

The Influence of Al-Sanusi through Umm Al-Barahin and Sharh Umm Al-Barahin on the Zahrah Al-Murid by Sheikh 'Abd Al-Samad Al-Falimbani

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Abstract

Zahrah al-Murīd is an important theological work in the Malay world. It was written by a prominent figure, Syeikh 'Abd al-Şamad al-Falimbānī. The discussion in this work revolves about the Kalimah Tauhid, which is the phrase *lā ilāha illā Allāh Muḥammad Rasūl Allāh*. Al-Sanūsī, through his works *Umm al-Barāhīn* and *Sharḥ Umm al-Barāhīn*, addressed the discussion of the Kalimat Tauhid earlier than Zahrah al-Murīd. Therefore, Zahrah al-Murīd is believed to have been influenced by these two works.. However, this cannot be definitively confirmed because both works employ distinct language and writing methods. This study aims to identify the influence of *Umm al-Barāhīn* and its commentary on the writing of Zahrah al-Murīd. In gathering data, the researcher conducted a textual analysis of these works to identify similarities and differences. Additionally, the references mentioned in Zahrah al-Murīd also help in identifying such influences. The analysis found elements of influence from *Umm al-Barāhīn* and its commentary in the writing of Zahrah al-Murīd, particularly in terms of its ideas, content, and references. It is hoped that the results of this study will assist the community in better understanding Zahrah al-Murīd. Furthermore, it will aid researchers in delving deeper into the study of Syeikh 'Abd al-Şamad al-Falimbānī and Zahrah al-Murīd.

Keywords: Influence, Zahrah Al-Murīd, Syeikh 'Abd Al-Şamad Al-Falimbānī, Umm Al-Barāhīn, Al-Sanūsī.

Introduction

Muḥammad bin Yūsuf al-Sanūsī (d. 1490 CE), also known as al-Sanūsī, was a prominent figure in Islamic theology who produced numerous works. Among his well-known theological works are *al-Aqīdah al-Şughrā* (*Umm al-Barāhīn*) and its commentary *Sharḥ al-Aqīdah al-Şughrā* (*Sharḥ Umm al-Barāhīn*). According to Abidin (2021), *Umm al-Barāhīn* is considered one of

his most famous works and has had a significant influence through translations, explanations, commentaries, and adaptations in later theological works up to the present day.

The theological works influenced by *Umm al-Barāhīn* include several notable texts from the Malay world. These include *Bidāyah al-Hidāyah* (1757 CE) by Sheikh Muḥammad Zayn bin al-Faqīh Jalāl al-Dīn al-‘Ashī, *al-Durr al-Thamīn* (1816 CE) by Sheikh Dāwud al-Faṭānī, *Sirāj al-Hudā* (1885-1886 CE) by Sheikh Muḥammad Zayn al-Dīn bin Muḥammad Badawī al-Sambawī, *Zahrah al-Murīd fī ‘Aqā’id al-Tawhīd* (1892 CE) by Sheikh Muḥammad ‘Alī bin ‘Abd al-Raḥmān bin ‘Abd al-Ghafūr Kutan al-Kalantanī, and *‘Aqīdah al-Nājīn* (1890 CE) by Sheikh Zayn al-‘Ābidīn al-Faṭānī (Faizuri & Hazim, 2018). According to Mukti (2002), *Zahrah al-Murīd* (1765 CE) by Sheikh ‘Abd al-Ṣamad al-Falimbānī is also one of the theological works from the Malay world that was influenced by *Umm al-Barāhīn*.

Therefore, this study aims to identify the influence of al-Sanūsī through *Umm al-Barāhīn* and *Sharḥ Umm al-Barāhīn* on the writing of *Zahrah al-Murīd* by al-Falimbānī.

Background of Zahrah al-Murīd

The full title of *Zahrah al-Murīd* is *Zahrah al-Murīd fī Bayān Kalimah al-Tawhīd*. This work was written by al-Falimbānī in 1765 CE in Mecca. It was based on his studies with Sheikh Ahmad al-Damanhūrī at the Masjid al-Haram in the same year. Al-Falimbānī later recorded these notes in a book written in Jawi at the request of his students.

Al-Falimbānī's full name was ‘Abd al-Ṣamad bin ‘Abd al-Raḥmān bin ‘Abd al-Jalīl al-Mahdanī bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb bin Aḥmad (Hussain, 2017). He was born in 1737 CE in Palembang and died in 1839 CE as a martyr in the Kedah-Siam War (1821–1842) (Abdullah, 2015). He was 28 years old when he completed *Zahrah al-Murīd*, which according to Muchtar (2012) was his first work.

According to Abdullah (1996), al-Falimbānī's grave is located between Kampung Sekom and Cenak in the Tiba area of Northern Patani. This is supported by a report from Sheikh ‘Abd al-Qādir Bendang Daya, who claimed that al-Falimbānī was killed in Cenak. The exact location of his grave remains uncertain, but locals claim to know of an old grave, known as Sheikh Mad's tomb, located there. Sheikh Mad's head was said to have been decapitated and taken to Bangkok, though his body remains buried there (Abdullah, 2004). The grave is currently located in Kampung Trap, Mukim Cenong, District of Cenak, Singgora Province, Thailand.

Background of Umm al-Barāhīn and Sharḥ Umm al-Barāhīn

Umm al-Barāhīn is also known as *al-‘Aqīdah al-Sughra* or *Dhāt al-Barāhīn*. It is a summarized version of his other work *al-‘Aqīdah al-Kubrā* (Kamal & Hakim, 2018). *Sharḥ Umm al-Barāhīn*, also known as *Sharḥ al-‘Aqīdah al-Sughra*, *Tawhīd Ahl al-‘Irfān wa Ma’rifah Allāh wa Rasūlihi bi al-Dalīl wa al-Burhān*, and *Nubdzah al-Tawhīd al-Mukhrijah min Ḥulumāt al-Jahl wa al-Taqlīd* (al-Sharfāwī, 2019), is an exposition of *Umm al-Barāhīn*.

Umm al-Barāhīn and *Sharḥ Umm al-Barāhīn* were written by Abu ‘Abd Allah Muhammad bin Yusuf bin ‘Umar bin Shu‘ayb al-Sanūsī al-Tilimsānī al-Ḥasanī, known as al-Sanūsī. He was born in 1428 CE and died in 1490 CE in Tilimsan, Algeria (al-Ziriklī, 2002). According to Tawfīq (2022), al-Sanūsī was a prolific scholar in various fields including the Qur'an, tafsir, hadith,

fiqh, Sufism, algebra, medicine, logic, and language, but he is best known for his works on theology.

Some of his other theological works include *'Aqīdah Ahl al-Tawhīd* or *al-'Aqīdah al-Kubrā*, *'Umdah Ahl al-Tawfīq wa al-Tasdīd* or *Sharḥ al-'Aqīdah al-Kubrā*, *al-'Aqīdah al-Wuṣṭā*, *Sharḥ al-'Aqīdah al-Wuṣṭā*, *Ṣughrā al-Ṣughrā*, *Sharḥ Ṣughrā al-Ṣughrā*, *al-Muqaddimāt*, *Sharḥ al-Muqaddimāt*, and others.

Influence of Umm al-Barāhīn on Zahrah al-Murīd

There are three aspects compared to identify the influence of *Umm al-Barāhīn* on *Zahrah al-Murīd*. The first aspect is the idea, the second is the content, and the third is the references.

a) Idea

As can be understood from the translated title of *Zahrah al-Murīd*, the main discussion in this book is about the meaning of the Kalimah Tawhid, which is *lā ilāh illā Allāh Muḥammad Rasūl Allāh* (Al-Falimbānī, 1912). Prior to al-Falimbānī, many other scholars had also made the Kalimah Tawhid a central topic in their works. Some of these scholars include 'Abd Allāh al-Habṭī al-Kabīr (d. 1556 CE) with his work *al-Ishādah bi Ma'rifah Madlūl Kalimah al-Shahādah*, Muḥammad al-Habṭī al-Saghīr (d. 1596 CE) with his work *Taqyīd fī Ma'nā Kalimah al-Tawhīd*, and al-Ḥasan bin Mas'ūd al-Yūsī (d. 1691 CE) with his work *Mashrab al-'Ām wa al-Khāṣ min Kalimah al-Ikhlāṣ* (Abidin, 2021).

Al-Sanūsī (2019), emphasized that the discussion he presented had never been carried out by previous scholars. He discussed divinity (ulūhiyyah) through the Kalimah Tawhid, dividing it into two qualities: *iftiqār* (neediness) and *istighnā`* (self-sufficiency). According to al-Suhaymī (1887), the innovation made by al-Sanūsī was a divine gift to him. Thus, it is not surprising that al-Sanūsī is considered the pioneer in discussing the Kalimah Tawhid using this approach. In this context, *Zahrah al-Murīd* shares similarities with *Umm al-Barāhīn* and its commentary. Al-Falimbānī (1912) follows a similar approach, stating:

“Based on the words of the majority of scholars, it is obligatory upon every rational and mature person to believe that the meaning of *lā ilāha illā Allāh* negates the divinity (ulūhiyyah) of any being deserving of worship or possessing eternal existence, or being truly worshipped, or independent of all except Him, and everything other than Him depends on Him, and this is negated when attributed to anyone other than Allah Ta'ālā.”

From this statement, it is clear that al-Falimbānī has explained the meaning of divinity (ulūhiyyah) in the Kalimah Tawhid based on two meanings: the first is being worthy of worship (*mustahiqq li al-'ibādah*), the necessary existence (*wājib al-wujūd*), or being the true object of worship (*ma'būd bi ḥaqq*). The second meaning is being self-sufficient (*mustaghniy 'an kull mā siwāh*) and that everything other than Allah depends on Him (*muftaqir ilayh kull mā 'adāh*).

The second meaning was pioneered by al-Sanūsī in *Umm al-Barāhīn*. According to al-Hāshimī (2018), the first meaning is known as *muṭābiq* (direct meaning), which is in accordance with the Arabic grammar, while the second meaning is referred to as *lāzim* (consequential meaning), which is derived indirectly from the *muṭābiq* meaning.

Therefore, part of the discussion of the Kalimah Tawhid in *Zahrah al-Murīd* is influenced by al-Sanūsī's ideas in *Umm al-Barāhīn* and its commentary.

b) Content

The content of *Zahrah al-Murīd* has similarities with the content of *Umm al-Barāhīn*. These similarities can be seen in the discussions on the attributes of divinity, the attributes of prophethood, and the Kalimah Tawhid. Regarding the discussion of the attributes of divinity, *Zahrah al-Murīd* clearly shows the influence of *Umm al-Barāhīn* by stating the division of the divine attributes into 20 obligatory attributes, 20 impossible attributes, and one possible attribute for Allah Ta'ālā, as presented in *Umm al-Barāhīn* in the same order. Al-Falimbānī (1912) states:

“And indeed, it is obligatory for us to know what is obligatory, impossible, and possible for Allah Ta'ālā with general proofs. This includes knowing each of Allah's twenty obligatory attributes, which are obligatory for Allah with their general proofs, such that if one is asked, they can answer with the proof, as mentioned by Imam Sanūsī in the *Umm al-Barāhīn* matn... Allah's existence is proven by the creation of the world. And Allah's eternity is proven by the creation of the world. And Allah's permanence is proven by the creation of the world. And Allah's dissimilarity to created beings is proven by the creation of the world. And Allah's self-sufficiency is proven by the creation of the world. And Allah's oneness is proven by the creation of the world. And Allah's power is proven by the creation of the world. And Allah's will is proven by the creation of the world. And Allah's knowledge is proven by the creation of the world. And Allah's life is proven by the creation of the world. And Allah's hearing is proven by the creation of the world. And Allah's sight is proven by the creation of the world. And Allah's speech is proven by the creation of the world. And Allah's ability is proven by the creation of the world. And Allah's will is proven by the creation of the world. And Allah's knowledge is proven by the creation of the world. And Allah's life is proven by the creation of the world. And Allah's hearing is proven by the creation of the world. And Allah's sight is proven by the creation of the world. And Allah's speech is proven by the creation of the world. These are all called general proofs.”

Since the main focus of *Zahrah al-Murīd* is the Kalimah Tawhid, al-Falimbānī does not delve deeply into all of these attributes in the same detailed manner as presented in *Umm al-Barāhīn* with specific proofs to establish the divine attributes of Allah. However, for those who adhere to the general proof as stated by al-Falimbānī, this suffices. This is because, according to al-Sharqāwī (2017), it is generally impossible for everyone to know the detailed proofs. In the context of *Zahrah al-Murīd*, the general proof mentioned is of the *hudūth* type. The *hudūth* proof is the proof that establishes the divine attributes of Allah by the newness of creation (Shahriman, 2012).

In terms of the attributes of prophethood, *Zahrah al-Murīd* mentions the division of four obligatory attributes, four impossible attributes, and one possible attribute for the prophets. This mirrors *Umm al-Barāhīn*, except for the attribute of *faṭānah* (wisdom). Al-Falimbānī (1912) states:

“The obligatory attributes for all prophets are: *ṣidq* (truthfulness), *amānah* (trustworthiness), *tablīgh* (conveying what Allah Ta'ālā has commanded to the creation), and *faṭānah* (wisdom).

The impossible attributes for prophets are the opposites of these four qualities. The permissible attribute for prophets is the human traits, such as eating, drinking, sleeping, illness, which do not affect their elevated status, marriage, and others.”

Thus, *Zahrah al-Murīd* shares similarities with *Umm al-Barāhīn* in discussing three obligatory attributes, three impossible attributes, and one possible attribute for prophets.

c) References

The references in *Zahrah al-Murīd* are the sources cited as the basis or support for al-Falimbānī’s statements in *Zahrah al-Murīd*. Ten reference materials are used in *Zahrah al-Murīd*, two of which are *Umm al-Barāhīn* and *Sharḥ Umm al-Barāhīn*. Al-Falimbānī refers to these two sources four times.

The First Reference, Al-Falimbānī (1912) States:

“And indeed, it is obligatory for us to know what is obligatory for Allah Ta’ālā and what is impossible for Him and what is permissible for Him with general proofs, such as knowing each of the twenty attributes of Allah Ta’ālā that are obligatory for Allah Ta’ālā with their general proofs, just as mentioned by Imam Sanūsī in the *Umm al-Barāhīn* matn.”

This citation is a summary of two statements by al-Sanūsī in *Umm al-Barāhīn* and *Sharḥ Umm al-Barāhīn*.

The second reference, al-Falimbānī (1912) further discusses the influence of al-Sanūsī in defining the attributes of Allah by citing *Umm al-Barāhīn*. *Zahrah al-Murīd* shares significant influence and uses the same references as al-Sanūsī’s work to establish its main point.

The third reference occurs when al-Falimbānī discusses the nature of divine unity (*tawḥīd*) and the meaning of the Kalimah *lā ilāha illā Allāh*:

"And indeed, this is as explained in the *Umm al-Barāhīn* matn and its commentary: the negation of every being or entity from divinity except Allah Ta’ālā. This negation is fundamental in understanding the true meaning of the Kalimah Tawhid, as it asserts that no one except Allah possesses the attributes of divinity—such as self-sufficiency and eternal existence—and that everything other than Him is in need of Him."

This direct reference to the *Umm al-Barāhīn* text shows how al-Falimbānī closely follows the framework laid out by al-Sanūsī, acknowledging his influence on the understanding of *tawḥīd* and the necessity of negation in the expression of divine unity.

Lastly, the fourth reference comes when al-Falimbānī elaborates on the human limitations in fully grasping the divine attributes and knowledge of Allah. He cites al-Sanūsī’s work again to support the idea that while general proofs (*dalā’il ‘āmmah*) are accessible to all, the deeper, specific proofs require specialized knowledge and are often only understood by scholars:

"In *Umm al-Barāhīn*, it is mentioned that the more detailed knowledge regarding Allah’s attributes and their proofs should be left to those with expertise. Therefore, for the common person, it is sufficient to accept the general proofs, as stated in the writings of Imam Sanūsī, which remain foundational in the discourse on divinity."

Conclusion

In conclusion, *Zahrah al-Murīd* by al-Falimbānī reveals significant influence from al-Sanūsī's *Umm al-Barāhīn* both in terms of the ideas presented and the content structure. The core concepts surrounding the nature of divine attributes, the meaning of *tawḥīd*, and the attributes of prophethood are largely derived from the earlier work of al-Sanūsī. Furthermore, al-Falimbānī's references to *Umm al-Barāhīn* throughout his book reinforce the continuity and relevance of al-Sanūsī's ideas in shaping later Islamic theological discourse. Al-Falimbānī's approach in *Zahrah al-Murīd* aligns with the intellectual framework of al-Sanūsī, although the former presents these ideas in a more concise manner, omitting some of the more detailed arguments and proofs found in *Umm al-Barāhīn*. Despite this, the clear dependence on al-Sanūsī's concepts demonstrates the lasting impact of *Umm al-Barāhīn* on the understanding of Islamic theology in the centuries following its composition.

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