THE MALAY SYARAH (COMMENTARY) OF AL-GHAZZALI’S WORKS (1700-1900)

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Abstract

It is a well-known fact that al-Ghazzali’s influence in the Malay world or what is Southeast Asia today is both pervasive and profound. The effect of his influence is evident in Malay-Muslim religious thought and practice and it is felt until today. One of the evidences which can be used to gauge this great thinker’s influence is by looking at the translations and commentaries (syarah) of local scholars of his works into Malay. It has been proven that these Malay commentaries began in the eighteenth century led by scholars such as ‘Abd al-Samad al-Palimbani and Dawud al-Patani. There were various types of these translations and commentaries which ranged from literal translations to commentaries and to what some scholars considered to be original compositions themselves. These writings, either in manuscript or printed, are found in local libraries including the Pusat Manuskrip Melayu, Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia. In this paper I will list six important Malay syarahs and describe briefly on their style and content with the aim of showing what the Malay scholars considered to be important from al-Ghazzali’s teachings to be transmitted to the local Malay-Muslims who mostly did not understand Arabic and hence, could not read the author’s original works. In this way, we are able to see how the Malay scholars used these Malay syarahs to interpret and transmit the teachings of Islam to the Muslim community in the Malay world.

Introduction

It is well known and widely accepted that Abu Hamid al-Ghazzali (d. 505/1111), popularly known as Hujjat al-Islam (Proof of Islam), had a pervasive and profound influence on the religious life and thought of Muslims in the Malay World. Studies have also shown that environments in the Malay World were conducive to the reception, assimilation and dissemination of the teachings of tasawwuf or Sufism generally, and of al-Ghazzali particularly.

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1 In this article, the terms ‘Malay World’ and ‘Malay Archipelago’ are used interchangeably. Occasionally, the term ‘Southeast Asia’ is also used to signify the same meaning. By these three terms is meant the region which has been the home of people of the Malay racial stock whose lingua franca, historically and presently, is Malay. This region comprises present day Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, South Thailand and the Philippines.

His influence was indicated from the beginning of the Islamization of the Malay Archipelago in the thirteenth century until the present time in various forms and with varying degrees of interest and intensity. His writings, especially on *tasawwuf* had a great impact on scholars who translated, summarized, commented and adapted them for Malay and other native languages such as Javanese and wrote their own works in different areas of thought based on his views and interpretations. Until today, his books such as *Ihya’*ulum al-din—acknowledged as the most important and influential work on ethics in Arabic—are studied by not only students in the Islamic education system but also the average Malay-Muslim since they consider this work to provide true Islamic knowledge and guidance to right action.

One of the evidences which can be used to gauge this great thinker’s influence is by looking at the translations and commentaries (*syarah*) of local scholars of his works into Jawi which are Malay writings written in a Malay adaptation of the Arabic alphabet with certain modifications influenced by the Persian. These Jawi translations and commentaries began in the eighteenth century and in fact the period between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is considered to be the time where al-Ghazzali’s influence is said to have reached its summit in Malay-Islamic intellectual history as indicated by the number of such works. 3 They ranged from literal translations to commentaries and to what some scholars considered to be original compositions themselves. These writings, either in manuscript or printed, are found in local libraries including the Pusat Manuskrip Melayu, Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia.

In this paper I have chosen six important and well-known works representing the different types of Malay *syarah* in terms of style and presentation focusing on the period between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries i.e., 1700-1900. I will describe briefly on their style and content with the aim of showing what the Malay scholars considered to be important from al-Ghazzali’s teachings to be transmitted to the local Malay-Muslims who mostly did not understand Arabic and hence, could not read the author’s original works. In this way, we are able to see how the Malay scholars used these Malay *syarah* to interpret and transmit the teachings of Islam to the Muslim community in the Malay world.

These *syarah* comprise of al-Ghazzali’s basic works on Sufism namely, *Bidayat al-hidayah*, *Minhaj al-‘Abidin*, *Ayyuha al-walad* and *Ihya’*ulum al-din*, written by four scholars who were the main proponents and commentators of al-Ghazzali and normative Sufism. These four scholars are ‘Abd al-Samad al-Palimbani (d. 1203/1789), Dawud ibn ‘Abd Allah al-Patani (d. 1265/1847), Wan Hasan ibn Wan Ishaq al-Patani (Tuan Hasan Besut) (d. 1325/1908) and ‘Abd al-Samad ibn Muhammad Salih al-Jawi al-Kelantani (Tuan Tabal) (d. 1891). These writers, especially Shaykh ‘Abd al-Samad and Shaykh Dawud, were recognized as the forerunners who used al-Ghazzali’s teachings as their main perspective and foundation of their works on *tasawwuf*.

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3 For a more elaborate account, see Megawati Moris, “The influence of al-Ghazzali.”
Studies have also shown that through their involvement as students and teachers in scholarly networks centered in the Haramayn (Mecca and Medina), Malay scholars who resided in the Middle East (*ashab al-Jawiyyin*) during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were spiritually and intellectually connected with representatives of sober (*sahw*) streams of Sufism; especially that of al-Ghazzali’s. The chains of transmission--*isnads* and *silsilahs*—that were formed from these networks are extremely significant in that literally centuries-of-teachings were subsequently passed on to the local Malay-Muslim communities through the writings of Malay scholars in the networks who inherited these treasures from their masters. The fruits of this wisdom and knowledge are found in the translations and adaptations of these Malay scholars in particular.

**The Malay *Syarah* of Al-Ghazzali’s Works**

In their original works, Malay scholars incorporated what al-Ghazzali considered the obligatory (*fard ‘ayn*) in jurisprudence (*fiqh*), as well as the principles of religion (*usul al-din*) and Sufism (*tasawwuf*). The Malay scholar’s approach to writing these books is to present the three sciences, namely, *usul al-din*, *fiqh*, and *tasawwuf*. The first two are considered prerequisites to the third and are hence, compulsory (*fard ‘ayn*) for adherents of the Islamic spiritual path (*tariqah*). Hence, *tasawwuf* ranks higher and is nobler than *fiqh* and *usul al-din* or *kalam*. As a consequence, books on *tasawwuf* should contain teachings from the other two sciences or branches of knowledge. In the wake of al-Ghazzali, *tasawwuf* was considered beneficial knowledge (*‘ilm al-nafi’*) since it provided the way to salvation of the human soul and the attainment of direct knowledge of God (*ma’rifah*). What follows below are titles and abbreviated accounts of six selected translations and adaptations—the latter sometimes referred to as translations-cum-commentaries of al-Ghazzali’s writings in Jawi by the four Malay scholars cited previously:

**Hidayat al-salikin**

The full title of this text is *Hidayat al-salikin fi suluk maslak al-muttaqin* written by Shaykh ‘Abd al-Samad. It is one of the most influential and widely taught Malay texts in the traditional learning institutions for example, the mosques and *pondoks* in Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore until today. This work was completed in Mecca in 1192/1778 and is principally a translation from al-Ghazzali’s *Bidayat al-hidayah* with additions from other sources for example, other works by al-Ghazzali namely, *Ihya ‘ulum al-din*, *Minhaj al-‘abidin* and *Kitab al-

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5 The Jawi community, particularly students, is known in the Arab world by this name that derives from the term ‘Jawi’ or ‘Jawah’, representing people from the Malay Archipelago in general. Refer to A. Azra, *Jaringan ulama*, pp. 16-17.

6 ‘Pondok’ literally means hut but it actually refers to a cluster of buildings used as a center of Islamic education. It has similar characteristics to the ‘surau’ and ‘pesantren’.

arba‘in fi usul al-din; a work by ‘Abd al-Samad’s spiritual guide and teacher Shaykh Muhammad bin ‘Abd al-Karim al-Sammani (d. 1189/1776) on the teachings and practices of the Sammanyyah Order entitled al-Nafahat al-Ilahiyyah fi suluk al-tariqah al-Muhammadiyah; and works by scholars of Hadramawt origin such as, Sayyid ‘Abd Allah bin ‘Alawi al-Haddad (d. 1132/1720), and by Sayyid ‘Abd al-Qadir al-‘Aydarus (d. 1038/1628). The group of learned Sayyids and Sufis from Hadramawt was included by ‘Abd al-Samad as verifiers of al-Ghazzali’s works because of their chains of transmission (isnad) as authentic commentators of al-Ghazzali’s works and their local popularity and recognition among the early figures who spread Sufism to the Malay world.8

This work—in manuscript and printed forms—carries two titles namely, Hidayat al-salikin and Bidayat al-salikin; although the contents are the same and the latter title is less commonly known.9 In the Pusat Manuskrip Melayu-Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia (PMM-PNM) there are manuscript copies which are complete with the title Hidayat al-salikin for example, MSS 225110, MSS 246711 and MS 2666.12 The work was first printed in Cairo, Egypt (1288/1871) and was edited by the famous Malay editor and scholar Ahmad bin Muhammad Zayn al-Fatani13 with subsequent printings in Mecca and in the Malay world. With the maiden edition and printing of the Hidayat al-salikin in Egypt through the pioneering efforts of Ahmad al-Fatani, the Malay language was not only introduced into the Middle East but also paved the way for the publication and printing of other Jawi works on a larger scale.14

The Hidayat al-salikin is a book on tasawwuf for the elementary (mubtadi’) level. In his introduction, ‘Abd al-Samad states that the book contains knowledge which brings reverential fear of God (Arabic: taqwa; Malay: takut akan Allah Ta’ala)15 and which is beneficial for this world and the hereafter that is necessary for every Muslim to acquire. He mentions that his work is based on al-Ghazzali’s book entitled Bidayat al-hidayah discussing some of its topics in Malay with additions of some other appropriate topics for the benefit of those who do not know

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9 Copies which bear the title Bidayat al-salikin include three manuscript copies kept in the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia (IAMM), Kuala Lumpur that were previously kept in the Muzium Islam Pusat Islam; a lithographed edition in Singapore in 1873; and only one printed edition. However, more printed books use this title. See a transliterated version of the work published in three volumes by Hj. Wan Mohd. Shaghir Abdullah, Hidayatus salikin Syeikh Abdus Shamad al-Falimbani, (Kuala Lumpur: Khazanah Fathaniyah, third edition/reprint 2000), 1:1.
14 W. M. S. Abdullah, Hidayatus salikin, 1:2, p. 6.
15 Referring to the Qur’an (Surat al-baqarah, 2: 197): “And take a provision (with you) for the journey, but the best of provisions is reverential fear.” Hidayatus salikin, 1:9.
The original work aims to treat the beginning of guidance, defined by al-Ghazzali as outward piety which entails obeying God’s commands and prohibitions related to man’s outward aspect or the body. In line with the meaning of outward piety, the book comprises of three parts: first, acts of devotion; second, the avoidance of sins and third; association with God and human beings. Interestingly, it is a more basic book compared to the Hidayat al-salikin which also deals with aspects of inward piety i.e., purification of the soul from vices or evil qualities which, according to al-Ghazzali, forms the end of guidance.

In the Hidayat al-salikin, ‘Abd al-Samad added expositions on knowledge and the invocation (dhikr). On the latter subject, he described the methods of the Sammaniyyah Sufi order (tariqah). He also discussed the ten vices together with the corresponding virtues which were not included in the Bidayat al-hidayah but were all standard treatments in al-Ghazzali’s Ihya’’ulum al-din, Kitab al-arba’in fi usul al-din and Minhaj al-‘abidin. Overall, the Hidayat al-salikin is an introductory text that gives brief explanations rather than long elaborations, but as the title indicates, it provides guidance for travelers i.e., those embarking on the spiritual path and hence, it is more spiritually advanced and exclusive in terms of its guidance compared to the original work. The Hidayat al-salikin’s main sources on tasawwuf are also found in ‘Abd al-Samad’s more comprehensive work the Siyar al-salikin.

The Hidayat al-salikin is arranged into a prologue (muqaddimah), seven chapters (abwab) and an epilogue (khatimah). The prologue contains two sections (fasl; plural: fusal). The first, explains the advantages of beneficial knowledge (al-‘ilm al-nafi’) and the second, gives the benefits for those who acquire this knowledge. A brief description of the seven chapters is as follows:

i. The First Chapter (Bab yang Pertama) introduces the foundations of the articles of faith (‘aqidah; plural: ‘aqa’id) of the Ahl al-sunnah wa al-jama’ah.
ii. The Second Chapter (Bab yang Kedua) gives an exposition on the external forms of worship (‘ibadah yang zahir).
iii. The Third Chapter (Bab yang Ketiga) expounds on the avoidance of outward disobedience or evil acts (ma’siyah yang zahir).
iv. The Fourth Chapter (Bab yang Keempat) is on the avoidance of inward disobedience or vice (ma’siyah yang batin). He mentions ten vices which are stated in the Kitab al-arba’in. They are: gluttony (Arabic: sharah al-ta’am; Malay: sangat gemar pada membanyakkan makan); excessive speech (Arabic: sharah al-kalam; Malay: sangat gemar pada membanyakkan perkataan); anger (Arabic: al-ghadab; Malay: marah); envy (Arabic: al-hasad; Malay: dengki); miserliness and love of money (Arabic: al-bukhl wa hubb al-mal; Malay: kikir dan kasih kepada harta); love of glory (Arabic: hubb al-jah; Malay: kasih akan kemegahan); love of the world (Arabic: hubb al-

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16 Hidayatus salikin, 1:9-10.
17 Muhammad Abul Quasem, Al-Ghazali on Islamic guidance, (Bangi: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 1979), p. 11.
18 During his stay in Medina ‘Abd al-Samad was appointed khalifah by his spiritual guide and Shaykh of the Sammaniyyah order, Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Karim al-Sammani.
v. The Fifth Chapter (Bab yang Kelima) gives a treatment on the inward forms of worship (‘ibadah yang di dalam hati) and explains the ten virtues in Kitab al-arba’in. They are: repentance (Arabic: al-tawbah; Malay: tawbat); fear (Arabic: al-khawaf; Malay: takut daripada Allah); renunciation (Arabic: al-zuhd; Malay: benci akan dunia); patience (Arabic: al-sabr; Malay: sabar); gratitude (Arabic: al-shukr); sincerity and truthfulness (Arabic: al-ikhlas wa al-sidq; ikhlas dan benar); trust in God (Arabic: al-tawakkul; Malay: tawakal); love (Arabic: al-malabbah; Malay: kasih akan Allah Ta’ala); contentment with the Divine decree (Arabic: al-rida bi al-qada’; Malay: rida dengan qada’ Allah Ta’ala); and remembrance of death (Arabic: dhikr al-mawt; Malay: ingat akan mati).

vi. The Sixth Chapter (Bab yang Keenam) gives an exposition on invocation (dhikr), its merit (fjadilah), spiritual etiquette (adab) and method (kayfiyyah).

vii. The Seventh Chapter (Bab yang Ketujuh) explains on the spiritual etiquette (adab) of companionship (al-suhbah; bersahabat) and intimate association (al-mu’asharah; berkasih-kastihan) with the Creator (khaliq) and with creation (al-khalq) i.e., associations between God and humans and between human beings. For the latter, the author initially discusses the spiritual etiquette of the learned followed by the spiritual etiquette between student and teacher, then between child and parents and lastly, between friends.

The Epilogue (Khatimah) deals with the etiquette of two groups of people: first, between people who know each other, and second, between those who are unknown to each other among the generality of Muslims.

**Siyar al-salikin**

The full title of this text is Siyar al-salikin ila ‘ibadat Rabb al-‘alamin although it is also referred to as Sayr al-salikin ila ‘ibadat Rabb al-‘alamin. I have chosen to refer to the work by its former title based on arguments given in support and because both the Jawi and Romanized versions of this work are given this title. The Siyar al-salikin is by right a partial translation of an abridgement (mukhtasar) of al-Ghazzali’s Ihya’ ‘ulum al-din by ‘Abd al-Samad since he did not translate the entire work. He wrote in the preface that he received inspiration from God Almighty to translate the book of al-Ghazzali “…named Lubab ihya’ ‘ulum al-din that is, the mukhtasar ihya’ ‘ulum al-din …” in the year 1193/1779. According to ‘Abd al-Samad, the original work combines the Shari’ah and the tariqah, and its contents concern the sciences of the...

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22 Siyar (J), 1:3: Siyar (R), 1:1.
principles of religion, jurisprudence and Sufism; all of which benefit those who tread towards the path of the next world or the hereafter. He said he translated the text to Jawi and made several useful additions for the benefit of those who do not understand the Arabic language.\(^{23}\)

Generally speaking, he followed the framework of the original text. In terms of the chapters, he maintained both the number (forty) and their headings. The contents of the *Mukhtasar* *ihya*’ *ulum al-din* are comprised primarily of verses from the Qur’an; *Hadith* of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him); sayings of the Companions, saints (*awliya’*), gnostics (*‘urafa’*) and pious Muslims (*salihin*); and al-Ghazzali’s own commentaries extracted from the *Ihya*. ‘Abd al-Samad made many additions to the *Mukhtasar* *ihya*’ *ulum al-din* in three manners: first, he included sayings from other Sufis especially those who came after al-Ghazzali; second, he summed up al-Ghazzali’s explanations with his own short commentaries; and third, he added totally new sections (*fusul*) not found either in the *Mukhtasar al-ihya*’ or in the *Ihya*. Hence, although ‘Abd al-Samad considers the *Siyar al-salikin* as a translation of the *Mukhtasar al-ihya*’, there is truth to the claim of Indonesian scholar M. Chatib Quzwain—who wrote a comprehensive study on the Malay text—that it is not merely a translation, but more accurately, a composition by ‘Abd al-Samad.\(^{24}\)

‘Abd al-Samad explicitly states his sources and cites them even if they are from al-Ghazzali’s works, including the *Ihya*’ itself. ‘Abd al-Samad’s choice of sources shows a combination of the works of scholars representing three streams of Sufi traditions namely, Indian, Eastern (*mashriqi*) or Egyptian, and Western (*maghribi*).\(^{25}\) They indicate works of scholars who form part of the prevalent movement in the Middle East towards a rapprochement of *Shari’ah* and Sufism, and within this framework, the works of al-Ghazzali and his commentators prove influential. ‘Abd al-Samad was part of this international scholarly community or network and the authorities he chose for the *Siyar al-salikin* reflect the syntheses of the various religious, intellectual and spiritual traditions he inherited and assimilated and of which he was a product. The *Siyar al-salikin* is written in Malay and played a vital role in the transmission process that brought the teachings, perspectives and tendencies as developed from these networks at the center of the Islamic world to its peripheries; in this case, to the Malay Archipelago.\(^{26}\)

The contents of this text are contained in four parts or volumes which the author completed in ten years beginning from 1193/1779 until 1203/1789.\(^{27}\) There are several copies of

\[^{23}\text{Ibid.; Ibid., 2.}\]
\[^{25}\text{For example from the Indian tradition the important treatise entitled *al-Tuhfah al-mursalah ila al-nabi* written by Muhammad bin Fadl Allah al-Hindi al-Burbanpuri (d. 1029/1620); from the Egyptian stream, works by Zakariyya’ al-Ansari (d. 926 /1526) and ‘Abd al-Wahhab al-Sha’rani (d. 973/1565); and from the Maghrib or North Africa, works connected to the Shadhiliyyah Sufi order such as, *Kitab al-hikam* by Ibn Ata’illah al-Iskandari (d. 709/1309). For a list and analysis of the sources of the *Siyar al-salikin*, see Megawati Moris, “The Influence of al-Ghazzali,” pp. 121-132.}\]
\[^{26}\text{For a comprehensive study on these cosmopolitan networks of scholars centered in the Haramayn see A. Azra, *Jaringan ulama*. The English version of this book is, *The origins of Islamic reformism in Southeast Asia: Networks of Malay-Indonesian and Middle Eastern ‘ulama’ in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries*, (NSW and Honolulu: ASAA in association with Allen & Unwin and University of Hawai’i Press, 2004).}\]
\[^{27}\text{The dates of completion are mentioned by ‘Abd al-Samad himself at the end of each volume of the text.}\]
the manuscript with the title *Sayr al-salikin*—both complete and incomplete—in the Pusat Manuskrip Melayu-Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia. Three of the completed copies are: MSS 2473, MSS 2665, and MSS 3248. This book continues to be printed and is readily available in book stores selling religious books in Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia reflecting its continuous importance and popularity among students as well as the general Malay-Muslim public. In recent years, two new Romanized editions of the Jawi work have been published with its language modernized in an attempt to make reading and understanding it easier.

The *Siyar al-salikin* comprises of a prologue or an introduction, four parts and an epilogue or a conclusion. The prologue explains on the superiority (*fadl*) of knowledge. The first part contains the principles of religion (*usul al-din*) which includes the beliefs of the *Ahl al-sunnah wa al-jama’ah* (*segala i’tiqad ahli al-sunnah dan jama’ah*) and religious duties i.e., the outward forms of worship (*segala ta’ah ya’ni ibadat yang zahir*). The second part explains on the norms of daily life and rules of ethics governing them (*‘adat ya’ni hukum adab yang berlaku pada ‘adah*) for example, in the practices of eating and drinking, marriage, companionship etc. The third part speaks on the virtues or the ways which lead to perdition (*muhlikat ya’ni membinasakan sekalian ‘amal*) i.e., the outward and inward forms of disobedience (*yaitu segala ma’siyah yang zahir dan ma’siyah yang batin*). The fourth and final part gives an explanation on the virtues or the ways which lead to salvation (*munjiyat ya’ni melepaskan daripada yang membinasakan sekalian ‘amal*) i.e., the inward forms of worship (*yaitu segala ‘ibadah batin*). The epilogue comprises two parts: first, is an explanation of the extent of God’s mercy for His servants (*luas rahmah Allah subhanahu wa Ta’ala akan hambanya*); the second is on the causes that bring a good ending to death (*segala sebab kebajikan kesudahan matti*).

**Minhaj al-‘abidin**

This Jawi work bears the same title in Arabic as written by al-Ghazzali. The full title of this text is *Minhaj al-‘abidin ila jannat Rabb al-‘alamin*. It is a translation from the Arabic into Malay by Dawud al-Patani without the many commentaries or expansions we found in ‘Abd al-Samad’s *Hidayat al-salikin* and *Siyar al-salikin*. There is one copy of the manuscript in its complete form in Pusat Manuskrip Melayu-Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia i.e., MSS 2310. The work was completed in Mecca in 1240/1825 and was printed for the first time in Istanbul in 1305/1887. It was widely studied in the Malay world and presently, there are still some teachers who teach the text in traditional Islamic educational institutions and mosques.
In the *Minhaj*, as its title indicates, the author sets out the path for those who desire the goal of paradise through worshiping and serving God. In essence, worship is the means and end for a life of success in this world and the next. According to al-Ghazzali, it is a very difficult path with many steep inclines (‘aqabat) that are full of danger with obstacles and enemies and few friends to help along the way. Hence, Dawud al-Patani, following al-Ghazzali, arranges the book according to each incline comprising of seven ascents as follows:

i. **Knowledge** (*al-‘ilm*). Here he emphasizes the importance of knowledge since without it the act of worship is meaningless. He also discusses on the hierarchy of the sciences based on what constitutes the obligatory for the performance of the acts of worship and the attainment of certain knowledge (*‘ilm al-yaqin*).34

ii. **Repentance** (*al-tawbah*); in which he explains the need for the servant to repent for his many sins, wrong-doings and vices and sets the necessary obligations and conditions for it.35

iii. **Obstacles** (*al-‘awa’iq*). In this section, Dawud al-Fatani explicates the four major impediments of devoted worship and selfless service to God that consist of (a) the world and what is inside it; (b) human beings; (c) the devil; and (d) the human soul. He then provides methods on how to overcome each respective obstacle effectively. The methods are: (1) detachment from the world; (2) isolation from people; (3) fighting against the devil and defeating him; and (4) disciplining the soul and suppressing the desires.36

iv. **Obstructions** (*al-‘awarid*). In this section, he enumerates four types of obstruction that distract the servant from performing and concentrating on his acts of worship and furnishes the reader with ways to overcome them. First is the servant’s preoccupation with his sustenance (*al-rizq*) which can be countered with trust in God (*tawakkul ‘ala Allah*); second are thoughts of dangers (*al-akhtar*) and fears (*al-makhafat*) can be overcome by entrusting (*tafwid*) all of his actions to God; third is destiny (*al-qada’*) which should be faced with contentment (*rida*); and fourth, adversities and misfortunes (*al-shada’id wa al-masa’ib*) which are to be endured by the servant with patience (*sabr*).37

v. **Inducements** (*al-bawa’ith*), which comprise the fear (*khawf*) of God’s punishment, and the hope (*raja’*) of reward from God. If these two feelings are under the servant’s constant control then performing the acts of worship are made smooth and easy.38

vi. **Impairments** (*al-qawadih*), which comprise two blameworthy qualities that can destroy the servant’s acts of worship, namely, ostentation (*riya’*) and conceit (*‘ujb*).
These two vices can be overcome by the two opposing qualities of sincerity (ikhlas) and remembrance of God’s grace (dhikr al-minnah). Sincerity will cleanse the servant’s acts of worship from any intention of ostentation or ‘showing off’ to others while the constant remembrance of God’s grace and blessings will remove his feelings of conceit and pride.39

vii. Praise and gratitude (al-hamd wa al-shukr) for the manifold blessings which God have bestowed on mankind.

According to al-Ghazzali and as described in the poetic language as translated by Shaykh Dawud, after the servant has completed the last steep incline and afterwards descends to ‘flat land’ (jatuhlah ia di dalam tempat turun), he will meet with his goal and desire and will arrive at the station of blessing and field of longing (perhentian kurnia dan padang rindu) and the garden of love (tanah lapang mahabbah). He will enjoy the benefits and remain in this state for the rest of his life: though his body remains in this world his heart is already in the hereafter. When he is finally called by the Lord of the Worlds, the angels will move him from his happy but transient state to the eternal Divine Presence (hadrat al-Illahiyah) and garden of Paradise (kebun syurga). There he will meet his Lord, Allah the Almighty, the Merciful, the Benificent and the Exalted (Tuhan Penghulunya yang amat Kasih Sayang lagi yang mengurniakan dia lagi yang Mulia).40

Ayyuha al-walad

This small treatise in Malay is a literal translation written by Wan Hasan ibn Wan Ishaq al-Fatani or Tuan Hasan Besut in 1266/1850 from the Arabic work bearing the same title, Ayyuha al-walad. It was first printed in Mecca by al-Matba’ah al-Miriyyah al-Ka’inah in 1311 A.H.41 The work was originally written by al-Ghazzali in Persian.42 The original work, since it was written near the end of his life, it is considered to have set down the Hujjat al-Islam’s conclusions on tasawwuf or Sufism as the path to God based on his own experience traveling it and practicing its requirements.43 It was written in reply to a question from his student who was himself a learned man and had spent many years studying all the branches of knowledge. The question he posed was related to which knowledge would be beneficial to him in the afterlife and which would not be useful so he might abandon the study of those that are not useful. The student’s concern was based on the Prophet’s hadith: “O Allah, I seek refuge in Thee from knowledge which does not benefit.”44

Tuan Hasan, translating al-Ghazzali, began the treatise with the qualification that his advice would merely be an extraction from the mine of teachings of the Prophet (pbuh) and if the

39 Ibid., pp. 111-128
40 Ibid., pp. 9-10.
student already has knowledge of the Hadith then he has no need of further advice from him. However, the problem as al-Ghazzali acknowledged, was the difficulty faced in accepting the advice and working according to it. This applies especially to those who preoccupy themselves in acquiring formal knowledge (‘ilmu yang resmi) since they believe that knowledge alone is a means for their safety and salvation. According to al-Ghazzali, knowledge and action should come together, both are required: “Knowledge is the tree and working is its fruit.” Furthermore there is accountability in the knowledge that one acquires. A person who acquires knowledge (mehasilkan ‘ilmu) but does not act according to it (tiada ia ‘amal dengan dia) will be indicted for it on the day of resurrection.

Keeping in mind his student’s question on what is beneficial knowledge, al-Ghazzali clarifies and Tuan Hasan translates accordingly that the substance of knowledge is obedience and worship and the meaning of these two essential elements is to adhere and conform to the law (shara’) in its commands (suruhan) and prohibitions (tegahan) in word (perkataan) and deed (perbuatan). Concretely, it means to emulate the Prophet (pbuh) in his speech and action. Since the Prophet’s example sets the way of the Sufis, al-Ghazzali reminds his student to be focused on the real challenge of treading the path (berjalan bagi jalan ini), which entails a struggle (mujahadah) to cut off the lusts of the soul (memputuskan hawa nafsunya) and kill its desires with the ‘sword of discipline’ (pedang riyadah). Until and unless the veils of negligence (lalai) and lusts (shahwat) are lifted from the heart, the light of knowledge (ma’rifah) will not be cast on it.

Al-Ghazzali mentioned that some of the questions asked by his student could not be answered verbally since they can be known only through experience when the traveler on the path of God attains the state of realization. However, for the portion that could be explained i.e., the conditions necessary for the travelers on the path, he enumerated them as follows: first is true conviction (i’tiqad yang sahih) that does not contain heresy (bid’ah); second is sincere repentance (tawbat yang nasuh) after which one does not return to sin; third is the satisfaction (minta rida) of adversaries to the extent that no one has any claims left (tiada tinggal haq) on him; fourth is the attainment of the knowledge of the laws (‘ilmu shari’ah) sufficient to perform God’s commands, and for the science of the hereafter (‘ilmu akhirah), i.e., what is essential for salvation (kelepasan), fifth that it is indispensable to have a shaykh as a guide (murshid) who trains the traveler to expel from his soul the evil qualities and replace them with ones that are noble; sixth is to guard against associations with evil people (orang yang jahat) so that he curtails the influence of evil jinn and humans from his heart; and seventh is that in all states or conditions (hal) to prefer poverty (faqr) more than wealth (ghina’).

Al-Ghazzali beseeched his student, “to work by what you know, there will be revealed to you what you do not know.” He reminded his student to be patient for this knowledge to come

46 Ibid., pp. 4-6; Ibid., pp. 1-2.
47 Ibid., p. 11; Ibid., p. 5.
48 Ibid., pp. 11-14; Ibid., p. 6.
50 Ibid., p. 16; Ibid., p. 9.
to him because God will show him the signs (ayat) when he reaches the time. He ascertained that this direct knowledge can only be attained by traveling the spiritual path.51

Munabbih al-ghafilin

This is said to be ‘Abd al-Samad ibn Muhammad Salih al-Jawi al-Kelantani’s or Tuan Tabal’s earliest work and he wrote it when he was a young man of twenty-eight. It is recorded as a Jawi translation of extracts from al-Ghazzali’s Ihya’ ‘ulum al-din and Mishkat al-anwar.52 This information is partially correct since at the end of the treatise states that it is a translation of extracts from the Ihya’ ‘ulum al-din and Mashariq al-anwar not Mishkat al-anwar. The Mashariq al-anwar was written by ‘Abd al-Wahhab al-Sha‘rani (d. 973/1565) and gives instructions and explanations on the necessity of performing religious duties.53 Tuan Tabal also referred to this work in his book, Bab Harap as does ‘Abd al-Samad in his Siyar al-salikin and additionally mentioned it as one of the important tasawwuf texts for beginners. The latest known edition of the Munabbih al-ghafilin is the one published in 1955, a reprint of the 1285/1868 edition. A manuscript copy of this work printed by al-Matba’ah al-Ahliyyah, Kota Bharu, Kelantan which is now at the Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.54

The Malay treatise is a short piece of work comprising of forty pages which gives an exposition on the following topics: first is what is required before death and at the time close to death (barang yang dituntut dahulu daripada mati dan tatkala hampir dengan mati); second is an essay on the agonies on the advent of death (kesakitan sakrat al-mawt); and third is on the states of the dead and those who love God (ahwal segala orang mati dan orang yang kasih kepada Allah subhanahu wa ta‘ala).55 Basically, it is a loose translation of excerpts of the first three chapters of the first part of al-Ghazzali’s Kitab dhikr al-mawt wa ma ba‘dahu (Book of the remembrance of death and the afterlife)56 as well as other books in the Ihya’ such as Kitab al-tawbah (Book on repentance),57 Kitab al-khawf wa al-raja’ (Book of fear and hope),58 and Kitab al-mahabbah wa al-shawq wa al-uns wa al-rida.59

Tuan Tabal does not divide the text into distinct chapters and sections that comprise the expositions as they appear in the Ihya’ but writes continuously and without paragraphs.

51 Ibid.; Ibid.
53 Its full title is Mashariq al-anwar al-qudsiyyah fi bayan al-‘uhud al-Muhammadiyyah. (Geschichte der Arabischen Literatur (GAL) II, 337 no. 14). It is also referred to as al-‘Uhud al-Muhammadiyyah al-qudsiyyah.
54 In this article, we refer to this copy of the work.
55 Munabbih, p. 4.
Nonetheless, in terms of explaining the subject matter, his writing maintains a continuous flow, remains systematic and is simple to understand. Tuan Tabal quotes many hadiths cited by al-Ghazzali in the *Ihya*. In the body of the text, he does not mention his sources, which is a contrast from the style of ‘Abd al-Samad who states explicitly his sources whenever he quotes them. However, Tuan Tabal clearly has a profoundly sound grasp of the original master’s teachings which he translated in elegant language and reproduced faithfully in a simple and comprehensible style.

**Minhat al-Qarib**

The full title of this text is *Minhat al-Qarib al-Mujib wa mugni al-Raghibin fi al-taqrib*.60 As the author stated, the *Minhat* is a translation-cum-commentary written in Jawi of parts of al-Ghazzali’s *Bidayat al-hidayah*, *Minhaj al-‘abidin* and the *Ihya* ‘ulum al-din as well as ‘Abd al-Wahhab al-Sha’rani’s *al-Bahr al-mawrud fi al-mawathiq wa al-‘uhud* and *Sharh wasiah Matbuliyyah*.61 This is Tuan Tabal’s largest and most comprehensive work and comprises three hundred and twenty-seven pages. Its contents are divided into the three requisite sciences namely, *usul al-din*, *fiqh* and *tasawwuf* following al-Ghazzali’s classification and division of knowledge. Hence, the book is based on the framework of the *Ihya* ‘ulum al-din in terms of the arrangement of subject matters discussed.

The work begins with an address (*khutbah al-kitab*) on the excellence of knowledge and the learned based on several ahadith characteristic of al-Ghazzalian introductions, which emphasizes the superiority of the science of *tasawwuf*.62 The first section of the work is an exposition on the creed (*al-‘aqidah*) of the *Ahl al-sunnah wa al-jama’ah* which reproduces important points from the *Kitab qawa'id al-'aqa'id* (*Book of foundations of the articles of faith*) of the *Ihya*.63 The second section is on *fiqh* and comprises the bulk of the work which is divided into sixteen books that are subdivided into chapters and sections. It begins with expositions on the acts of worship as follows: first on purification (Arabic: *al-taharah*; Malay: *bersuci*); second on ritual prayer (Arabic: *al-salah*; Malay: *sembahyang*); third on almsgiving (Arabic: *al-zakah*); fourth on fasting (Arabic: *al-sawm*; Malay: *puasa*); and fifth on the pilgrimage (Arabic: *al-hajj wa al-'umrah*).64 Subsequently, it expounds on matters that invalidate acts of worship and of some norms of daily life (*'adat*) as developed in the *Ihya* and several other items that are not. The order of these Books are as follows: sacrifice (Arabic: *al-udhiyyah*; Malay: *korban*); selling and others (Arabic: *al-bay' wa ghayrihi*; Malay: *berjual dan lainnya*); distributive shares in an estate (Arabic: *al-fara'id*); marriage (Arabic: *al-nikah*); crime (Arabic: *al-jinayah*), rebellion (Arabic: *al-bughah*); adultery (Arabic: *al-zina*); holy war (Arabic: *al-jihad*; Malay: *berperang sabil*); food (Arabic: *al-at'amah*; Malay: *makanan*); racing (of horses and camels) (Arabic: *al-musabaqah*; Malay: *berlumba*); judiciary (Arabic: *al-qada*); freeing of slaves (Arabic: *al-i'taq*; Malay: *memerdeheka i.e., memerdeka*).65 In the last section of the *Minhat al-Qarib* i.e., on *tasawwuf*, it begins with a chapter on repentance followed by an exposition on the etiquette of companionship and social intercourse (Arabic: *adab al-sahabah wa al-mu'asharah*; Malay: *tersahabat dan sekedudukan*).

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60 Printed by al-Matba‘ah al-Kamaliyyah, Kota Baharu, 1354 A.H.
61 Named for Ibrahim al-Matbuli (d. ca. 877/1472), the spiritual leader of Sha’rani’s Shaykh, ‘Ali al-Khawwas, and a prominent Sufi Shaykh affiliated to the Ahmadiyyah *rariqah* who lived in Cairo in the ninth century/fifteenth century. On al-Matbuli, see Michael Winter, *‘Abd al-Wahhab al-Sha’rani*, pp. 93-99.
62 *Minhat al-Qarib*, pp. 2-5.
63 Ibid., pp. 5-7.
64 Ibid., pp. 7-84.
65 Ibid., pp. 91-224.
Subsequently, he deals with the all-important subject of avoiding vices or the evil qualities of the soul (al-ma'asi al-qalb; segala ma'siyat hati) and its virtues or the good qualities of the soul (al-ta'ah al-batiniyah; ta'at yang dibangsakan kepada batin). The book ends with an epilogue (khatimah) that provides an exposition on the love of God and its remembrance (mahabbah Allah ta'ala; kasihkan Allah ta'ala) and the merits of the invocation (kelebihan berdhikir).66

According to renowned Malay scholar El-Muhammady, who first introduced Tuan Tabal and his works to wider Malay readership, this text presents the structure of the religious sciences in Islam from the viewpoint of an ordinary member of Muslim society in its consideration of the duties of human beings. Hence, this book is directed to each member of the Muslim society.67

Interpreting and Transmitting al-Ghazzali’s Teachings

The Malay syarahs of al-Ghazzali’s works we have investigated were written in various styles and forms that ranged from literal translations to summaries and commentaries to adaptations which included other authors’ works besides those of al-Ghazzali’s. However, these Jawi works remain faithful to the teachings of the original master and the additions from other scholars mostly lend support to his basic teachings. The choice of later commentators the Malay scholars refer to in their works all come from the same tradition of normative Sufism and these commentators possess a deep understanding of al-Ghazzali’s teachings as well as are familiar with his writings.

The authors of these Malay syarahs focussed on works which are classified as introductory or for the beginners and they laid out the principles and their explications for the readers in a language and vocabulary which are easily understood. They were aware of the needs of the community to ground themselves in the Shari‘ah and restrict the subject matter to what are considered fard ‘ayn in the three important sciences of usul al-din, fiqh and tasawwuf. Therefore, although the study of tasawwuf is the final aim they believe, following al-Ghazzali, it must always be understood in relation to the principles of faith and belief followed by the requirements of the Divine Law before meaningful actions can be performed. Judging from the syarahs, it is evident that these Malay scholars embody all three branches of knowledge. Since the ultimate aim of tasawwuf is knowledge of God, the Malay scholars must necessarily include metaphysics in these works to provide a complete framework of knowledge. They customarily translate the Andalusian Sufi al-Shaykh al-Akbar, Ibn al-‘Arabi’s (d. 1165/1240) expositions on this subject referring to their favorite commentators. In this way, although the metaphysical explanation comes from Ibn al-‘Arabi but the whole perspective of ethics and spirituality is still characteristically al-Ghazzali’s and the demands for orthodoxy remains intact.

Based on the examination of the Siyar al-salikin, a model of a translation-cum-commentary which showed al-Ghazzali’s influence most clearly and fully in terms of his teachings and invited the most creative response from its Malay commentator, it can be said that the Malays were not merely passive translators but creative interpreters and transmitters of al-

66 Ibid., pp. 224-328.
Ghazzali’s teachings. For a detailed examination and account of the Siyar al-salikin, see Megawati Moris, “The influence of al-Ghazzali,” Chapter Four.

Conclusion

Al-Ghazzali’s presence continues to be felt in the life and thought of Muslim communities in Southeast Asia with the perpetual instruction and study of his works in the institutions of religious learning such as the pondok, madrasah and pesantren. In these places of learning especially in the Indonesian pesantrens, his teachings on ethics and Sufism make up the core contents of the instruction of the science of tasawwuf together with other works categorized under the same orthodox school. Since his works are taught within the parameters of Shafi’i fiqh and Ash’ari kalam, his influence will remain significant for Muslims in Southeast Asia who are overwhelmingly Sunnis. In addition, their historical reverence for his spirituality and religiosity and respect for his knowledge and scholarship will continue to make him a vital figure and his teachings significant in the Islamic education system.

In recent times, there is a strong wave of translation activity of al-Ghazzali’s works into modern Malay and especially, Indonesian language which began in the 1990’s. These translations comprise of his works in various fields, not just in tasawwuf, as has been traditionally the case. Many of these translations are directed towards a more general rather than a specialized readership. These translations are important channels for transmitting his

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68 For a detailed examination and account of the Siyar al-salikin, see Megawati Moris, “The influence of al-Ghazzali,” Chapter Four.

teachings in non-traditional fields for example, philosophy,\textsuperscript{71} which were previously not made available to the Muslim communities in their native tongue. In addition, they will provide a greater awareness and better appreciation of the versatility of his knowledge and contribution to the different sciences and disciplines. Through these modern translations, his religious and intellectual legacy will abide in the life and thought of Muslims in Southeast Asia.
