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Asy-Syekh Muhammad Nawawi Al-Jawi: His Life and Writings

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Abstract

This is research entitled: "Asy-Syekh Muhammad Nawawi Al-Jawi: His Life and Writing" through which we wanted to focus on the life of the pious scholar Asy-Syekh Muhammad Nawawi Al-Jawi, as the man combined several sciences; such as Jurisprudence, Sufism, Interpretation, and Credendum – and his efforts had a great impact in teaching Islamic sciences. Likewise, his scientific project had a profound impact on scientific life in the Hijaz, and its surroundings in the Arab countries; reflections of this Lord-Worshipper scholar have remained in religious schools in Indonesia, and Malaysia until now. Despite being non-Arab; he mastered the language, which gave him high skill, and rare accuracy in reading the Islamic heritage. Research Problem: Many researchers – especially Arabs – believe that the greatest effort in the service of Islamic studies belongs to Arab scholars; ignoring a major fact, which is that the utmost effort in the service of Islamic studies fell on the shoulders of many non-Arabs who served the religious sciences with great services; including the scholars of Southeast Asia. Reasons for Choosing the Topic: To get acquainted with the character of this honorable scholar and his efforts; and among the reasons also is to highlight the efforts of scholars in general, and non-Arabs, in Islamic studies in general. Research Goals: This study comes as a recommendation to the nation to follow the illustrious biography of the devoutly-religious scholars, in order to trace their influence in establishing religion on earth, empowering it, preserving it by spreading its truths, showing its virtues, and facilitating its resources. In this study, we used the descriptive analytical approach. Among the results of this research: The production of the right scholar who specializes in linguistic and legal sciences requires special preparation characterized by moderation.

Keywords: Nawawi, Al-Jawi, His Life, His Writings

Introduction

The Sheikh – may Allah have mercy on him – was born in Indonesia, which is the largest Muslim country in terms of its population. It was said that its name consists of two syllables; "Indo" means India and "nesia" means "islands", and this is what the writings of authors and geographers have always referred to by naming them the East Indies. Further, it is sometimes

called the Green Land, and since the thirteenth century AH. – the nineteenth century AD. – it has become known as Indonesia.

When the Dutch came to this land – in the seventeenth century AD., and that was before the birth of the Sheikh and continued until his death – they spared no effort to isolate the Indonesian islands from contact with the outside world; and they set up their first military base in Batavia – the former name of the capital, Jakarta – at the beginning of the seventeenth century AD. Within ten years, they were sinking all foreign ships in Indonesian waters, and fortified factories and trading posts along the archipelago.

In the middle of the seventeenth century AD., the Dutch were able to control these vast areas of land. When the Muslim sultans asked the Dutch to provide them with arms and support to crush their rivals or usurpers, the Dutch always helped them, which would have been due to the Dutch with more land gained from either side. Indeed, this assisted them to interfere in the affairs of the Indonesian states.

Whilst the Dutch arrived in Indonesia, they did not prevent Muslims from practicing their religion; as long as they do not interfere in political matters or do not interfere in their political and economic interests. Indeed, they confronted the Muslim peoples – face to face, if they took the sense of a confrontation in them. During the reign of Asy-Syekh Nawawi Al-Jawi, several battles took place between the Dutch government and the Muslim mujahideen; the most important of which was the Battle of Badri in 1821-1837 AD., the Battle of Bonoguru in 1825-1833 AD., and the Battle of Athshiah in 1871-1912 AD.; however, the end of the battles was the victory of the Dutch. After these battles, they put pressure on the Sheikh and other scholars – and this is one of the reasons why Asy-Syekh Nawawi did not stay in his hometown for teaching and mission and he returned to Makkah until he died there – and the Dutch government charged him and put pressure on him and prevented him from delivering Khutbah and teaching.

The first national movement against Dutch colonialism arose in 1912 AD. and was called the Islamic Union, the number of its supporters increased in 1918 AD. until it reached two million along the archipelago, and began to disturb the Dutch government, which adopted a more repressive policy for the movement (Qamar, 2003).

Considering these colonial conditions; the birth of the Sheikh – may Allah have mercy on him – had a great influence after that on his dwelling in Makkah Al-Mukarramah to learn, and then, to teach and write, later.

Religious Status

The Indonesian constitution, from the time of the Dutch until now, recognizes religious freedom. Therefore, the government officially recognizes five religions:

1. Islam
2. Christianity with its two sects: (Protestantism – Catholicism)
3. Hinduism
4. Buddhism
5. Confucianism

Various history books narrate that some Indonesian merchants had arrived in Baghdad during the days of the Abbasid caliph Harun al-Rashid; while returning, they carried the Islamic faith, and when they arrived in their country, they made a wide-range invitation to it (Shaker, 2000).

In early times of the ninth century AH. – the fifteenth century AD. – the Islamic religion began to spread rapidly in the outskirts of the state, and the sultans and Muslim tribes began to resist the Buddhist authority in "Java". Among the most important of these Muslim sultans were the sultans of "Achen" in the far north of the island of "Sumatra", and the sultans of "Malaga" in the west of the "Malay Peninsula", who established an independent trade of the state with the Arab, Persian, Chinese and Indian Muslim merchants; those converted to Islam as a result of their contact with Arab and Persian Muslims (Qamar, 2003).

As for Hinduism and Buddhism; the Indian missionary missions transferred the doctrine of Hinduism and Buddhism to Indonesia at a time when religion in India was in decline and the Indonesians were in a state allowing them to accept that belief in departure from their primitive belief systems, despite the enmity that existed between the adherents of Hinduism and Buddhism in India, most of the followers of these two religions in Indonesia lived side by side in harmony and peace. As for Confucianism, it is considered a new religion close to the time when compared to other religions.

It was said that their first temple was built in Manadoua – an eastern region of Indonesia – in the nineteenth century AD. A modest percentage of Indonesians follow other religions; such as the Dayak Christians – the Dayak tribes or the Dayak people – who are the indigenous people who inhabited the island of Borneo between Indonesia and Malaysia, a few Orthodox, in addition to the doctrine of reconciliation between religions, which depends on the sharing and compatibility of customs, traditions and beliefs (Ismail, 2015). Based on the foregoing, it appears that the Indonesian community is a multi-religious and multicultural one; Muslims constitute the majority, and the rest is distributed among several divine and man-made religions (Jaber, 1990).

Educational Status

The Dutch were able to prevent the Indonesians from carrying out a national movement for ages; which was evident in their discouragement of modern education among the people – as previously mentioned – as well as in their establishment of a local education system that obscures all modern ideas from schools. For about two centuries, they remained without performing any progress recording their endeavor to civilize the country, and they were only helped by the wealth of Indonesia, which was said to have amounted to 1/6 "sixth" of the national income of the Dutch people.

After that, the Dutch leader Jenderal Van Den Capellen (1802 AD. - 1819 AD.) came and established educational centers for the people of his race residing in Indonesia and Christians of the country children. However, others were still deprived of education. Because the Indonesians did not like these schools, the Dutch Royal Order came to establish schools without the partnership of Christian religious institutions, in 1848 AD. Since that year, educational centers have evolved from primary to higher levels.

As of 1863 AD., the study was available to all Indonesian children, with a change in the goals of education – the most important goal was to prepare employees to take care of the colonial

affairs – and the curricula. Likewise, the government needed employees in various fields; therefore, they were forced to open schools, and the goal was not to educate the people of the country or free education. As for Islamic religious education; the first advocates who spread this religion were vastly fascinated with teaching the people of Indonesia the sciences of Islam. Historians have recorded that several Islamic institutes were established in some states in Java, at the beginning of the seventeenth century AD. When the Dutch came, they did not care about religious education, and this was an opportunity that advocates took advantage of to strengthen religious institutes; so Islamic education became in the hands of its scholars, far from the colonizer. Mosques were the natural centers from which the light of Islamic sciences beamed out and influenced the masses. The number of institutes increased and several Sheikhs and advocates graduated from them, and some of them traveled abroad after they finished their studies in those institutes.

From the social aspect, the movement of these scholars called on Muslims to follow the laws of Islam and to surrender to the provisions of the Sharia. However; politically, the movement represented a spirit of resistance. Several figures – who represented the political revival of Islam – emerged; they are among the essentials and major establishing blocks brought up a generation that carried out the independence movement from the Dutch at their hands. Those were either among the companions of the Sheikh who used to study with him in Makkah and elsewhere, or their students who were brought up by them. The intensification of the strength of Muslims led to a great increase in the resistance of the people to the Dutch aggression in the islands; so, religion was one of the biggest causes of the continuous wars against the Dutch (Qamar, 2003).

Based on the foregoing, it can be figured out that thanks to the Sheikhs and Imams who established the religious institutes, a massive transformation took place in the religious, social and political conditions in Indonesia.

Introducing Sheikh Nawawi Al-Jawi

His Name, Lineage and Birth:

He is: Abu Abd al-Muti Muhammad Nawawi bin Omar bin Arabi bin Ali al-Jawi al-Bantani al-Tanari, affiliated with the Shafi'i school of thought. Some references mentioned that his lineage is connected to our Messenger of Allah – May the Blessings and Peace of Allah be upon him – as he is Indonesian by birth, of Arab origin.

Some writers believed that there was a consideration of proving his lineage and connection with the Messenger of Allah – May the Blessings and Peace of Allah be upon him – because the Indonesians did not care about the lineage and did not memorize it. Indeed, Indonesia is a vast country inhabited by tribes with different traditions and cultures, and some or most of them did not care about lineage. Rather, there may be people who do not know the name of their first grandfather; however, some tribes and families preserved the knowledge of their genealogy and cared for it, especially some honorable tribes and families.

Asy-Syekh Muhammad Nawawi Al-Jawi – born in the year 1230 AH. - 1813 AD. in Tanara region of the Banten Province, one of the provinces of Java Island, Indonesia.

His Background, Life and Death

Asy-Syekh Muhammad Nawawi Al-Jawi was raised by his father, then by Sheikh Sahl and Sheikh Yusuf who were of the prominent Javanese sheikhs of his time. When he reached the age of fifteen years, he traveled to Makkah for Hajj, and stayed there for three years, during which he studied under the sheikhs of the Makkan Sanctuary, and then he returned to his country – Indonesia, and taught at his father’s institute where students crowded around him to benefit from his knowledge. He began to spread his knowledge and thought among the community; whether among common people or elites, and he had a great influence. That is why the colonizer's government harassed and pressured him; as the Sheikh was prevented from delivering sermons, and some charges were leveled against him. Eventually, the Sheikh left Indonesia and traveled for the second time to Makkah to study, and then he resided there for teaching and writing until he died on Shawwal 25, 1314 AH.; corresponding to 1897 AD., at the age of eighty-five in his home in Shaab Ali in Makkah Al-Mukarramah, and was buried in the Ma’ala Cemetery near the tomb of Asmaa bint Abi Bakr Al-Siddiq.

His Scholarly Journeys and Sheikhs

Asy-Syekh Muhammad Nawawi undertook some scholarly journeys. The first journey was to Makkah for Hajj; as he stayed there for three years to study, and then he returned to Indonesia – as previously mentioned – after that he traveled to Makkah for the second time, when he received knowledge from the prominent figures of Makkah Al-Mukarramah in his time:

For instance: Sheikh Ahmed Zaini Dahlan and his counterparts among the Shafi’i scholars; like Sheikh Abd Al-Hamid Al-Dagestani from the scholars of Dagestan and he – may Allah have mercy on him – resided in Makkah. In Al-Madinah Al-Munawwarah, he received knowledge from Sheikh Muhammad Khatib al-Hanbali, and traveled to Egypt and learned from the prominent scholars of his time; such as Sheikh Ahmed Al-Nahrawi, and then he traveled to the Levant and learned from its prominent scholars. As for his students; senior Indonesian scholars graduated at his hand; including: Sheikh Hashim Al-Ash’ari.

The Intellectual Output of Asy-Syekh Al-Jawi

Asy-Syekh Muhammad Nawawi is the author of many books on the sciences of hadith, the principles of Jurisprudence, Grammar, Jurisprudence, Interpretation and Credendum. Some Indonesian scholars believe that the Arabic publications of Asy-Syekh Muhammad Nawawi Al-Jawi numbered one hundred and fifteen ones, and some of them believe that the number is ninety-nine, publications. Ahmed Al-Sebaei said; "he was devoted to writing alongside teaching until his writings in various sciences amounted to about a hundred books" (Al-Sebaei, 1999).

This is after he stayed in Makkah – on his second journey – for more than thirty years, during which he studied under its Sheikhs and the Sheikhs in Egypt and the Levant. Among the Sheikh’s books are

- 1- Al-Ibriez Al-Dani fi Mawlid Sayidina Muhammad Al-Sayyid Al-Adnani - edition, printed by Hajar Egypt 1299 AH.
- 2- Bughyat Aleawami fi Sharh Mawlid Sayyid Al-Anam - edition - an explanation of Mawlid Ibn Al-Jawzi - Egypt 1297 AH.
- 3- Bahjat Al-Wasayil Bisharh Al-Masayil - edition (Shafi'i Jurisprudence) Bulaq 1292 AH. - Al-Maymaniyah 1334 AH. It was published by Dar Alkutub Alearabiat Alkubraa in 1333 AH.

- 4- Targhib Almushtaqayn Libayan Manzumat Alsayid Al-Barzanjii fi Mawlid Sayid Al'awalin Walakharin - edition, Bulaq 1292 AH. – Makkah 1311 AH.
- 5- Tanqih Alqawl; Sharh Libab Al-Hadith Lilealama Jalal Al-Diyn Al-Suyutii - Al-Haramain Press, Indonesia. Muhammad Hashim Al-Ash'ari took jurisprudence, grammar, and morphology from Sheikh Khalil bin Abdul-Latif Al-Banklani. He traveled to Makkah Al-Mukarramah and lived there; for six years in search of knowledge and worship, where he took on the authority of its sheikhs and established an association in the name of the Nahdlatul Ulama Association and assumed its presidency. Many scholars graduated from the institute and took the knowledge from it. He passed away – may Allah have mercy on him – in East Java (Almalami, 2000).
- 6- Tijan Aldarari; Sharh Ealaa Risalat Al-Bajouri's - (The Science of Monotheism) - and in the margins, the aforementioned Risala, Egypt 1301 AH.
- 7- Al-Thimar Al-Yanieat fi Al-Riyad Al-Badiea; which is an explanation on the summary of Sheikh Muhammad Hasab Allah, which is called Al-Riyad Al-Badiea in the Fundamentals of Religion and Some Branches of Sharia - Edition, Dar Al-Fikr, Beirut.
- 8- Hilyat Alsibyan fi Sharh Fath Al-Rahman fi Al-Tajwid
- 9- Al-Durar Al-Bahiya fi Sharh Al-Khasayis Al-Nabawiat - Edition: It is an explanation of the story of the Mi'raj by Al-Barzanji - 1298 AH. edition.
- 10- Dharieat Alyaqin Ealaa Umm Al-Braheen - Edition, Makkah 1317 AH.
- 11- Salalim Alfadla' Ealaa Almanzumat Almusamaaat Hidayat Al'adhkia' 'lilaa Tariq Al'awlia' (Sufism) Edition, Makkah 1315 AH.
- 12- Salam Al-Munajat Ealaa Safinat Al-Salati, Sheikh Abdullah bin Yahya Al-Hadrami (Shafi'i Jurisprudence) - Mustafa Al-Babi Al-Halabi Library and Printing Company, Bulaq 1297 AH., Egypt 1301 AH.
- 13- Suluk Aljadah Ealaa Al-Risala Al-Musamaat Bilameat Al-Mufadat fi Bayan Al-Jumueat Wa Al-Mueadat - (Shafi'i Jurisprudence) Al-Wahhabi Press 1300 AH. – Makkah 1303 AH.
- 14- Sharh Nasayih Al-Eabadi, by Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalani, Al-Haramain Press, Indonesia.
- 15- Al-Eaqd Al-Thamin; Sharah Manzumat Al-Sitiyn Mas'alat Al-Musamaat Al-Fath Al-Mubin - (Shafi'i Jurisprudence) Al-Wahhabi Press 1300 AH.
- 16- Euqud Al-Lujayn fi Bayan Huquq Al-Zawjayn - an Explanation of a Treatise on the rights of the spouses by some of the advisors - Shafi'i Jurisprudence – Edition - Dar Al-Fikr, Beirut.
- 17- Fath Al-Samad Al-Alam ealaa Mawlid Al-Shaykh Ahmed bin Qasim - Edition - Bulaq 1292 AH.
- 18- Fath Ghafir Al-Khatiat Ealaa Al-Kawakib Al-Jaliat fi Nuzum Al-Ajrumiati, with its margin, the aforementioned Nuzum (Grammar) Bulaq 1298 AH.
- 19- Fath Al-Majid fi Sharh Al-Durr Al-Majid - by Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nahrawi (Monotheism), Egypt 1298 AH.
- 20- Al-Fusus Al-Yaqutia ealaa Al-Rawda Al-Bahia fi Al-Abwab Al-Aasrifia (Morphology and Grammar), and in the margin, Al-Riyad Al-Qawliat also for him, Egypt, 1299 AH.
- 21- Fatah Al-Mujib Bisharh Mukhtasar Al-Khatib fi Manasik Al-Hajj (Shafi'i Jurisprudence) and with its brief margin, Dar Ibn Hazm, Beirut, 2004, edited by Bassam Al-Jabi - Mustafa Al-Babi Al-Halabi Library and Printing Company and his sons.
- 22- Quat Al-Habib al-Ghiribi; Al-Tawshih Ealaa Sharh Ibn Qasim Al-Ghaziyyi Ealaa Matn Li'abi Shujae Ghayat Al-Taqreeb (Shafi'i Jurisprudence) - printed in Dar al-Kutub Al-'Ilmiyyah in Beirut in 1998 AD., edited and corrected by Muhammad Abd Al-Aziz Al-Khalidi - and Mustafa Al-Babi Al-Halabi Library and Printing House.

- 23- Qatar Al-Ghaith fi Sharh Masayil 'Abi Allyth - Nasr Ibn Muhammad Ibn Ahmed Ibn Ibrahim Al-Hanafi Al-Samarqandi.
- 24- Qamie Al-Tughyan Ealaa Manzumat Shaeb Al'iimani, (Monotheism).
- 25- Kashf Al-Marutiati Ean Sitar Al-Ajrumiati.
- 26- Kashifat Al-Sajaa Fi Sharh Safinat Al-Naja - (Shafi'i Jurisprudence) - Dar Al-Fikr, Beirut - and Mustafa Al-Babi Al-Halabi Library and Printing Company and his sons.
- 27- Madarij Al-Sueud 'Iilaa Aiktisa' Al-Brud - an Explanation on Mawlid Al-Barzanji.
- 28- Mirah Labid Likashf Maenaa Al-Quran Al-Majid - Dar Al-Kutub Al-Ilmiyyah, Beirut in 1997 AD., with the study of Muhammad Amin Dannawi.
- 29- Marqaat Sueud Al-Tasdiqi; Sharh Sulam Al-Tawfiq Liabn Tahir (Sufism); Edition 1303 AH., Al-Khairiya Press.
- 30- Misbah Al-Zulm Ealaa Al-Manhaj Al-Atim fi Tabwib Al-Hukm - an explanation for Al-Manhaj Al-Atam for Sheikh Ali Ibn Hossam Al-Din Al-Hindi, Makkah 1314 AH.
- 31- Maraqa Al-Eubudia – an Explanation of Bidayat Al-Hidayat by Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali - (Sufism) was published by Dar Al-Taqwa in 2007 in a volume with the study of Mahmoud Al-Masouti.
- 32- Nihayat Al-Zayn fi 'Iirshad Al-Mubtadiiyn Bisharh Qurrat al-Ayn (Shafi'i Jurisprudence) - Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah in Beirut 2002. Compiled and corrected by Abdullah Mahmoud Muhammad Omar, Dar al-Fikr in Beirut.
- 33- Al-Nahja Al-Jayida Lihali Naqawat Al-Eaqidati.
- 34- Nur Al-Zalam; an Explanation of the Poem (Aqidah Al-Awam) by Ahmed Al-Marzouqi, printed in Dar Al-Hawi and Al-Sanabel in a volume. And other Arabic works.

It is noted that most of his works are only explanations of some books approved in the Shafi'i school of thought, and I did not find anything he wrote in the Indonesian language, although he was born, raised, and spent part of his life in Indonesia. Indeed, it was said that he wrote a book in the Malay language, but I did not find it.

Conclusion

After this short journey with the honorable Sheikh Muhammad Nawawi Al-Jawi, and after presenting his life and writings, the researcher found several issues and results, including:

1- The sheikh was born in Indonesia in 1230 AH.; corresponding to 1813 AD., and he spent most of his life in Makkah for learning and teaching. Makkah in his era is characterized by the era of Maqama; as each of the four schools; Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i and Hanbali, has a special place in the sanctuary. The Shafi'i school of thought is the school of most of the people of Hijaz in his time – as mentioned by Ahmed Taymur – the Egyptian researcher and historian who died in 1348 AH. – and the Dutch orientalist Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje when he visited and resided there and met with him (Snouck, 2002). The sheikh was born as a Shafi'i person and was raised by the Shafi'i scholars, lived in that atmosphere, and spread the sciences of the doctrine, by teaching and writing, until the number of his books reached more than a hundred books. He continued in this attitude until he passed away in 1314 AH.; corresponding to 1897 AD. It was said that he died while explaining one of the books – may Allah have mercy on him.

2- The large number of his writings in many arts and the recognition of them by scholars, researchers and historians indicate that the sheikh has a great status; especially among most Muslims in Indonesia, particularly among students and sheikhs affiliated with the Shafi'i

school of thought; as there is no Shafi'i Islamic school or institute in Indonesia that does not include some of the Sheikh's writings.

3- Among his most prominent qualities are humility and asceticism in life; as his student Sheikh Al-Dahlawi said about him, and as witnessed by the Dutch orientalist Snouck Hurgronje; and what he said about the sheikh; "An Arab whom he had not known before might pass by an evening in a meeting with him without knowing that he is the author of about twenty books of scholarly works in the Arabic language. Although he was not of a strong personality, his moral influence was well known. His presence had the greatest impact on the interest of many Sundanese, Javanese, and Malays in studying Islam comprehensively. However, Al-Nawawi does not show his recognition that he is behind such movements." (Snouck, 2002)

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