

Islamic Weltanschauung in Bahr al-Lahut: The writings of Shaykh `Abdullah `Arif

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DOI: 10.6007/IJARBS/v6-i11/2382 URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v6-i11/2382>

Abstract

This study aims to analyze Islamic worldview (*tasawwur al-Islam*) by Islamic manuscript writings founded in archipelago. Islamic worldview is a fatal aspect that has been emphasized in Islamic writings since the Islamic phase of 12 century. In general, there are three fundamental elements in Islamic worldview; i.e. Allah as Creator, man as servant and vicegerent, and universe as His creation. Among writings that composed Islamic worldview is *Bahr al-Lahut*; the writing of Syakh `Abdullah `Arif. The questions regards on the accessibility of Islamic worldview on *Bahr al-Lahut* as well as the elements that has been emphasized on and the explanations of those elements by Syakh `Abdullah `Arif. Therefore, the objective of this study is to answer those triple quests by identify Islamic Worldview and analyze the elements in *Bahr al-Lahut's* writing. This study will focus on the discussion and analysis of Islamic worldview and elements which centered upon Allah as a Creator. Methodology of this study is text analysis upon the manuscript of *Bahr al-Lahut*. Eventually, this study ascertains that there are the elements of Islamic worldview in *Bahr al-Lahut* through the concept of seven ranks (*Martabat Tujuh*) i.e. the rank of Divinity (*Ahadiyah*).

Keywords: *Bahr al-Lahut*, Islamic Worldview, The Divine Ranks (*La Ta`Yyun*)

1.0 Introduction

Bahr al-Lahut is the writing of Syakh `Abdullah `Arif, composes during the end of Perlak (Aceh) administration on 12 century. Mahayudin Yahya (2000) said this writing is among the earliest writings in archipelago. Additionally, the manuscript also discusses the teachings of Islam through the growth of Islam. While the practices language in knowledge is Malay (Mahayudin Yahya, 2001). Based on al-Mu`jam al-`Arabi al-Melayuwiah al-Kabir (2006) word of *al-Lahut* is

based on the root word of *Lah*; means God, however there is an additional the word of *wau* and *ta* as addition to the word of *jabarut* and *malakut*.

According to Abdul Rahman (1990) the manuscript of *Bahr al-Lahut* is a noteworthy privilege of Syakh 'Abdullah 'Arif who contributes to the deployment of Islam in archipelago by the discipline of Sufism. Based on the findings discovered by Muslim scholars of archipelago, Syakh 'Abdullah 'Arif is said to write writings on Sufism, but present discoveries merely the former writing. With reference to Mahayudin Yahya (1994) on linguistic perspectives, the original of *Bahr al-Lahut* is written in Arabic, and then being translated into Malay which based on writing that have been founded at Kampung Pernu, Melaka, Malaysia. After researching, there are other opinions believes the translation efforts of *Bahr al-Lahut* have been maid severely while the manuscript is being written. It is used to understand the contents of *Bahr al-Lahut*, which clearly covers the aspects of belief and mysticism. Besides, the aforementioned views also gain support from Amin Che Ahmat (2012) who believes there two aspects of teaching and learning in *Bahr al-Lahut*, i.e. theology and mysticism. Generally, theology is being taught in *Bahr al-Lahut* which based on believes structure of *ahl al-sunnah wa al-jama'ah*. Thus, based on the aforementioned theories, it show that early explanation of *Bahr al-Lahut* cycle upon the discussion of basic knowledge to the formation of Islamic worldview i.e. theology. By referring to the earlier statements, hence this study will explore the development of Islamic worldview which holds in *Bahr al-Lahut* especially the explanations on theology.

2.0 Islamic Worldview

In general, Malay word of *tasawwur* refers to give an opinion, picturize, concept or perception about something (Kamus Dewan, 2005). Mahmud Qudah (2003) then defines *tasawwur* in the edge of linguistic by mean of imagining something in mind. He explains the absolute imagination only could happen on the physical appearance (*al-madiyah*) like imagining Kaabah, while abstract viewing (*al-ma'nawi*) like belief and thought and emotional feeling (*al-masha'ir*) like occupation and feeling pain.

Islamic worldview (*tasawwur al-Islam*) then means a comprehensive and exact picture or explanation of Islam. Islamic worldview which is bold and nature is formed of creed firmness when the root cause of Islamic epistemology that build based on traditional i.e. revelation, without rejecting rationality which build reasoning through intellectual discourse. M. Syukri Salleh (2003) explains there are three elements of Islamic worldview; Allah as creator, man and universe are creations; based on Islamic epistemology of al-Qur'an and al-Sunnah and supported by consensus as well as analogical reasoning of scholars.

3.0 Analysis of Islamic Worldview in *Bahr Al-Lahut*

According to researcher opinion, Islamic worldview according to Syakh 'Abdullah 'Arif in *Bahr al-Lahut* has been discussed through the doctrine of seven ranks (*Martabat Tujuh*). Although he

did not mentioned clearly the level of the seven ranks in *Bahr al-Lahut*, however the researcher find that the former discuss theology as the divine ranks i.e. the first rank of the seven ranks. Because of that similarity, the researcher takes action on analysis between the relationship and his thought regarding Islamic worldview on the context of the divine ranks ¹.

3.1 The Divine Ranks (LA TA`YYUN)

Early writing in *Bahr al-Lahut*, Syakh `Abdullah `Arif focuses his teaching about the reality of essence (*dhat*) of Allah before creed gratitude. He teaches the essence of Allah is *la ta`yyun* which purifies His essence from elucidating His essence and His actions. The statement supports "So as said by `Abdullah `Arif, hopefully Allah has purify the essence of the Almighty to the concealed and unconcealed (*af`al* of God or statement)" (Amin Che Ahmat, 2012).

The truth of those essences of Allah as *la ta`yyun* is not clear and man as creation could not be able to reach to the ranks. Only God knows His reality and it is God's affairs. This situation also mentioned by Abu Bakr, that only God knows His reality and man cannot achieves in order to know Him. Man's consciousness regarding the weaknesses of man in order to attain the reality of Allah as a sign that he knows Him. Narration from Abu Bakr (al-Shawi, Ahmad Ibn Muhammad al-Maliki, 2007):

Abu Bakr has been asked: How did you know your God (Allah)? He replies: [I know my God through Him and without Him, I am surely did not know Him], and has been asked again to him: Thou man able to achieve the stage of knowing Him? Then Abu Bakr said: [Inability to know is knows].

As been informed above, i.e. writing of *Bahr al-Lahut* has discuss about the divinity rank. Means the divinity rank refers to the level of *la ta`yyun* i.e. concealed, or known as *martabah al-zuhuri* which severely the existence of God's essence, or unconcealed of His essence to the other than Him, or also known as absolute concealment (*Ghaib al-Mutlak*) from rational or senses (Amin Che Ahmat, 2012). Hence, according to the above statement, the researcher finds that explanation by Syakh `Abdullah `Arif correlates because he explains only the essence of Allah exist before the existence of His creations. The present existence is only God. Additionally, as said by Syakh `Abdullah `Arif while explaining the divine rank, he believes creations are unable to achieve or seen the essence of Allah; The Infinitely Preexistence and no one compared to Him. The explanation of Syakh `Abdullah `Arif regarding his statement of the

¹ The first rank from the seven ranks is known as *ahadiyah* (al-Burhanpuri, Muhammad Fad Allah, 1965: 130). This rank refers to the ranks of *la ta`yyun* which is concealed, the rank of *al-Itlaq* and the rank of *al-dhat al-buht*. According to Syakh Fad Allah al-Burhanpuri, this rank is the first rank from any ranks of *tanazzul*. He adds, existence during this ranks considers pure from any support of attributes, exist solely without names, and any support of something (al-Banjari, Muhammad Nafis Ibn Idris, n.d: p. 21). Syakh Abd Samad in his explanation believes that this rank also named as the rank of *zuhuri* i.e. the rank that solely exist the essence of Allah, whereby the statement of His essence were not cease to exist before Him. The existence of God's essence during this rank also known as *ghaib al-mutlak* form intellect and senses (al-Palembani, Syakh Abd Samad, n.d: p. 104-105). The rank of *ahadiyah* much as a plain paper or spacious without: *qaiyid*". The given example by scholars in order to imagine free like O which also named as the ranks of *al-Itlaq*, as said by Syakh Daud (Wan Mohd Saghir Abdullah, 1992: p. 24). Syakh Daud explains that the rank of *al-Itlaq* is free from anything and *ta`yyun* because of unconcealed. The aforementioned rank also much as *dhihin* freedom and exempt from rationalizing something i.e. *la ta`yyun* (Wan Mohd Saghir Abdullah, 1992: p. 24). The rank of *ahadiyah* is the highest rank and there are no other ranks because they are underneath rank (al-Burhanpuri, Muhammad Fad Allah 1965: p. 130; Wan Mohd Saghir Abdullah, 2004: p. 12).

divine rank includes “All existing creations (*ka`in*) do not exist and concealed except the essence of Allah i.e. Infinitely Preexistence, and no comparison of the essence of Allah i.e. Infinitely Preexistence” (al-‘Arif, Syakh Abdullah in Amin Che Ahmat , 2012).

In order to explain the divine rank, Syakh `Abdullah `Arif shares his opinion with Syakh `Abd Samad in explaining the existence of God’s essence and Almighty because it cannot be achieved by beings, as the essence is absolute concealment (Al-Palembani, Syekh `Abd Samad, n.d). Syakh `Abdullah `Arif believes all beings do not exist because each and everything is concealed except the essence of Allah i.e. Infinitely Preexistence (`Arif, Syakh Abdullah in Amin Che Ahmat , 2012).

Observation by researcher, Syakh `Abdullah `Arif applies teaching and writing methods as well as analysis between the existence of Allah and His beings. The existence of Allah is eternal and intrinsic which differ to the existence of beings. According to the above statements, the true existence of beings (*ka`in*) does not cease to exist, which contrary to the existence of the essence of Allah. Based on Syakh `Abdullah `Arif opinion, researcher finds that every being is concealed except Allah and His existence of beings because of God’s ordinance and omnipotence. The existence of beings only depending to God, and it is clearly explaining the weaknesses of beings (*maujudat*) in existence.

Besides, views by Shaykh `Abdullah Arif is similar to Syekh Muhammad Fad Allah al-Burhanpuri’s while explaining the position of divinity rank because the period of existence of God’s essence exempt from other essences and anything possible (al-Burhanpuri, Muhammad Fad Allah, *al-Tuhfah al-Mursalah Ila Ruh al-Nabi*, in A.H . Johns , 1965). Accordingly, the existence of God is sacred from any characteristic like locality (*jihah*). Existence that exists during existing period is absolutely the essence of God. The explanation of Syakh `Abdullah Arif who denies the characteristic of non-locality in *Bahr al-Lahut* shows that he wants to explain about the divinity rank which also similar to al-Burhanpuri’s explanation. Clear statements by Syakh `Abdullah `Arif about the divinity rank on particular period of God’s essence can be detailed through his writing in *Bahr al-Lahut*; “You should know (O the member of truth) indeed God when He is unwanted (to show His essence and attributes), no He placed, and He timed, He upper, He downed, and He is in right, and He is left (al-‘Arif, Syakh Abdullah in Amin Che Ahmat, 2012)”.

According to Syakh `Abdullah `Arif, creations cannot be able to understand, know and calculate the ends of His Almighty of God indeed it is too wide and eternal. To Him, the existence of Allah is Infinitely Preexistence and His Superiority is uncalculated. This can be approved according to the statement as written in *Bahr al-Lahut*; “The infinitely Preexistence of God’s essence and it is gleam (*diya`*) and widely (neither begin nor end), the Sacred Ones, the Eternal (pure existence) superior and uncalculated His superiority (`Arif, Syakh `Abdullah in Amin Che Ahmat, 2012)”

By referring to the above statements, the researcher finds Syakh `Abdullah `Arif try to explain his opinion in order to calculate the existence of God's essence and superiority, because man cannot achieves to calculate and understand His superiority. The reason is man also cannot allow imagining God by physical appearance, states, divisions and all that correlates with His creations. As explains earlier, it shows that the explanation by Syakh `Abdullah `Arif also similar to al-Burhanpuri and al-Fatani regarding the existence of Allah in the stage of *la ta`yyun* or *ahadiyah* and regards as *dhihin* (intellectual freedom) by our own freewill and exceptional from rationalizing something, also as the highest rank, else no other ranks higher because they are underneath ranks (al-Burhanpuri, Muhammad Fad Allah 1965, Wan Mohd Saghir Abdullah, 2004). This situation also correlates with the opinion by al-Ansari, who said that the Prophet Muhammad said: "Do you think over the essence (*dhat*) of God (Allah)" (Al-Hariri, Syakh `Abdullah, 2007).

The researcher also finds that Syakh `Abdullah `Arif also discuss the advantages of understand of *Bahr al-Lahut*'s writing because it bring felicity (*sa`adah*) to whom see and "able to achieve and understand" the contents, because it discuss and states the superiority of Allah. The above statements can be shown as "He writes a book named by us entitled *Bahr al-Lahut*, (according to Syakh `Abdullah `Arif, the meaning *al-Lahut* is) where no boundaries (begins) and finishes (ends), to those see *Bahr al-Lahut* are people who achieve over-happiness because in (*Bahr al-Lahut*) states superiority over God's superiority of no boundaries (begins) and no finished (ends)" (`Arif, Syakh `Abdullah in Amin Che Ahmat, 2012).

He also explains that the essence of Allah of non-ends, no upper, and no below, no placed, no space and no time, then it is mean by the creed of *Allah al-Akbar*. He concludes the meaning of *Allah al-Akbar* is because His superiority which eternal and no ending indeed no other compared to His essence. He also supports his evidences from *muhkamat* verse, which exempt no other than His essence like "The superiority of Allah's essence which is no up and down, no end, no space and no time and no destruction. Thus, the term *Allah al-Akbar* according to Syakh `Abdullah `Arif understands, is no boundaries upon God's Almighty and no other than Him. God says: "There is no one that similar to Him (Allah), and He is (Allah listening and seeing)" (`Arif, Syakh `Abdullah in Amin Che Ahmat, 2012).

Syakh `Abdullah `Arif also explains the essence (*dhat*) of God is absolute and *Dhat al-Haq* is Infinitely Preexistence which Sempiternal and does not composite with creations (`Arif, Syakh `Abdullah in Amin Che Ahmat, 2012).

4.0 Conclusion

Based on the above discussions, Islamic worldview that being explained by Syakh Abdullah `Arif thought especially theology is based on the divinity rank. He shows opinion that the reality and essence of Allah as *la ta`yyun*, that sacred His essence from His characters and attributes. He also comprehends that only God's essence exists while His creations are non-existence or being

created. Syakh `Abdullah `Arif also explains that the existence of Allah is the stage of *la ta`yyun* or *ahadiyah* regards as *dhihin* freedom and exempt from rationalized anything and is the highest rank. God has exists His Infinitely Preexistence as recommend existence, absolute existence and absolute conceals.

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