

# Sheikh Ahmad Fatani & his Contribution in (Fiqh) Islamic Jurisprudence Writing

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## **ABSTRACT**

Sheikh Ahmad Fatani is one of the leading scholars of Patani. He has produced works in various fields of fiqh, hadith, tafsir and others. Sheikh Ahmad Fatani stature can be seen from the aspect of his contributions in fiqh writing which is produced by him. However, not many people want to try to review and highlight the leadership and contribution of Sheikh Ahmad Fatani in his books of fiqh in the light of Islamic teachings in Malaysia whereas Sheikh Ahmad Fatani is a great scholar who is responsible for the spread of Islam in the archipelago. The question is what is the contribution of jurisprudence by Sheikh Ahmad Fatani to the community in the archipelago? Hence, to answer these questions, this study has set two objectives which are first, to identify the background of Sheikh Ahmad Fatani and the second objective is to explain the contribution of Sheikh Ahmad Fatani in the field of jurisprudence. Therefore, the data of the study is collected through the literature review in the form of documents. The data are analyzed using content analysis method. In addition, preliminary findings indicate that the contribution of fiqh Sheikh Ahmad Fatani is huge in the field of religion in Malaysia. This is because the books of fiqh still prevail in mosques up to the tertiary level. Other than that, these books are also made as a reference in various of fiqh issues.

**Keywords:** *Sheikh Ahmad Fatani, Contribution, Writing, Ulama, Islamic Jurisprudence.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Sheikh Ahmad Fatani is one of the prominent scholars and authors in Southeast Asia. His leadership can be demonstrated by the production of his works covering various fields of science. The works of Sheikh Ahmad Fatani are mostly written in Malay (Jawi) and there are also his works in Arabic. Sheikh Ahmad Fatani is also the first person to publish the works of scholars in the archipelago with the help of the Caliphate Daula Ottoman who is Sultan Abdul Hamid II. He is also called as "A Savant of Merit" and also "a leading scholar" by West scholars (Abdullah, 2005).

In the aspect of writing, Sheikh Ahmad Fatani has contributed in various fields of science, including the science of jurisprudence. However, a study of the stature of Sheikh Ahmad Fatani and his contribution in the books of fiqh towards the teachings of Islam in Malaysia is still less explored by academics even though Sheikh Ahmad Fatani is a great scholar who is responsible for the spread of Islam in the archipelago. In fact, the works of Shaykh

Ahmad Fatani are still widely printed for use in the teaching and learning of religion in Malaysia nowadays (Mat Zin, 2007). Books of fiqh are still being used in mosques, lodges and right up to the tertiary level (Rosele, Ramli, Md. Ariffin & Marinsah, 2015; Awang & Tengku Kasim, 2007). Hence, the question arises, what is the contribution of fiqh Sheikh Ahmad Fatani to the community in the archipelago? Therefore, it becomes a requirement to carry out this study in order to highlight the contribution of jurisprudence by Sheikh Ahmad Fatani.

In order to view the contribution of Sheikh Ahmad Fatani in fiqh literature, this study first discusses the background of Sheikh Ahmad Fatani and discusses the writing of fiqh Sheikh Ahmad Fatani. Then, both of the discussions will be analyzed to see the contribution of the fiqh writing in religion's study until now.

## **METHODOLOGY**

In order to collect the data of this study, a literature review has been the method used in this study in order to collect the data and realize this study. Harahap (2014) says that research library is a method used to find information in the form of books, journals, magazines, and other documents. According to Jasmi (2012), the library method involving document analysis method is a breakdown of the data collection methods. Data collection which has undergone document analysis will be selected to obtain relevant information on the issues and research problems. Therefore, this study data collection will be done by examining documents such as books, journals, previous studies, and related paperwork.

The content analysis method is the method used in analyzing the data of this research. In this study, the data are analyzed using content analysis method as to obtain relevant data. According to Yusuf (2004), the content analysis will systematically conclude through the data in the form of documents. Additionally, the content analysis also describes the content of a written text (Lebar, 2009). Therefore, the acquisitions of data in this study are based on information obtained from books, journals, previous studies, papers and so on.

## **FINDINGS**

This paper discusses on Sheikh Ahmad Fatani which is based on two aspects. Those two aspects are, firstly, the background of Sheikh Ahmad Fatani and secondly, the writing of fiqh by Sheikh Ahmad Fatani.

### **Background of Sheikh Ahmad Fatani**

Sheikh Ahmad Fatani who his full name was Ahmad bin Muhammad Zain bin Mustafa al-Fatani, he was born in 5 Sha'ban 1272 AH (10<sup>th</sup> of April 1856), Friday night, in Kampung Sena Janjar, Jambu, Patani. According to Abdullah (2016), the name of his father was Sheikh Muhammad Zainal Abidin Wan but then, the name was changed to Sheikh Muhammad Zain al-Fatani. He was born in 1233 AH or 1817 AD and died on the 18th of Muharram 1325 AH January 21, 1908, AD. He was active in spreading knowledge on the cottage with his younger brother, Sheikh Wan Abdul Qadir al-Fatani.

Meanwhile, his grandfather's name was Sheikh Ahmad Fatani Haji Wan Mustafa bin Muhammad bin Muhammad Zain bin Musa al-Fatani. During his life, he was a Committee (commander) to the Sultan of Patani. He established a village which is named "Sena Janjar" and "Bendang Power" (Abdullah, 2016).

According to Abdullah (2016), in the early stages of education, Sheikh Ahmad Fatani was educated by his father, Haji Muhammad Zain and also by his uncle Sheikh Abdul Qadir bin Sheikh Wan Wan Mustafa. This was due to kindred of Sheikh Ahmad Fatani itself which consisted of members of the Islamic scholars (ulama). The involvement of Sheikh Ahmad Fatani's family in science and knowledge began with his grandfather, Sheikh Wan Mustapha bin Muhammad bin Muhammad Zain. Sheikh Mustapha Wan had four sons who had piety and wisdom in the field of religion among others, namely, Muhammad Zain, Abdul Qadir, Abdul Latif and David (Mohd Yusoff & Adnan, 2011).

During his early age, Sheikh Ahmad Fatani was already interested in the science of religion and this could be seen at his early achievement when he had memorized various of "matan" as early as age two years with the help of his parents (Adib & Yahya, 2011). Sheikh Ahmad Fatani's ability had caused a feeling of wonder and awe of his parents and relatives when Sheikh Ahmad Fatani can memorize a "matan" (summarize) easily (Mohd Yusoff & Adnan, 2011). This situation showed Sheikh Ahmad Fatani had extraordinary intelligence.

At the age of four years, Sheikh Ahmad Fatani was brought to Mecca by his mother to study theology. In Mecca, Sheikh Ahmad Fatani learned with many scholars including his aunt's husband, Sheikh Wan Ali Kutan al-Kalantani. After reaching the age of 12 years, Sheikh Ahmad Fatani was able to teach grammar to those who were older than him.

Sheikh Ahmad Fatani had a strong interest in various fields of science. During his stay in Makkah, he also studied medicine with Sheikh Abdur Rahim al-Kabuli in Jerusalem (Mohd Yusoff & Adnan, 2011; Abdullah, 2016). Sheikh Ahmad Fatani was the first Malay people to become an expert in medical science at that time and had produced a medical book. Next, he moved to Egypt to continue the searching process of science at the University of al-Azhar. According to Abdullah (2016), Sheikh Ahmad Fatani was the first Malay people who have studied in al-Azhar, Egypt.

Moreover, Sheikh Ahmad Fatani was also famous for wisdom and piety in religion. He was a seeker of knowledge who was committed and had passion in the search for knowledge. His attitude could be seen in the poems produced by him when studying religion in Makkah. The contents of the poem were vastly produced in connection with the question of faith (*aqidah*), mysticism (*tasawuf*), and faith (*tauhid*) and so on. Hence, he was declared as the greatest poet among the country's population of Egypt (Mohd Yusoff & Azrien, 2011).

Along the way of his search for knowledge, he had studied with some of Mecca and Medina scholars namely Shaykh 'Umar Al-Shami Al-Baq'a'ie, Sayyid Hussein Al-Ethiopia, Syatta Saiyid Abu Bakr al-Bakri, Saiyid Ahmad ibn Zaini Dahlan and much more. Sheikh Ahmad Fatani also had studied with Islamic scholars from Patani who are Sheikh Muhammad bin Ismail Daud Al-Fatani (Sheikh Nik Mat Kecik al-Fatani), Sheikh Abdul Qadir bin 'Abdur Rahman al-Fatani and Sheikh Wan Ali Kutan Al-Kalantani. Sheikh Ahmad Fatani also had many students who come from various countries. Sheikh Saleh bin Mohammed Abdus Samad (Tuan Tabal), Nik Mahmud bin Haji Ismail Haji Muhammad Yusuf bin Ahmad (Tok Kenali) are the students of Sheikh Ahmad Fatani that originate from Malay land. Most of his students have turn out to be famous and respected Islamic scholars (Abdullah, 2005).

Sheikh Ahmad Fatani had several titles. The titles were given by Muslim scholars and Western scholars. Among the titles given by the scholars of Islam were Sibawayh Saghir, Tok Guru Wan Ngah Tuan Faridah al-Adib, Allama al-Alim and others. Western scholars called Sheikh Ahmad Fatani as "a savant of merit" and "a great savant" (Abdullah, 2005).

Sheikh Ahmad Fatani died in Mina when he was performing his "hajj" on 11 Muharram 1325 AH January 14, 1908, AD. Sheikh Ahmad Fatani was buried in the cemetery at Makkah Ma'la under the feet of the Prophet's wife Khadijah (Abdullah, 2016; Adib & Yahya, 2011).

### **Fiqh (Islamic Jurisprudence) Writing of Sheikh Ahmad Fatani**

The name of Sheikh Ahmad Fatani is quite special as it is associated with his contribution to the development of Islam in the Malay world. This is because there are many writings and his works that serve as a guide and reference for the Muslim community from past to present (Jamsari, Abul Hassan, Ashari, Azziaty & Mohd Yunus, 2011). Sheikh Ahmad Fatani is a prominent French scholar who is prolific and has produced 160 works in various fields of knowledge (Adib & Yahya, 2011).

Sheikh Ahmad Fatani has authored three books of fiqh in Malay and Arabic which are *al-Bahjatul Muhtadin wa Farhatul Muhtadin* (1310H), *'Umwatul Falah wa' unfuwanul Salah* (1319H), and *al-Fatawal Fathaniyah*. Apart from the books written by him, Sheikh Ahmad Fatani also heavily involved in activities of meticulousness and printing books of fiqh which are written by previous scholars of Nusantara. Hence, these previous studies of scholars still can be learned until now (Abdullah, 2005).

Among the books of fiqh, written by Sheikh Ahmad Fatani is:

1- *Muhtadin wa al-Bahjatul Farhatul Muhtadin*.

The book is authored by Sheikh Ahmad Fatani when in Makkah. This book is written on Friday, 13 Rabiul Akhir 1310H corresponding to 4 November 1892M. The first printing is done by Mathba'ah al-Miriyah al-Kainah, Makkah in 1310H corresponding 1892M. Hence this book is published until the seventh which is ran by Patani Press in 1385H. According to Wan Mohd

Saghir Abdullah (2005), the book is still being used as a reference and learning in Islamic education institutions and also in traditional education.

2- *Falah Umwanul wa 'unfuwanul Salah.*

This book is written on 17 Shawwal 1319H (16 January 1902M). The book is completed in Makkah during Asr. This book discusses on faith (Aqidah), mysticism (Tasawuf), and jurisprudence (fiqh).

3- *Al-Fatawal Fathaniyah.*

Kitab *Al-Fatawal Fathaniyah* is the first book of fatwa in the Malay world. Kitab *Al-Fatawal Fathaniyah* is a book that compiles answers to 108 questions regarding various aspects of Islam. However, the book has no recorded date. According to Wan Mohd Saghir Abdullah (2005), the book of *Al-Fatawal Fathaniyah* is written in two languages, Arabic and French. Issues that involve globally are written in Arabic. In contrast, the issues that happen in Malay situation; they are written in the Malay language.

Apart from his written books, there are also books of fiqh that has been detailed (tashih) by Sheikh Ahmad Fatani. Namely:

1. *Al-Siratul Mustaqim* authored by Sheikh Nuruddin al-Raniri.
2. *Sabilul Muhtadin* authored by Sheikh Muhammad bin Abdullah al-Banjari.
3. *Furu'ul Masail* authored by Sheikh Daud bin Abdullah al-Fatani.
4. *Mir-atuth Thullab* authored by Sheikh Abdur Rauf bin Ali al-Fansuri.
5. *Sullamul Muhtadi* authored by Sheikh Daud bin Abdullah al-Fatani.
6. *Fath al-Mannan* authored by Sheikh Daud bin Abdullah al-Fatani.
7. *Al-Jawahirus Saniyah* authored by Sheikh Daud bin Abdullah al-Fatani.
8. *Mathala'ul Badrain* authored by Sheikh Muhammad bin Ismail bin Ahmad al-Fatani.
9. *Kasyful litsam* authored by Sheikh Zainal Abidin bin Muhammad al-Fatani.

Moreover, there is also an Arabic book of fiqh that is well known among the Shafi'i schools which is known as *al-Talibin l'anahu*, authored by Sayyid Abu Bakr Uthman bin Mohd Syatta al-Dahlan al-Bakri. The book is widely used throughout the Muslim world. The book is also one of the books that have been detailed (tashih) by Sheikh Ahmad Fatani (n.d.). *Al-Talibin l'anahu* solely has practiced the Shafi'i schools. Therefore, this book is ordinarily used in Malaysia as the majority of Malaysian people are practising Shafi'i schools.

Abdullah (2000) states, the islamic shoelars of archipelago write the fiqh writing based on Shafi'i schools. This is because the whole Malay world is already adhering to hold on to the Shafi'i schools as a major hold and practices. Therefore, among the most influential books of fiqh in the Malay world is *al-Siratul Mustaqim* written by al-Sheikh Nuruddin al-Raniri.

Those books of fiqh have spread across the Muslim world including the Malay world. This happens due to the caring attitude of Syeikh Ahmad Fatani towards the importance of the works of Nusantara scholars. Sheikh Ahmad Fatani is also the first to publish the works of scholars in the country with the help of the Caliphate Daula Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid II. Therefore, the books of fiqh can be broadened and it is still used for reference in various issues of fiqh (Mat Zain, 2007).

### DISCUSSION

In the previous discussion, Sheikh Ahmad Fatani is an influential scholar in the Muslim world and he plays a crucial role in spreading Islam through the work of writing. There are many books that have been produced by Sheikh Ahmad Fatani, covering various fields of science. One of them is in fiqh science. Likewise, Sheikh Ahmad Fatani also has produced three books of fiqh.

On the other hand, Sheikh Ahmad Fatani is also involved in activities of “pentashihan” of previous scholars’ fiqh works. Most of the “tashih” book consists of studies by famous scholars’ of Patani and Makkah. Significantly, his effort in “pentashihan” of the book brings a great contribution to society. The legacy of former fiqh books and studies by earlier Islamic scholars are still being used and valued by society, especially Muslims up until these days.

Among of the fiqh books, written and reviewed by Sheikh Ahmad Fatani are as follows:

Books of fiqh written (Malay and Arabic)	Books of fiqh that has been corrected (Malay and Arabic)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Mubtadin wa al-Bahjatul Farhatul Mujtadin (1310H).</i></li> <li>2. 'Umwanul Falah wa' unfuwanul Salah (1319H).</li> <li>3. <i>Al-Fatawal Fathaniyah.</i></li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Al-Siratul Mustaqim (1054H)</i> authored by Sheikh Nur al-Din al-Raniri.</li> <li>2. <i>Sabilul Muhtadin (1193H)</i> authored by Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah al-Villanueva Banjari.</li> <li>3. <i>Furu'ul Masail (1257H)</i> authored by Sheikh Daud bin Abdullah al-Fatani.</li> <li>4. <i>Mir-atuth Thullab (1592H)</i> authored by Sheikh Abdur Rauf bin Ali al-Fansuri.</li> <li>5. <i>Sullamul Mubtadi (1252H)</i> authored by Sheikh Daud bin Abdullah al-Fatani.</li> <li>6. <i>Fath al-Mannan (1249H)</i> authored by Sheikh Daud bin Abdullah al-Fatani.</li> <li>7. <i>Al-Jawahirus Saniyah (1252H)</i> authored by Sheikh Daud bin Abdullah al-Fatani.</li> <li>8. <i>Mathala'ul Badrain (1303H)</i> authored by Sheikh Muhammad bin Ismail bin Ahmad al-Fathani.</li> </ol>

	<p>9. <i>Kasyful litham</i> (1307H) authored by Sheikh Zainal Abidin bin Muhammad al-Fatani.</p> <p>An Arabic book that has been tashih by Sheikh Ahmad Fatani namely:</p> <p>1- <i>I'anahu al-Talibin</i> (1300H) authored by Sayyid Abu Bakr Uthman bin Mohd Syatta al-Dahlan al-Bakri.</p>
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Figure 1: The books of fiqh, written and has been “tashih” (corrected) by Sheikh Ahmad Fatani.

Sheikh Ahmad Fatani works of fiqh can be classified into two forms. Firstly, the written books of fiqh and secondly, the books of fiqh that has been corrected. All the writings in those books of fiqh are written in Arabic and Malay. Furthermore, writing books of fiqh have been widely spread and used throughout the Islamic world up until this year. Hence, this proves that the contribution of jurisprudence writing by Sheikh Ahmad Fatani is deliberated is vital and important as it does bring many advantages towards the communities, particularly the Muslim community in understanding the science of religion (Islam), especially on the doctrines of religion. Additionally, those spread books of fiqh are following the practice of Shafi'i sect.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the above discussion, the study proves that Sheikh Ahmad Fatani is one of the great figures who are famous and admired for his many contributions towards the community, especially the Muslims. There are many contributions of Sheikh Ahmad Fatani especially in the writing of fiqh. This contribution can be comprehended at his works and also books of fiqh that has been “tashih” by him. His literary prowess has led to the continuity of the books of fiqh which are still being used and referred until these days.

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