," to use the term of Jalaluddin, a nineteenth-century Sufi from Minangkabau. He gave us a short account of this episode, which at one stage led to open fighting between the followers of the Shattariyyah and the Naqshabandiyyah.

According to his account, a renowned Shattariyyah teacher, Tuanku Nan Tua of Kota Tua, was confronted by Tuanku Nan Salih of Telawi, because of his belief in the "martabat." Tuanku Nan Salih's father, who was opposed to the belief, is also said in the account to have confronted Tuanku Nan Tua earlier but was defeated by him. In the meeting and discussion over the issue between the two that took place in Kota Tua, the latter is said to have reached the conclusion that the "*martabat*" was not wrong; "all have agreed that the view of Tuanku Nan Tua was right and that there is nothing wrong, even to the smallest thing" (Jalaluddin, 1857).

Another Malay scholar who is known to have employed the system was Jalaluddin al-Tursani. Not much is known of him. We find no mention of him until the death of `Abd al-Ra'uf of Singkel. According to Iskandar (1995), there is a certain scholar known as Jalaluddin bin Muhammad Kamaluddin bin Baginda Khatib, author of the *Safinat al-Hukkam fi Takhlis al-Khassam* (The Ship for the Judges in Settling Problems of Those in Dispute), which was completed in 1740. He was from Turasan, in Minangkabau. It is probable that these two names, Jalaluddin, the author of *Safinat al-Hukkam*, and Jalaluddin al-Tursani, were one and the same person, for the word al-Tursani could well refer to Tarusan in Minangkabau.

His ideas of *Martabat Tujuh* are expressed in his work, entitled *Mazhar al-Ajla ila Rutbat al-A`la*. He mentions in the work that the grades of God's manifestation were accounted for as

forty grades, which he most likely refers to Abd al-Karim al-Jili's account in his work, the *Insan al-Kamil*. These grades were later reduced to only seven grades. However, in his description of the system, he employs the terms *la ta`ayyun*, *ta`ayyun awwal*, and *ta`ayyun thani* instead of describing the first three grades of the system of *Martabat Tujuh* as *ahadiyyah*, *wahdah*, and *wahidiyyah* (Abdullah, 1990).

Shaykh Yusuf of Makassar, a contemporary of `Abd al-Ra'uf, also accepted the *Martabat Tujuh*. He is venerated as the major saint of South Celebes and was given the honorific title of "*al-Taj al-Khalwatiyya*" (The Crown of the Khalwatiyyah). Yusuf al-Khalwati, like 'Abd al-Ra'uf, spent roughly two decades in Arabia studying under various famous teachers of his time, such as Ibrahim al-Kurani, 'Umar b. 'Abd Allah Ba Shayban (d. 1656) and 'Ayyub b. 'Ayyub b. Ahmad b. 'Ayyub al-Dimashqi. It was during his years in Arabia that he was initiated into several brotherhood orders and acquired authorizations to teach the Naqshabadiyyah, Qadiriyyah, Shattariyyah, Ba-'Alawiyyah, and Khalwatiyyah.

After his return to Indonesia around 1670, Yusuf taught the Khalwatiyyah order, but in fact he combined the techniques of the Khalwatiyyah with those of other orders. This order took root only in South Celebes, especially among the Makassarese aristocracy. According to van Bruinessen, it is evident from his extant works that Yusuf does not give a systematic exposition of his own views. But the frequent references to Ibn al-Arabi and other mystics of the same persuasion make it abundantly clear where he stood doctrinally (Bruinessen 1994). His exposition of the *Martabat Tujuh* is found in his works such as *Taj al-Asrar* and *Matalib al-Salikin* (Hamid, 1994).

The system also reached Palembang in South Sumatra. However, it is not clear how early it was known there. As in the case of Java, the system could have been brought there by Palembang students themselves. On their way to and from the Middle East, they might have stopped at Aceh for a considerable time and come into contact with either `Abd al-Ra'uf himself, his students, or his works. A well-known Palembang scholar, *Shaykh* Abdul Samad b. `Abd Allah, for instance, mentions Shams al-Din of Pasai and `Abd al-Ra'uf of Singkel in one of his own books, *Siyar al-Salikin ila `ibadat Rabb al-`Alamin*. It is probable that he learned those works of Shams al-Din entitled *Jawhar al-Haqa'iq* and `Abd al-Ra'uf's *Umdat al-Muhtajin fi Suluk Maslak al-Mufarridin* while he was in Aceh, judging from his familiarity with their contents (al-Falimbani, 1953). It is also possible that other Palembang students could also have known the works, including those that contain the *Martabat Tujuh* in Aceh. Hence, they could have brought it back and spread the doctrine in Palembang around the end of the seventeenth century.

The spread of the *Martabat Tujuh* in Palembang in the eighteenth century could also be closely related to `Abd al-Samad who established his career in the *Haramayn* (Mecca and Medina) and never returned to his homeland. While staying in Medina, where he is known to have spent most of his lifetime, he came under the influence of a Sufi teacher, Muhammad al-Samman (1719–1775), who initiated him into the Sammaniyyah order (Drewes, 1977). In turn, `Abd al-Samad was instrumental in introducing numerous *Jawi* students and pilgrims, particularly from Palembang, to the order. Before long, this fraternity spread all over Sumatra, especially in Palembang and Aceh. The influence of the *Martabat Tujuh* on him is confirmed in volume four of his translation of al-Ghazali's *Lubab Ihya' `Ulum al-Din*, entitled *Siyar al-*

Salikin, under a chapter on *tawhid* (God's Unity). In this chapter, he categorises the belief in God's unity (*al-tawhid*) into four degrees and names the *wahdat al-wujud* in the framework of *Martabat Tujuh* as the highest degree of *tawhid* (Al-Falimbani, 1953). As Abd al-Samad was highly respected by the *Jawi* students and pilgrims of the region, particularly among his own countrymen, it may well be that the work was also very popular in Palembang, which would have helped spread knowledge of the system among the local population.

The same exposition of *Martabat Tujuh* as the highest degree of *Tawhid* is also given by another well-known Malay Sufi, *Shaykh* Muhammad Nafis b. Idris b. Husayn of Banjar, in his works: *al-Durr al-Nafis fi Bayan Wahdat al-Af`al wa al-Asma' wa al-Sifat wa al-Dhat al-Taqqis* and *Majmu`al-Asrar*. He was born in 1735 in Martapura into the Banjar royal family (Mansur, 1982). Although we do not have much information on his life, there is no doubt that he was a contemporary of another Banjarese scholar, *Shaykh* Muhammad Arshad b. `Abd Allah (1710–1812), and second only to the latter in terms of the influence he exerted upon the Kalimantan Muslims, particularly in the field of Sufism. In this sense, it is undoubtedly the case that the system also circulated and was accepted by the Banjar populace through these two works as the popularity of Muhammad Nafis grew among the Banjarese.

The popularity of the *Martabat Tujuh* among the population of the Indonesian Archipelago also had a disadvantage, as the system was misunderstood by many. An example of this misunderstanding in the area of Palembang in the eighteenth century was highlighted by a Palembang scholar, *Shaykh* Shihabuddin b. `Abd Allah who appeared as an author in about the 1750s. In his work entitled *Risalah*, he criticises current excesses in sufi practice, which he blames on the misunderstanding of the teaching of *Martabat Tujuh*. He stigmatises the vulgarisation and misuse of the mystical system of Seven grades of Being. In order to prevent the misunderstanding, he instead strongly asserts that ordinary believers must not be allowed to read books on this subject because there are not enough competent teachers who could give them appropriate tuition and advise them with good counsel on this issue. Should a sufficient number of good teachers be available, then laymen could be prevented from living in disregard of religious law (*shari`ah*). According to Shihabuddin, the people who were guilty of these were *dajjal* (antichrists) in human form because they were neither conscious of their sin against God nor aware of the fact that it is the devils who induce them to reject the sacred law of the Prophet (Drewes, 1977).

The Influence of Ibn `Arabi in the Malay Peninsula in the 1700s and 1800s

We do not have much information about the distribution of the *Martabat Tujuh* system in the Malay Peninsula area. In fact, it may have been introduced into this area as early as the seventeenth century. There are two indications for this. First, many areas of the Malay Peninsula fell under the rule of the Aceh Kingdom under Iskandar Muda in the first half of the seventeenth century, for example, Johor in 1615, Pahang in 1618, Kedah in 1619, and Perak in 1620 (Riddell, 1990). We have already noted that the *Martabat Tujuh* system in Aceh may have been known as early as 1601. These close contacts between the conquered territories and Aceh could therefore mean that the literary works that contained the system could have been brought to the conquered territories.

Second, the search for Islamic knowledge in the Middle East by Malay students from the Malay Peninsula and Patani would have meant that they would have reached Aceh, whether

on their way to or from the Middle East. They could have spent a considerable amount of time there, as Aceh was also an important centre for Islamic education in that period. Their stay in Aceh would have brought them into contact with the works that contained the *Martabat Tujuh*, such as *Tuhfah* by Muhammad b. Fadl Allah, the treatises of Shams al-Din, al-Raniri, and 'Abd al-Ra'uf, as in the case of Daud al-Fatani, as will be argued later. It seems plausible, then, that the system may have reached the Malay Peninsula in the seventeenth century. However, we have not yet found any solid evidence to support this claim, apart from the fact that our knowledge of the early history of Sufism in this part of the archipelago is very scant.

The earliest evidence of its existence is found in Mengkarak, a small town in the Temerloh district of Pahang. But we have no information about it except that it is said to have been taught by a certain figure, known as Datuk Mengkarak. Who he was and where he came from is unknown. It seems certain that the name Datuk Mengkarak was not his real name, but a name attributed to the place where he lived - Mengkarak. It has been suggested that he was from Minangkabau and that he may have come to Pahang during a conflict between Raja Kecil of Riau and Sultan Abdul Jalil of Pahang (r. 1720), as the latter is said to have brought many people from Minangkabau to Pahang as soldiers (Adil, 1972).

However, a Malay religious scholar (Malay: Ulama) in Pahang, Tuk Shihabuddin b. Zainal Abidin (b. 1728), has mentioned that a certain Datuk Mengkarak taught a doctrine of *wahdat al-wujud* in the form of *Martabat Tujuh*, the teaching of which he firmly rejected. In his poems he writes that *Martabat Tujuh*, which was very popular in his time, is false and that those who believe in it are subject to the wrath of God. He writes in *Syair Rejam* (Yaakob, 1992)

*Tujuh haribulan rejamnya Naga,
Naga di laut bercula tujuh,
Siapa memakai ilmu Martabat Tujuh,
Itulah orang dimurkai Tuhan .*

On the seventh day, a dragon was slain,
The dragon which had seven heads,
Whosoever useth the Seven Grades of Being,
Comes among the people who are in God's wrath .

In his poem entitled *Syair `Ashiqin* (Poem of the Lovers) Tuk Shihabuddin writes about the *Martabat Tujuh* (Said, 2004):

*Martabat Tujuh suatu andaian,
Nabi dan Wali empunya pakaian,
Di dalam hati tampuk tampan,
Tiada tahu pengajaran syaitan.*

The Seven Grades of Being is an assumption,
[That] it is a cloak of the Prophet and the Saint,
[The one who] at heart finds it admirable,
[Does not know that] it is the Devil's teaching.

*Duduk berfikir kepalanya tunduk,
Selaku-laku ahlu'l-dhawq,
Meningatkan kata `ashiq dan ma`shuq,
Wahda dan kathra, jam` dan firaq.*
[He looks outwardly] sitting, meditating, bowing down his head,
Like the People of Taste[Sufis],
Recollecting the words lover and Beloved,
Unity and plurality, gathering and imparting.

*Inilah asal iktiqad zindiq,
Lafaznya syubhat berbalik-balik,
Samar di dalam `ilmi'l-haq'iq,
Maqam al-khawwas muhadir dan salik.*
This is how the belief of the heretic commences,
His words have double meanings, [and] he inverts them,
Uncertain in the Knowledge of Realities,
Of the stage of Adepts, those in God's Presence and Wayfarers.

*Martabat Tujuh terlalu masyhur,
Racun yang terbang di negeri Timur,
Lihat di hati sedikit tak kendur,
Seumpama riwayat orang berekor.*
The Seven Grades of Being is very popular,
A Poison that flies to the Eastern countries,
If you consider it in your heart, it is a little incoherent,
Like a story of people with tails .

In another poem entitled *Syair Ghafilah* (Poem of The Heedless), he mentions terms which are common to the system of the *Martabat Tujuh*. He writes (Abu Bakar, 1984):

*Kepala ilmu mengenal diri,
Dimisalkan tanah buyung dan kendi,
Sekelian alam wujud majazi,
Hanyalah Allah yang hakiki.*

Translation:

The principle in knowledge is to know yourself,
It is compared to clay, jar and pitcher,
The Universe has a metaphoric existence,
Only God is Real.
*Berbagai jenis kias dan misal,
Siapa yang menang itulah handal,
`Alam Ruh, `Alam Mithal,
`Alam Ajsam, Insan Kamil.*
Various allegories and images,
He who wins is the powerful one,
{They speak of} the World of Spirit, the World of Images,
The World of Bodies, [and the World of] Perfect Man.

*Alam Lahut, `Alam Jabarut,
 `Alam Nasut, `Alam Malakut,
 A`yan Thabita dimisalkan ombak,
 Putus makrifat di sanalah hanyut.*

The World of Divinity, the World of Sovereign,
 The World of Humanity, the World of Kingdom,
 [They compare] the Immutable Entities to waves,
 They fail to attain gnosis, and are swept away.

*Muhdath dan Qadim di sanalah terhimpun,
 Umpama laut ombak mengalun,
 Dimisalkan benih dengan pohon,
 Benihkah dahulu atau pohon.*

It is where the created and Uncreated united[according to them],
 Like the billowing sea [and] a wave,
 [They] make allegory from seed and tree,
 [And argue whether] the seed is first or the tree.

*Inilah asal iktiqad zindiq,
 Menghaluskan kata jama` dan tafriq,
 Usul furu` makhluk dan khaliq,
 Sehabis kata karam terbalik.*

Here begins the belief of the heretic,
 Playing with words, 'unity' and 'separation',
 'Basic' and 'Derivative', 'creation' and 'Creator',

So that at the end [these] words are drowned and turned upside down .

From these poems it appears that the doctrine of the Seven Stages of Being also reached Mengkarak, a district in present-day Temerloh, Pahang, and was spread among the population. It is very unfortunate, however, that we have no other record to enable us to measure the extent of its popularity. The opposition of Tuk Shihabuddin b. Zainal Abidin against the doctrine was later adopted by his son Tun Teh Muhammad b. Tuk Shihabuddin. In his work entitled *Kitab 'Ilm Tawhid*, which he wrote in 1206/1791, he emphatically asserts that the system is not only false, but that those who believe in it are disbelievers. He wrote (Ibrahim, 1983):

Tanbih, ingat-ingat daripada iktiqad kufur lagi dalala seperti... Dan lagi ingat-ingat daripada iktiqad yang cemar lagi najis iaitu iktiqad Martabat Tujuh dan daerah yang dicampurkan Allah ta`ala dengan makhluk .

Translation: Be careful! Beware of infidel and stray beliefs such as... And further, beware of the filthy and defiling belief which is the belief in the Seven Grades of Being, and of belief which amalgamates God and creation.

He further noted:

Dan beberapa lagi perkataan yang semata-mata kufur lagi dalala seperti perkataan`ayan(a`yan?) thabita dan `ayan(a`yan?) kharij(kharija?) dan `alam lahut dan ruh idafi

Translation: And some of the words of those who are totally infidel and astray words are like the words "immutable entities", and the "interior entities", and the World of Divinity, and the Relational Spirit... .

Conclusion

Malay Muslims in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago did not learn about Ibn 'Arabi's teachings until two decades after his death in 1240 CE. The evidence shows that the teachings of Ibn 'Arabi were introduced to Malay Muslims in the region in three phases. The first phase probably began in the fifteenth century AD, when the inhabitants of the archipelago learned of Ibn 'Arabi's teachings through the influence of 'Abd al-Karim al-Jili, an ardent follower of Ibn 'Arabi, although it is difficult to say with certainty when they first knew of him or who brought al-Jili's ideas to the region. The second phase probably began in the sixteenth century AD. Ibn 'Arabi's teachings were introduced to the inhabitants of the archipelago by the Malay religious scholars themselves, particularly Hamzah of Fansur, who mentions Ibn 'Arabi's name in at least two of his works entitled *Asrar al-'Arifin* (Secret of the Gnostics) and *al-Muntahi* (The Adept). For the first time, the name of Ibn 'Arabi and his teaching of *wahdat al-wujud* (the unity of being) seemed to be introduced to the people of the region through these works. The third phase seemed to begin in the seventeenth century AD. *Tuhfah al-Mursalah*, written by Muhammad Fadl Allah al-Burhanpuri in 1590 CE and brought to the Indonesian archipelago in 1601 CE, enabled the expansion of Ibn 'Arabi's teachings to Muslims in the archipelago. It can be said that the popularity of Ibn 'Arabi's teachings in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago in the seventeenth century AD was due to Malay Muslim scholars incorporating al-Burhanpuri's idea of *Martabat Tujuh* (Seven Stages of Being) into their works on Sufism. Because of the contributions of Malay religious scholars during this period, the influence of Ibn 'Arabi's teachings lasted throughout the 1700s and 1800s. Nonetheless, Malay scholars have issued warning against Ibn 'Arabi's doctrines and teachings in the eighteenth century AD due to the difficulty of understanding his teachings, which have led to misrepresentation and false teachings. To sum up, this article has successfully demonstrated that the Muslim population in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago is not alien to Ibn 'Arabi's teachings due to its wide acceptance amongst the Malay religious scholars in the seventeenth and eighteenth century AD. Debates that occurred between the Malay religious scholars only show the dynamic of the Islamic religious education process that took place within the traditional Muslim society in that period.

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