

The Intellectual Genealogy of Indonesian-Malay Qur'an Interpreters: A Historical Tracking

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Abstract

This article aims to trace the intellectual genealogy of Qur'an interpreters of Indonesia and Malaysia. The term 'genealogy' here refers to the origins of the interpreters in terms of their master-pupil relationships and their intellectual networks. Employing a historical approach to the issue, this article concludes that in the 17th century, Shaikh Abd al-Ra'uf of Singkil of Aceh became the first link from whom many early generations of Malay interpreters transmitted knowledge on Qur'anic interpretation. Tok Pulau Manis, the first Malay interpreter, developed the Qur'anic interpretation in the 18th century from this figure. In the subsequent era, Tok Kenali became the common link under whom many Malay interpreters studied, namely Muhammad Idris al-Marbawī, Haji Abdullah Abbas Nasution, Shaikh Uthman Jalaluddin al-Kalantani, and Shaikh Muhammad Salleh Tok Kenali

Keywords: *intellectual genealogy; interpretation; trend; network*

Introduction

“The present state of Qur'anic studies in Indonesia and Malaysia is not well surveyed,” stated Anthony H. Johns (Johns, 1984, 155). Some researchers, including Howard M. Federspiel, Isiah Gusman, M. Nurdin Zuhdi, Nashruddin Baidan on Qur'anic studies Indonesia (Wardani, 2017, 7–11; 14–19), Haziyah Hussin, Mustaffa Abdullah, Ismail Yusoff, Mazlan Ibrahim, Siti Wahidah in Malaysia, and Johns himself and Riddell on Qur'anic studies in

Malay world (Baidan & Aziz, 2018; Gusman, 2019), have responded to this statement. However, none of them tried to depict the interpreters' intellectual genealogy and their works in an integrated network.

The Qur'an interpretation in Indonesia and the Malay world has developed rapidly. It is not valid, just like the claims of some intellectuals, such as the thesis of Peter G. Riddell (2001) about transmission and responses, that reference books on Qur'an interpretation from the Middle East constitute the only elements to form the intellectual tradition of writing of Qur'an interpretation in the Malay world, nor does in Indonesia, just like the thesis of Howard M. Federspiel (1994). Such claims and views cannot be confirmed because of the rapid development of Qur'an interpretation in both countries. The intellectual genealogy involves an interaction between both, and each of the works responds to its locality.

In the 20th and 21st centuries, this intellectual tradition in both countries underwent accelerated development marked by the emergence of some local interpreters and, in turn, the publication of books of Qur'an commentaries. In particular, not until the 20th century was the writing of exegetical works in Malaysia began; when Islam was first introduced, the writing of Qur'an commentaries was not found (Hussin et al. 2012, 4343–49).

Meanwhile, Indonesia in the 20th century witnessed the emergence of some works on Qur'an commentaries, such as the works of

M. Quraish Shihab. In the meantime, Qur'an commentaries published in Malaysia were *Tafsir al-Tibyan* by Tuan Guru Haji Hadi Awang (Dui, 2017) and *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* by Tuan Haji Muhammad Said bin Umar (Hussin & Majid, 2014, 160–167). According to the survey by Mustaffa Abdullah, at least 26 Qur'an interpreters were writing their works in Malaysia. By way of comparison, the survey of Haziyah Hussin et al. (Hussin et al., 2012, 4345) recorded that from 1901 to 2000, there were 39 Qur'an commentaries written in Malaysia. Additionally, 66 Qur'an commentaries using various styles and methods of interpretation were written from 2001 to 2015 (Mustapa & Kadir, 2017, 27–36).

The rapid development of the writing of Qur'an commentaries in Indonesia and Malaysia resulted in a close relationship, called the intellectual genealogy, among Qur'an scholars in both countries. In this regard, Qur'an interpreters in Malaysia forged close relationships with those in the Middle East and the ones in Indonesia. In the 1730s, for instance, a pivotal figure in the development of Qur'an exegesis in Malaysia in the 17th-19th centuries, Shaikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah who is best known as Tok Pulau Manis (1650-1736 CE), made a transcript of *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* (Hussin & Majid, 2013, 1735). It is the work of his master of Aceh, Shaikh Abd al-Ra'uf Singkil (1615-1693 CE). This work was the only Qur'an commentary to be found in Malaysia at the time. It marked the initial phase of the development of the writing of Qur'an commentaries in the Malay language (Hussin et al., 2012).

In addition to this work, some Qur'an commentaries by Indonesian interpreters also became popular literatures of the Qur'an among Malaysian Muslims (Masrur, 2019), such as *Tafsir al-Azhar* by Buya Hamka, *Tafsir al-Nur* by T. M. Hasbi Ash-Shiddeqy, and *Tafsir al-Furqan* by A. Hassan. Moreover, three Qur'an

interpreters from Medan, South Sumatera, i.e., H. A. Halim Hasan, H. Zainal Ariffin Abbas, and Abdul Rahim Haitami, published a Malay-written Qur'an Commentary which became the primary reference of the local people. Besides, another Indonesian Qur'anic interpreter, Ustadz Ahmad Sonhaji Mohamad, reached his Malay readers through Singapore through his *Tafsir 'Abr al-Athīr*, also known as *Tafsir al-Qur'an di Radio*, adapted from a particular programme of a radio station.

First released in 1960 in the Jawi alphabet, the first edition of this work contained the commentaries on Sūrat al-Fāthihah and the first 102 verses of Sūrat al-Baqarah. Only after publishing it by Pustaka al-Mizan, it was a work widely read in Malaysia (M. Ibrahim et al., 2011, 453). The intellectual genealogy between Malay Qur'anic interpreters and Indonesian ones is worth researching to explain the exact nature of the relationship among those interpreters.

Methodology

It is library research applying critical historiography, what in historical research is called the history of truth or genealogical study, which constitutes a part of social history – a non-chronological historical study that stresses the relation of knowledge and power (Azra, 2005, 18–19). This research aims to reveal the intellectual genealogy and exegetical works by using historical data (biographies, pupil-master relationships, networks, and the spread of teachings) and critically analysing the knowledge-power relation in the given context of authors.

Intellectual genealogy is the theory applied in this research. In the world of thought, especially in philosophy, the term 'the intellectual genealogy' is derived from the thoughts of Max Stirner (1806-1856), Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), and Michel Foucault (1926-1984) (Özpolat, 2017). In this research, the intellectual

genealogy deals with Qur'an interpreters' intellectual pedigree that involves masters, pupils, and affiliation with any school of religious thoughts in theology, law, and Sufism, as well as the interrelationship among all those elements as a network connecting each other.

Furthermore, this research considers the exegetical works understudy to be a part of the network, considering that those works were transmitted from a Muslim scholar to others. For instance, *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* written by 'Abd al-Ra'ūf Singkil of Aceh, was transcribed by Shaikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah (1650-1736 AD), best known as Tok Pulau Manis, and then spread throughout Malaysia.

Results and Discussion

A. The 16th-18th centuries: The Networks of Abd al-'Abd al-Rauf Singkil and Tok Pulau Manis

The development of Qur'an exegesis in the Malay world coincided with the introduction of Islam to the region, and only that exegesis was taught orally. According to Peter G. Riddell, the first interpretive work to be written there is on the interpretation of *Sūrat al-Kahf*. This anonymously written explanation is known to contain the teaching on Sufism.

In the subsequent era, the first written exegetical Malay work is *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* by Shaikh Abd al-Ra'ūf Singkil of Aceh, written in 1675. Not only is the book the first interpretive work written in the Malay language, but it is also the first one to cover 30 juz of the Qur'an completely. It was taught in both Indonesia and Malaysia. It was also taught in some *Pondok* in Malaysia. At the time, Malay people were scared of being accused of affiliating with *Kaum Muda* (Youth People), Puritan reformers.

According to Haziyah Hussin (Hussin &

Majid, 2013, 1738), the accusation of affiliation with this religious organization also meant rebelling against the traditional value system of the Malay people. Therefore, they preferred to study *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* in addition to classical literatures from Middle East, such as *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, *Madārik al-Tanzīl*, *Lubāb al-Ta'wīl fī Ma'ānī al-Tanzīl*, and *Anwār al-Tanzīl wa Asrār al-Ta'wīl* by al-Bayḍāwī. In other words, using the book of al-Singkili should also be regarded as the Malay people's effort to overcome their fear, i.e., by writing Qur'an exegesis in their language.

Shaikh Abd al-Ra'uf Singkil was born into a Persian family who came to Samudra Pasai in the late 13th century. He was a great Acehnese Muslim scholar. He was born in 1615 CE (in another source: 1593 AD). He was also known as Teungku Syiah Kuala. He received his early education from his father, Ali al-Fansuri, and continued his study in Fansur, Aceh. He was named after Singkil, a region in Aceh.

In 1652, he continued his study in the Middle East. He wrote a list of 19 Muslim scholars from whom he learned and another 27 Muslim scholars with close relationships. He began his intellectual journey in pilgrimage through Doha (Qatar) in the Persian Gulf, Yaman, Jeddah region, and ended up in Mecca and Medina.

In Doha, Qatar, he studied for a short time under 'Abd al-Qadīr al-Mawrīr. In Yaman, he studied in some places, including Bayt al-Faqīh, Zabid, Mawza', Mukha, al-Lumayah, Hudaydah, and Ta'izz. In Bayt al-Faqīh, he studied under masters from the Ja'mān family, like Ibrāhīm bin Muḥammad bin Ja'mān, Ibrāhīm bin 'Abdullāh bin Ja'mān, and Qādīhī Ishaq bin Muḥammad bin Ja'mān.

He also built a relationship with Faqīh al-Thayyib bin Abī al-Qāsim bin Ja'mān. Most of the Ja'mān family were sūfīs and

disciples of al-Qushāshī and al-Kūrānī. From Bayt al-Faqīh, he moved to Zabid, where he studied under the likes of ‘Abd al-Raḥīm bin al-Shiddīq al-Khāsh, Amīn bin al-Shiddīq al-Mizjaji – the master of Muḥammad al-Qushāshī – and ‘Abdullāh bin Muḥammad al-’Adanī. Shaikh Abd al-Ra’uf considered those masters to be the best reciters (*qāri*) of the Qur’an in the region. Besides, he also studied under ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ al-Khāsh (the *mufti* of Zabid), Sayyid al-Thāhir bin al-Husayn al-Ahdal, Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Bāqī al-Mizjaji (d. 1074/1664), Qadhī Muḥammad bin Abī Bakr bin Muthayr (d. 1086/1675), and Aḥmad Abū al-’Abbās bin al-Muthayr (d. 1075/1664) (Azra, 2004, 236).

Subsequently, he continued his study in Jeddah, where he studied under ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Barkhalī and then moved to Mecca to study under Badr al-Dīn al-Lāhūrī and ‘Abdullāh al-Lāhūrī. His master who had the most critical influence on Shaikh ‘Abd al-Ra’uf was ‘Alī ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Ṭabarī, a leading expert in Islamic law in Haramain. In addition, Shaikh ‘Abd al-Ra’uf also studied under other Muslim scholars, like ‘Isā al-Maghribī, ‘Abd al-’Azīz al-Zamzamī, Tāj al-Dīn bin Ya’qūb, ‘Alā’ al-Dīn al-Bābilī, Zayn al-’Abidīn al-Thabarī, ‘Alī Jamāl al-Makkī, and ‘Abd Allāh bin Sa’īd Bā Qasyīr al-Makkī (d. 1076/1665) (Azra, 2004, 237).

The two most prominent Muslim scholars in Haramain of whom Shaikh Abd al-Ra’uf was a disciple were Shaikh al-Qushāshī (d. 1660 CE) and Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī (d. 1690 CE). The latter was also the disciple of the former.

Al-Qushāshī was well known as the Shattāriyya order leader, although he was affiliated with other orders. It was from his disciples coming from various regions that the Shattāriyya order was widely known and followed. His disciples other than al-Kūrānī were ‘Abdullāh bin Shaikh al-’Aydārūs (d. 1073/1662) – the master of

Bā Shaybān, who later became the master of al-Rānīrī – Hasan bin ‘Alī al-’Ajamī (d. 1113/1701), Sayyid al-’Allāma al-Wālī Barakāt al-Tūnisī, Sayyid ‘Abd al-Khāliq al-Hindī al-Lahūrī (d. 1059/1649), Sayyid ‘Abd al-Raḥmān (al-Maḥjūb) al-Maghribī al-Idrīsī (d. 1085/1674), ‘Isā bin Muḥammad al-Maghribī al-Ja’farī al-Makkī (d. 1080/1669), Mihnān bin ‘Awd Ba Mazrū’, Sayyid ‘Abdullāh Bā Faqīh, Sayyid ‘Alī al-Shaybānī al-Zabīdī (d. 1072/1662), and a number of Muslim scholars from Yaman, especially those from the ‘Alawī and Ja’mān families, Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Rasūl al-Barzanjī al-Kurdī (d. 1103/1692), Yūsuf al-Maqassarī, and Shaikh ‘Abd al-Ra’uf of Singkil (Azra, 2004, 92–93).

Shaikh ‘Abd al-Ra’uf of Singkil was also the disciple of al-Kūrānī, i.e., Burhān al-Dīn Ibrāhīm bin Ḥasan bin Shihāb al-Dīn al-Kūrānī al-Shahrazūrī al-Shahrānī al-Kurdī al-Madanī. He was born in the village Shahrān in the mountain range of Kurdistan on the border of Persia (Azra, 2004, 95). Al-Azhimabadi regarded him as the reformer of the 11th/17th century. Like al-Qūshāshī, he was renowned as the respected figure in Sufism, and even al-Kattānī called him *Shaykh al-Islām, Hujjat al-Ṣūfiyya*, and the man behind the revival of Sunnī mystic tradition (Azra, 2004, 94). It was slightly surprising that he learned engineering science in his hometown in addition to Arabic, theology, logic, and philosophy (Azra, 2004, 95). He excelled in multiple Islamic disciplines.

Al-Baghdādī mentioned that as many as 49 (according to Brockelmann: 42) of at least 100 works of al-Kūrānī are in such a wide range of disciplines as theology, exegesis, Prophet ḥadīth, Islamic jurisprudence, and Sufism. Through his works, al-Kūrānī also responded to some issues indirectly addressed to him (Azra, 2004, p. 98). In this regard, it was from al-Kūrānī, not from al-Qushāshī, that Shaikh Abd al-Ra’uf Singkil learned a lot about Qur’anic exegesis.

Shaikh Abd al-Ra'uf of Singkil did not return to Aceh until his master, Shaikh al-Qushāshī, passed away in 1616 CE. Having returned to his hometown; he began to preach Islamic doctrines. His wealth of knowledge across disciplines like philosophy and Qur'anic exegesis helped draw the interest of many pupils. Among them is Shaikh Burhanuddin, who helped develop the Shattāriyya order after returning to his hometown in Ulakan (Jamal & Abdullah, 2016, 114–115).

Thanks to Shaikh Burhanuddin of Ulakan, the Shattariyya order developed well in West Sumatra, even before the rise of the Naqshabandiyya order. *Kitab Menerangkan Agama Islam di Minangkabau*, as cited by Oman Fathurrahman (Fathurahman, 2008, 45–46), mentions that Shaikh Burhanuddin spread the teachings of the order to the region in 1070/ 1659. It resulted in the fact that the local Muslim people did not see any Muslim denomination. They practised Islam in the same way: the theological belief of Sunnism (*Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamā'a*), the Shāfi'ite school of Islamic law, and the Shattāriyya Sufi order. Meanwhile, the Naqshabandiyya was first introduced to the region in 1786 CE.

Another disciple of Shaikh Abd al-Ra'uf was Shaikh Abdul Muhyi of Karang Pamijahan, West Java (Jamal & Abdullah, 2016, 114–115). Like Shaikh Burhanuddin of Ulakan, Shaikh Abdul Muhyi of Pamijahan devoted his *da'wa* not to studying Qur'anic interpretation but to developing the Shattāriyya order in his hometown. He contributed significantly to the spread of the order on Java island. Moreover, being the disciple of Shaikh Abd al-Ra'uf Singkil, he arrived at the pivotal point for the spiritual chains of many mystic orders in Java island and the Malayan peninsula (Azra, 2004, 257–258).

However, the disciple with the closest

relationship with Shaikh Abd al-Ra'uf of Singkil was Dawūd al-Jāwī al-Fansurī bin 'Ismā'īl bin Agha Muṣṭafā bin Agha 'Alī al-Rūmī. Azyumardi Azra assumed him to come from Turkey. His father might be a Turkish soldier joining a large group to help the Aceh Sultanate fight against the Portuguese. His mother was likely a Malay, and he was born in Nusantara. He was the favourite student of Shaikh Abd al-Ra'uf of Singkil. On the colophon of *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* was the request of Shaikh Abd al-Ra'uf of Singkil that Dāwūd al-Jāwī adds some exploration to the tafsir book. Adding the information was conducted under the close supervision of the master until 1105/1693, when the master passed away. According to A. Hasjmi, Dawūd al-Jāwī al-Fansurī was the rightful *khalīfa* (successor) of Shaykh Abd al-Ra'uf. He founded a *dayah*, a traditional educational institution in Aceh, and wrote some works (Azra, 2004, 259).

One of the disciples of Dawūd al-Jāwī al-Fansurī was Shaikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah (d. 1149/1736), who was also known as Tok Pulau Manis (Jamal & Abdullah, 2016, pp. 114–115). According to Hawas Abdullah, Tok Pulau Manis studied under Shaikh Abd al-Ra'uf Singkil in Aceh and continued his journey to Haramain, in which, according to a local source, he studied under al-Kūrānī.

Azyumardi Azra (Azra, 2004, p. 258) denied such a statement because the Haramain Muslim scholar had passed away in 1101/ 1690 before Tok Pulau Manis was born. Actually, given that he was born in 1089/1678, Tok Pulau Manis was 12 years old when al-Kūrānī passed away. Either way, a boy of his age cannot travel overseas. As a disciple of Shaykh Abd al-Ra'uf, Tok Pulau Manis made a transcript of his master's exegetical work, *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd*, in 1730 CE (M. Ibrahim et al., 2011, 453; Yusoff, 1995, 21).

In addition to developing the network of his

disciples in Indonesia and Malaysia, Shaikh Abd al-Ra'uf also wrote an influential exegetical work entitled *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd*. This work was studied by Muslim communities in Indonesia and the Malay world and even by Malay Muslims living in South Africa. The importance of the *tafsīr* book was illustrated by the fact that it was widely distributed and frequently published. It was published not only in some Asian cities like Singapore, Penang, Jakarta, and Bombay but in the Middle East as well. It was published in Istanbul by *al-Maṭba'at al-'Uthmāniyya* in 1302/ 1884 and 1324/ 1904, in Cairo by Sulaymān al-Marāghī, and in Mecca by al-'Āmiriyya. In 1981, the *tafsīr* book was published in Jakarta. It shows that the tafsir book has been studied by Muslims in Indonesia and the Malay world (Azra, 2004, 247).

B. The Intellectual Genealogy of the Qur'anic Interpreters between the Late 19th century and the Early 20th Century: the Network of Tok Kenali

1. Tok Kenali (1868-1933)

Muhammad Yusof, better known as Tok Kenali, was born in Kampung Kenali, Kubang Kerian (4.5 miles from Kota Bharu, the capital of Negeri Kelantan), Malaysia, in 1868. He was born into a poor religious family. His father was Ahmad bin Abdul Samad, and his mother was Fatimah Binti Mohammad Salleh. The title "Tok" is an honorary title used by Malay people in Kelantan to address elders or those people of vast knowledge. Tok Kenali was a great Muslim scholar from Kampung Kenali. Having completed his study in Kelantan, with the financial support of his friends, he left for Mecca in 1886 to continue his study. After making the pilgrimage, he joined in with a student from Kelantan, Nik Mahmud Ismail (d. 1964 CE), and Shaikh al-Fatani (d. 1908 CE). In addition to studying, he joined the teaching staff in Masjidil Haram to have support for his life and study. After

his master, Shaikh al-Fatani, passed away, he went back home to Kelantan in 1908. After two years of spreading Islamic teachings, he began to be renowned for his vast knowledge. Thanks to his close relationship with Nik Mahmud Ismail, who was designated as the prime minister after his return from Mecca, Tok Kenali was appointed as the informal government advisor (Yacoob & Ahmad, 2017, 264).

In Kelantan, he founded an Islamic educational institution by applying the system of *Pondok*. The institution happened to be the education centre drawing the intention of Muslim scholars, politicians, writers, and intellectuals from Kelantan and other regions. His initiative for the inclusion of the formal curriculum into the institution admirably succeeded in reforming the *Pondok* system to the extent that it became an integral part of the national educational system of Malaysia. The *Pondok* he founded turned to the state faculty of Qur'anic studies, Arabic language, and literature. Tok Kenali was also famous for providing outstanding cadres. His disciple Haji Abdullah Tahir founded another *Pondok* in Bunut Payung, Kota Bharu, called Madrasah Ahmadiyyah, which then turned into the faculty of Islamic law (Yacoob & Ahmad, 2017, 265).

Besides his relationship with his masters in Mecca, Tok Kenali was also said to be influenced by the Egyptian reformers such as Shaikh Muḥammad 'Abduh (d. 1905 CE), Muḥammad Rashīd Ridā (d. 1935 CE), and al-Maraghī (d. 1945 CE). Other Muslim figures in Southeast Asia who also had strong influence on Tok Kenali were Shaikh Muhammad Arshad al-Banjari, Shaikh Nawawi Banten, Dawud al-Fatani, Ahmad Khatib dari Minangkabau, and Wan Ahmad bin Muhammad Zain Mustafa Fatani. The most dominant influence on Tok Kenali was the appeal to authentically understand and follow the Qur'an and Sunna's teachings. According to Tok Kenali, the key to understanding the two

primary sources of Islamic teachings is the mastery of the Arabic language. For this reason, he wrote *al-Durūs al-Kenaliyyah*, the first Malay-written work on Arabic grammatical rules. Students in some *Pondok* have studied this work until now (M. Abdullah et al., 2012, 1–8; Hussin & Majid, 2013, 1737).

2. Muhammad Idris al-Marbawi (1868-1933 CE)

Tok Kenali's desire to encourage Malay Muslims to understand Islam from its authentic sources also inspired his disciple, Muhammad Idris al-Marbawi (native to Merbau), to compile an Arabic-Malay dictionary entitled *Qāmūs al-Marbawī* (Yacoob & Ahmad, 2017, 266). The dictionary has been used not only in Malaysia but also in other countries like Indonesia.

One of prominent disciples of Tok Kenali, Datuk Haji Hasan Yunus al-Azhari, was the great minister (*Menteri Besar*) of Johor, and others were *mufītīs*, such as those of Kelantan (Datuk Haji Ahmad Mahir bin Haji Ismail and Datuk Haji Ismail bin Yusuf), of Melaka (Haji Hasan bin Abu Bakar), of Selangor (Haji Abd. Jalil bin Islamil), of Central Java (Dzu al-Mukhtasar bin Dzu al-Fudhail), and of Vietnam (Haji Ismail Fikri) (Yacoob & Ahmad, 2017, 266).

Some of his disciples instrumental in founding Islamic educational institutions were Utsman Jalaluddin al-Kalantani (the founder of Madrasah Manābi' al-'Ulūm wa Maṭāli' al-Nujūm, Penanti, Seberang Perai), Haji Ali Shalahuddin bin Awang (the founder of Madrasah al-Falāh, Kota Bharu), Haji Nik Muhammad Nik Mat (the founder of Pondok Pulau Melaka), Haji Ismail bin Ahmad (the founder of Pondok Jabat, Narathiwat, Thailand), and Haji Shalih bin Harun (the founder of Pondok Asahan, North Sumatera) (Yacoob & Ahmad, 2017, 267).

Tok Kenali was widely known as a Muslim scholar and activist. He once assumed some key positions, such as the Chief of Religious Education of Kelantan (*Ketua Pelajaran Agama Kelantan*), the Senior Staff of Islamic Religious Council of Kelantan (*Ahli Majlis Agama Islam Kelantan*), the founder of al-Jam'iyyah al-'Ashriyyah in Kota Bharu, and the executive editor of Pengasuh magazine. In Qur'anic studies, he was known as the translator of *Lubāb al-Ta'wīl fī Ma'ānī al-Tanzīl*, widely known as *Tafsīr al-Khāzin* by al-Khāzin (d. 741 AH), and the translator of *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr* (Yacoob & Ahmad, 2017, 267). It can be seen as the early phase of translating exegetical works into the Malay language. As mentioned before, both the exegetical works were not chosen arbitrarily. Instead, both were chosen because they constituted the main reference books frequently used by Muslim scholars in the Middle East and studied by Indonesian students. Before Tok Kenali, Shaikh Abd al-Ra'uf Singkil (d. 1693 CE), in writing *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd*, also used those exegetical works as the primary references, especially when he explained Qur'anic verses on stories (*qaṣaṣ al-Qur'ān*).

Tok Kenali contributed to the emergence of famous Qur'an translations in Malaysia. His works brought about significant changes in teaching Qur'an exegesis in Malaysia, which had predominantly used Arabic-written exegetical works. Around the 1920s, Malay Muslim scholars began to write their Qur'an commentaries. Muhammad Said bin Umar (d. 1932 CE) wrote *Nurul Ihsan*, which was published in 1934. The most famous Malay interpreter emerging in this period was Muhammad Idris al-Marbawī. He wrote some works, including *Tafsīr Qur'an al-Marbawī Juz Alif Lam Mim*, *Qur'an Bergantung Makna Melayu*, *Tafsīr Surah Yasin (the translation of Faṭḥ al-Qadīr)*, *Tafsīr al-Qur'an al-Marbawī*, *Tafsīr Qur'an Marbawī Surah Yāsīn*, *Tafsīr al-Qur'an Nūr al-Yaqīn*, *Tafsīr*

Juz 'Ammā, and *Tafsīr al-Fātiḥah*. Most of these works are private collections, even with different titles. He wrote those works by referring to popular tafsir books like *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, *Tafsīr al-Nasaḥī*, *Hāshiyat al-Jamāl*, and *Tafsīr al-Khāzin*, just as did Tok Kenali and Shaikh 'Abd al-Ra'uf Singkil (Hussin et al., 2016, 26–31). Nevertheless, unlike Shaikh Abd al-Ra'uf Singkil, he seemed to avoid referring to *Anwār al-Tanzīl wa Asrār al-Ta'wīl*, written by al-Baydāwī. It might have been caused by the fact that *Anwār al-Tanzīl wa Asrār al-Ta'wīl* contains doctrines of the rationalist school of Islamic theology, Mu'tazilah, which was unacceptable to Malay people.

3. Shaikh Uthman Jalaluddin al-Kalantani (1880-1952)

Another disciple of Tok Kenali, explicitly concerned with Qur'anic exegesis, was Shaikh Uthman Jalaluddin Penanti bin Muhammad bin Abdus Samad al-Kalantani (d. 1952 CE). He was better known as Shaikh Utsman Jalaluddin al-Kelantani. He was born in 1297 AH/ 1880 CE in Kampung Panjang, Daerah Sering, Kota Bharu, Kelantan. Another source states that he was born in 1330 AH/ 1882 CE and passed away on Friday, 30 Dzulhijja 1371 AH/ 19 September 1952 CE. However, according to Wan Shagir Abdullah, he was born in 1330 AH/ 1882 CE because a source mentions that he was as old as his friend, Shaikh Ismail bin Abdul Qadir al-Fathani, or Pak De 'El.

One of the sons of Shaikh Uthman was Tuan Guru Haji Saleh. According to Wan Shagir Abdullah, Tuan Guru Haji Saleh learned *Tashīl Nayl al-Amānī*, a book on Arabic grammar (*nahw*), from his father.

Shaikh Uthman wrote some works, some of which are as follows. First, *Taṣrīf al-'Arḥ fī Taṣrīf al-Ṣarf*, written in Arabic and Malay. The work finished on 23 Dzulhijja 1354 AH/ 1935 AD is a book on Arabic

morphology (*ṣarf*). Second, *al-Sharḥ al-Kabīr*, written in Arabic. The work completed on 16 Sha'bān 1358 AH/ 30 September 1939 CE also explores Arabic morphology (*taṣrīf*). Third, *al-Durra al-Nāfi'a fī Ashrāt al-Sā'a*. This work explains the signs of the Day of Resurrection (*yawm al-qiyāmah*) by mentioning some arguments from the Qur'an, ḥadīth, and the commentaries of Muslim scholars. Fourth, *Anwār al-Hudā wa Amṭār al-Nadā*. This work contains his commentaries (*sharḥ*) on *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*. It was written in Malay, still citing the Arabic version (N. Binti Ibrahim, 2012, 3). In his introduction, Shaikh Uthmān explained in detail all about the studies of Qur'anic exegesis. Also, he mentioned qualifications for being a Qur'anic interpreter, and he made a statement that he simply does not deserve to interpret Qur'anic verses with my not meeting all the requirements. But Wan Shagir Abdullah (W. Mohd. S. Abdullah, 2005) said that the statement does not mean that Tok Kenali cannot interpret Qur'anic verses, showing his humility.

Tok Kenali also succeeded in training creative writers other than the two mentioned before. Some of whom were Datuk Haji Ahmad Mahir (the *mufī* of Kelantan Sultanate), Tuan Guru Hj. Yaakub bin Ismail (Legor, South Thailand), Datuk Hj. Ismail bin Yusoff (the *mufī* of Kelantan Sultanate), Shaikh Muhammad Salih Tok Kenali (in Mecca), Hj. Ahmad bin Ismail (Datuk Lela Negara), Tuan Guru Hj. Ali Salahuddin (a religious leader), Tuan Guru Hj. Yaakub bin Hj. Ahmad (a religious leader in Kota Bharu) and Datuk Hj. Hassan Yunus al-Azhari (former *Menteri Besar* of Johor) (W. Mohd. S. Abdullah, 2005).

4. Shaikh Muhammad Salleh Tok Kenali (1911-1984)

One of his sons who followed the intellectual activities of Tok Kenali was Shaikh Muhammad Salleh Tok Kenali, a religious leader living in Mecca and the

author of some books on Islamic studies. He founded an organisation called *Dār al-Iṣlāḥ*, which became the gathering place for Asian people from the Malay world, Patani, Cambodia, Indonesia, and some other countries. He also founded *Dār al-Qur`ān* in Misfala, Mecca (Muhammad Yusuf bin Ahmad, n.d.).

He was born in Kampung Kenali, Kelantan, in 1329/1911 and passed away in Mecca on Friday dawn, 22nd of Ramaḍān, 1404 AH/ 22nd of June, 1984 CE. He studied a wide range of knowledge under many Muslim scholars, be they Arab or Malay.

As a creative writer, he produced several works, some of which are as follow. First, *al-Ṭarīqa al-Iṣlāḥiyya liman Arāda al-Dunyā wa al-Ākhira*, finished at Dār al-Iṣlāḥ, Mecca, in 1361 AH. It contains daily recitations (*wird*) to be recited daily and also contains the prayers that Tok Kenali recited daily and prayers for protection and safety he received from Kiyai Shalih al-Juhuri. Second, *al-Najm al-Ṭāli` fī Qirā`at al-Nāfi`*. This work elaborates a set of rules for the correct pronunciation of Qur`anic letters (*tajwīd*). Third, *Tadzkirot al-Ghāfilīn Mimman Lahu `Umr al-Arba`īn*, written in Mecca and completed in 1369 AH. This work contains commentaries on some Qur`anic chapters and verses and commentaries on some ḥadīth related to 40-year-old people.

Fourth, *al-Maṣābīḥ* finished in 1371 AH. This work consists of some treatises: *Sharḥ Dār al-Iṣlāḥ* on the levels of human beings, the translation of *Talbīs Iblīs* of Ibn al-Jawzī, some ḥadīth quotes cited from *Shamā`il* of al-Tirmidzī, guides for those who want to travel to Mecca, and the virtues of *asmā`* (beautiful names of God). Fifth, *Risālat al-Rafīq al-Wāthiq li Rabb al-Qarīb* bound with another work, *al-Malja` min Ashadd al-Balā`* in a single printed edition, finished in 1376 AH. It contains 25 *amalan* (special prayers or practices) for happiness in the world and the afterlife. Sixth, *Risālat*

Makka wa al-Madīna, which extolls the virtues of Mecca and Medina and some other sites like Arafah, Mina, and Muzdalifa. Seventh, *Islam dan Rahsia* is bound with *Risalah Roh Islam* which explains Islam from various aspects, such as its spread, its rise, and fall. The introduction to the work was written by Haji Encik Ahmad Ismail al-Hikmah (Dato` Lela Negara Kelantan) in Mecca. Eighth, *Risalah Pembinaan Ruhani dan Kebendaan*. It was aimed to be the introduction to the book by ustadz Haji Abdur Razaq bin Yusuf, Kuala Terengganu. Ninth, *Risalat Anwār al-Maṣābīḥ* which contains some explanations related to theology, law, and mysticism.

Of all his works mentioned above, only two deal with the Qur`an and its exegesis, namely *al-Najm al-Ṭāli` fī Qirā`at al-Nāfi`* about different ways of the Qur`an recitation (*qirā`āt*) and *Tadzkirot al-Ghāfilīn Mimman Lahu `Umr al-Arba`īn*, which contains commentaries on some Qur`anic chapters and verses telling what 40-years-old people should do.

5. Haji Abdullah Abbas Nasution (1912-1987)

Haji Abdullah Abbas Nasution was born in 1330 AH/1912 CE in the village Kisaran, Asahan, North Sumatera. `Nasution` is one of the *marga* (family name) of the Batak tribe in this region. He once made a vow that he would leave for Kedah in the event of bountiful harvests and huge trade benefits.

In May 1920, he left for Kedah, Malaysia, for religious studies. At age ten, he had received his elementary education at school in Langgar (small prayer-place) Melayu, Kedah, before continuing his study in *Pondok* Pulau Pisang. In 1928, he moved to *Pondok* Kenali in Kelantan under the leadership of Tok Kenali. It was here that Haji Abdullah Abbas Nasution studied under Tok Kenali for three years and served him for six years until the death of his

master.

His writing career began in 1933 when he studied in Kota Bharu, Kelantan. He wrote for newspapers like *Saudara*, *Warta Malaya* (Singapore) and *Sahabat* (Pulau Pinang). As for his translation skill, he learned a lot from the *mufit* of Kelantan, Ustadz Ahmad Maher.

Abdullah Abbas Nasution was concerned with a wide range of disciplines, like logics, *balaghah* (Arabic rhetorics), philosophy, and Islamic studies.

In 1934, he joined a writer association, called *Persahabatan Sahabat Pena Malaya*. The so-called 'Malaya' (Melayu, Malay) here included the Malay land, Singapore, Sabah, Serawak, Siam, and Sumatera. In 1935, he learned translation, and in 1940, he wrote the Qur'an translation, entitled *Qur'an Besar Bergantung Makna Jawi Untuk Bacaan Anak Sehari-hari*. In 1943, he wrote two volumes of books entitled *Sejarah Melayu Raya* during the Second Sino-Japanese War. In 1954, as many as 10.000 copies of the work were published by Persama Press Pulang Pinang (Ibrahim, Mazlan, 2008, 16).

Haji Abdullah Abbas Nasution was once designated as the leader (*mudir*) of *Pondok Ihyā' al-Dīniyyah* in Tanjung Pauh. He was also involved in founding Persatuan Ulama Kedah (PUK). He was also active in political parties, such as United Malays National Organisation (UMNO). However, he left this party in 1955 because the Muslim scholars involved were not elected as the local chiefs. Then, he joined *Parti Islam Se-Malaysia* (PAS, Malaysian Islamic Party).

Under his leadership, PAS managed to establish 113 branch offices in Kubang Pasu and Padang Terap. In 1969, he rejoined UMNO because the *Menteri Besar* of Kedah Datuk Seri Ahmad Shahabuddin promised to give a grant of RM. 75,000 to

the rehabilitation of Tanjung Pauh Mosque and a grant of RM. 120,000 to publish as many as 10.000 copies of *Qur'an Bergantung Makna Melayu Raya Tulisan Latin* (Ibrahim, Mazlan, 2008, pp. 17–21).

The following is the list of some works written by Haji Abdullah Abbas Nasution.

First, *al-Qur'an Besar Bergantung Makna Jawi bagi Bacaan Anak Sehari-hari*. It was written to ease the concern that many Muslim people recited the Qur'an without knowing what the Qur'an tries to tell them. Methodologically, it imitates the Urdu Qur'an translation provided for Indian children. Second, *Sejarah Melayu Raya (Tarikh Perjuangan dan Ekonomi Indonesia, Filipina, dan Malaya)*. It explores the history of Malays' efforts and fights to gain independence from colonialists by explaining geographical features, the history of kingdoms, and the arrival of Europeans. Third, *Berzanji Bergantung Makna Jawi Bagi Mengetahui Kisah Maulud Nabi S.A.W.* The 51-page-thick book is a translation of *Barzanji* and tells the history of the Prophet Muhammad pbuh. Fourth, *Suluhan Politik (Risalah Perlembagaan dan Sains Politik Bagi Negeri dan Kerajaan Inngeris dan Jajahan Takluknya Semenjak Tahun 1912 Sehingga Tahun 1948)*. It explains how the British Empire, despite their being colonialists, improved institutional systems in five phases: the first phase in 1648, the second phase in 1832, the third phase in 1832 (the amendment of the Election Act), the phase of the power of palace and ministers, and the last phase when the British Empire could be defeated (1837-1926). Fifth, *Suluhan ke Tanah Suci*. This book explains some preparation for prospective pilgrims to make. It was published by Cathay Printers Limited, Penang, without any clear information about the publication year. Sixth, *Qur'an Dakwah Islamiyyah* Volume I. It consists of four chapters on the history of Islam propagation.

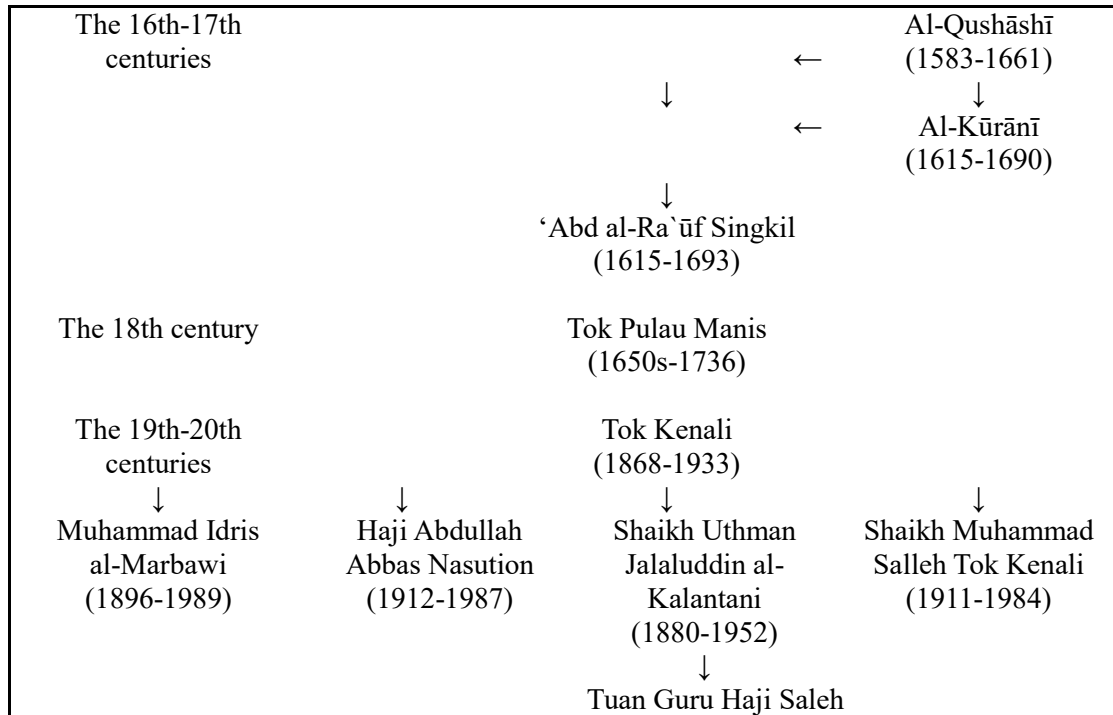


Figure 1: The intellectual genealogy and network of Qur`anic interpreters in Indonesia and Malaysia.

Conclusion

The Qur`anic interpreters in Indonesia are genealogically related to those in Malaysia. Starting from the 16th-17th centuries, the network of interpreters in both countries had a pivotal point in Shaykh Abd al-Rauf of Singkil (1615-1693). He was an Acehnese Muslim scholar who studied in the Middle East under al-Qushāshī (1583-1661) and al-Kūrānī (1615-1690). One of the prominent disciples of Shaikh Abd al-Ra'uf Singkil was a Trengganu-native Muslim scholar, Shaikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah (1650-an-1736). He is also known as Tok Pulau Manis, who transmitted Qur`an exegeses from his master and transcribed his exegetical work, *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd*. It was Tok Pulau Manis who began to teach Qur`anic exegesis on some occasions in *Pondok* and mosques. In addition to the network of Shaikh Abd al-Rauf Singkil, the network of Tok Kenali (1868-1933) was also instrumental in growing generations of famous Qur`an interpreters, such as

Muhammad Idrīs al-Marbawī (1896-1989), Haji Abdullah Abbas Nasution (1912-1987), Shaikh Uthman Jalaluddin al-Kalantani (1880-1952), and his son, Shaikh Muhammad Salleh Tok Kenali (1911-1984).

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