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Sheikh Nik Mat Kecik Patani: The Great Malay Writer of Religious Books in The 19th Century

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Abstract

In the 15th century, Patani was an area that became the center of the development of Islam. It was called the Porch of Mecca. The string, many local scholars have appeared in Patani. They impart Islamic knowledge to the local population orally and also through the writing of books. Some have migrated outside Patani and contributed to the development of Islamic knowledge outside Patani. Their works have also become a treasure of knowledge that was very useful for society, and some are still used as teaching material today. For example, the book *Munyatul Musolli and Furu'ul Masail wa Usulul Wasail* by Sheikh Daud al-Fatani, the book *Mathla'ul Badrain wa Majma'ul Bahrain* by Sheikh Nik Mat Kecik al-Fathani and the book *Kasyful Litsam 'an as-Ilatil Anam* by Sheikh Zainal Abidin bin Muhammad al-Fathani. One of the ancient scholars of Patani descent whose life past scholars less discuss history is Syeikh Nik Mat Kecik al-Fatani, who wrote many works with a religious pattern, literature, science, and Islamic cosmology. Thus, this article was written to study the biography of Sheikh Nik Mat Kecik Patani and his contribution as a leading author in the 19th century.

Keywords: Sheikh Nik Mat, Writer, Religious, Malay, Patani

Introduction

Islam has been found having its root in the Malay Archipelago since 7AD with the emigration of Arabs to Java. Islam is becoming more popular in the Malay Archipelago with the intensive efforts by Islamic scholars, both locals and internationals who came from cities such as Baghdad, Egypt, Yemen and Saudi Arabia. Their religious books became an important source of reference for the local population. The figure that will be discussed in this article is Sheikh Nik Mat Kecik, one of the Patani descent. The writer will describe the background of his life and his contribution in the development of Islam in the archipelago.

Methodology

In completing this article, the writer used the method of document analysis to obtain data related to the biography of Sheikh Nik Mat Kecik. The document study was carried out using books and articles related to scholars. In addition, some of Sheikh Nik Mat Kecik's works have also been carefully read by the author to obtain data about the date of writing and the content of the books. The data that has been collected is analyzed using the content analysis method.

The Background of The Birth of Sheikh Nik Mat Kecil

Sheikh Nik Mat Kecil or his full name, Wan Muhammad bin Wan Ismail was born in Kampung Pulau Duyong Kecil, Kuala Terengganu, in the year 1260H/ 1844AD (Ruswani & Fadlly, 2015: 677). There is also a record that states that Sheikh Nik Mat Kecil was born earlier in the year 1245H/ 1829 AD (Saghir, 1990: 60). Sheikh Nik Mat Kecil is a nephew of Sheikh Daud bin Abdullah al-Fatani and was cared for by his grandfather since childhood. Sheikh Nik Mat Kecil's father named Wan Ismail bin Wan Ahmad bin Wan Idris is Sheikh Ismail Janggut Merah, while his mother's name is Tok Wan Zainab binti Sheikh Idris (Ruswani & Fadlly, 2015: 677). Before the birth of Sheikh Nik Mat Kecil, there was a war between Siam and a combination of 4 states, namely Patani, Terengganu, Kedah, and Kelantan. The war happened when his mother and father migrated from Siam to Terengganu. In all his books, he wrote Sheikh Muhammad bin Ismail Daudy al-Fathani. "Daudy" in the name likely refers to his grandfather, Sheikh Daud bin Abdullah al-Fatani.

In 1845 AD, Sheikh Daud bin Abdullah al-Fatani came to Terengganu to take Sheikh Nik Mat Kecil as an adopted son and finally took him to Mecca al-Mukarramah. After the death of Sheikh Daud al-Fatani in 1846 AD, his maternal cousin, Sheikh Abdul Kadir bin Abdul Rahman has taken care of him. Sheikh Nik Mat Kecil died on Saturday, 20 Rabiulakhir 1333H corresponding to March 6, 1915 AD (Daud, 2012: 198). However, an entry in a letter written by Sheikh Wan Daud bin Wan Mustafa al-Fatani and Wan Ismail bin Sheikh Ahmad al-Fatani to Tengku Long bin Ngah Besut Terengganu dated 22 Zulhijjah 1325H shows that Sheikh Nik Mat Kecil died earlier. The letter also stated the reasons for his death.

"Due to pain, half of his body died on the 22nd day of the last Jamadil month. Then it got better a little, and then it got worse after fasting for six Syawals. Then the pain is less, he goes on Hajj on the Hajj holiday. Then after Zuhur on the day of the Hajj, he fell ill again until after Maghrib, and then he passed away" (Wan Mohd Saghir Abdullah, 1990:p60)

Syeikh Nik Mat Kecil was buried in Ma'la near the Siti Khadijah binti Khuwailid (Ruswani & Fadlly, 2015: 682).

The Study of Sheikh Nik Mat Kecil

Sheikh Nik Mat Kecil was brought to Mecca at a young age by Sheikh Daud bin Abdullah al-Fatani. He has also been trained to memorize *matan* since childhood (Abdullah, 1992: 15). In Mecca, he studied jurisprudence, jurisprudence, interpretation, hadith, and other sciences from Sheikh Hasbullah, Sheikh Abdul Qadir bin Abdul Rahman al-Fatani and other figures (Daud, 2012: 184). He also studied with a great scholar in Jabal Hindi until he became pious. The height of religious knowledge in Sheikh Nik Mat Kecil has made him a respected scientist, author, and translator who has made many contributions to society (Ruswani & Fadlly, 2015: 682).

The Contribution of Sheikh Nik Mat Kecil to the Development of Islamic Knowledge in Malaya

Like other Malay scholars of the past, Syeikh Nik Mat Kecil also spread Islamic knowledge by writing Jawi books. There is no denying that book writing is essential in conveying knowledge, especially religious knowledge. He wrote nine books and became a necessary reference for

the community, even though some are still used as a reference to this day. Malay scholars have done the same thing in the past, such as Tok Pulau Manis, Syekh Abdul Qadir Bukit Bayas, Tokku Tuan Besar, Tokku Paloh, and Tok Syekh Duyong. Although his works are not as many as those produced by his grandfather Sheikh Daud bin Abdullah al-Fatani, the books he wrote have become essential reading and reference material.

1- *Al-Bahjat al-Mardhiyah fi Fawaid al-Ukharawiyah*

This book was completed on 20 Shaaban 1296 H/ 1878 AD in Makkah al-Mukarammah. Maktabah al-Miriyah, in Mecca, has printed it several times, including a print identified in 1319 H/1901 AD. Some sources say this book was completed in Mecca on Wednesday, 2 Shaaban 1296H corresponding to July 23, 1879 AD. This book was also found to have been printed in Malaysia. Among the earliest prints in Malaysia were in the early 1980s by Pustaka Muda, Ipoh, Perak. *Al-Bahjat al-Mardhiyah fi Fawaid al-Ukharawiyah* contains various wirids and prayers. Its advantages are following the practice of most of the Malay community at that time, who were very strong in practicing it (Daud, 2012:186).

2- *Matla' al-Badrain wa Majma' al-Bahrain*

Matla' al-Badrain wa Majma' al-Bahrain was completed on 12 Syaaban 1303 H/ 1885 AD. This book was used during the lifetime of Sheikh Nik Mat Kecil and continues to be used by Malaysians as teaching material in religious lectures and also as scientific reading material to this day. His influence can be seen in the birth of a special dictionary about *Matla' al-Badrain wa Majma' al-Bahrain*, namely *Suluh Matla' al-Badrain*, written by Haji Abdul Ghani Yahya (Daud, 2012:192).

3- *Al-Kawkab al-Durriy fi Nur al-Muhammady*

This book was completed on 13 Shaaban 1304 H/ 1886 AD in Mecca and was printed for the first time at the end of Zulhijjah 1308 H/ 1890 AD. This book was also revised and published by Sheikh Ahmad al-Fathani.

4- *Al-Durr al-Basim fi Ashab al-Kahfi wa al-Raqim*

This book was completed on Monday 19 Rajab 1310H, corresponding to February 6, 1893 AD. It was printed for the first time at Matbaa'h al-Miriyah, Mecca, on Thursday, 25 Syawal 1310, corresponding to May 11, 1893, and as many as 16 pages. The printed copy at Matbaa'h al-Ismailiyyah, Kota Bharu, Kelantan, on the other hand, totals 35 pages and measures 17x12 cm (Daud, 2012:187).

5- *Al-Farqadain wa Jawahir al-'Aqdain*

This book explains the signs of the apocalypse and its chaos, including various properties of gemstones, plants, fruits, vegetables, grains, animal properties, and others. The book *al-Farqadain wa Jawahir al-'Aqdain* was completed in Mecca on Thursday, 13 Syawal 1311H corresponding to April 19, 1894 AD. The first print was made in Matba'ah al-Mirayah, Mecca, with a thickness of 81 pages at the end of Zulhijjah 1311, corresponding to the beginning of July 1894 AD. The reprint was completed at the end of Ramadhan 1329H, corresponding to September 1911 AD (Daud, 2012:192).

6- *Wishah al-Afrah wa Isbah al-Falah*

This book explains the pillars of faith and Islam, jurisprudence, and some benefits for the world and the hereafter. The translation was completed in Mecca on Thursday, 22nd Zulkaedah 1312H, corresponding to May 16, 1895. Among the printing companies that ever printed this book was Mustafa al-Babiy al-Halabiy wa Auladuh in Egypt at the end of Zulkaedah 1342H, corresponding to July 1924M.

7- *Sawati' al-Barq*

This book discusses the law of tayammum, qasar, and plural prayer. This 32-page pamphlet was completed in Mecca on Friday, 25/5/1323H, corresponding to 28/7/1905.

8- *Al-Bahr al-Wafiy wa al-Nahr al-Safi*

Sheikh Nik Mat Kecik also produced works on Islamic law. The book *al-Bahr al-Wafiy wa al-Nahr al-Safi* is his last essay completed on 18 Rejab 1331H, corresponding to June 22, 1913. It contains a debate on the jurisprudence of the al-Shafii school with complete and clear examples.

9- *Al-Durr al-Masnun wa al-Jauhar al-Maknun*

This book contains a discussion about celestial science. Sources state that it was printed in 1309 Hijriyyah at Matba'ah al-Amirat al-Islamiyyah, Mecca (Daud, 2012:192).

The writing of the above books has further promoted the culture of knowledge among the Muslim community in Malaya in particular and in the archipelago in general. According to Abdul Ramae, the past books of Malay scholars have become essential in building the Malay Archipelago's thoughts, views, and intellectualism. However, at the beginning of the 20th century AD, the Western colonizers introduced a secular education system, causing the efforts to spread knowledge through oral or writing to become increasingly gloomy (Sulong, 2017:3).

The Advantages of Sheikh Nik Mat Kecik

The life of a scholar is often associated with the advantages that other public members do not have. These advantages are also called *karamah*. Among the benefits of Sheikh Nik Mat Kecik are:

- i- He is one of the seven great scholars of Patani descent who wrote the most religious works or also known as Islamic literature (Al-Fatani, 2013:83)
- ii- Syeikh Nik Mat Kecik was also the only Malay scholar who became a Syarie Court Judge in Mecca in his time.
- iii- He is also an expert in Hajj management and is known as Sheikh Hajj (Daud, 2012:196)
- iv- When imparting knowledge, his students can hear his voice clearly even without using loudspeakers.
- v- If there are members of his pilgrims who are disturbed on the way to Mecca and Medina as if they were robbed, they will say: "We are the Congregation of Sheikh Nik Mat Kecik". When hearing those words, robbers or harassers of the pilgrims will leave them and not disturb them.

Conclusion

Sheikh Nik Mat Kecik is a Nusantara scholar who spreads knowledge through writing religious works. Many of his works are still used as references by students in madrasahs, universities, and the public until now. His effort continues the struggle of the scholars before him who was always persistent in spreading knowledge. Sheikh Nik Mat Kecik's family background, which is descended from preachers and scholars, as well as an educational background from pious teachers in Mecca, has shaped Sheikh Nik Mat Kecik into an authoritative and respected scholar.

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