


Photo 1: Storehouse of Mustafa al-Babi al-Halabi wa Awladuhu.

Photo 2: Inside the storehouse.


Kitabs from Cairo: An Overview of the New Collection of Southeast Asian Kitabs at Sophia University

Oman Fathurahman

1. Prologue

This brief paper will deal with a number of kitabs printed in Cairo, and which have just been purchased by Sophia University. These Cairo kitabs will soon be catalogued and integrated into the existing collection, ensuring that Sophia University boasts the most comprehensive collection of Southeast Asian kitabs.

On July 16-24, 2011, Dr. SUGAHARA and I conducted field research in Cairo to identify and collect all the kitabs written by Southeast Asian authors that were printed or published in that city. Certainly several studies have confirmed the strong historical connection between Cairo and Southeast Asia, an intellectual connection that continues to the present day, given so many Indonesian students study there. 1 The presence of the printing press certainly bolstered the strength of this intellectual connection [Laffan 2004: 4]. A number of leading Mecca-based Jawi scholars, such as Ahmad al-Fatani and Nawawi al-Bantani, 2 took advantage of the press to publish their works. Al-Bantani seems to be the first Jawi scholars to send his works in Arabic to Cairo for printing in 1859 [Laffan 2004: 5][Laffan 2003: 361].

Over the following decades, many other kitabs where produced at Cairo having been written by Jawi scholars in Malay, Arabic, and Javanese. These works cover a variety of Islamic fields, including Islamic jurisprudence, theology, ethics, Quranic exegesis, Sufism, and hadith.

---

1 This paper was presented at the workshop on “Comparative Study of Southeast Asian Kitabs” in Sophia University, Tokyo, October 23, 2011, and have had invaluable comments from TONAGA Yasushi, Nico Kapteyn, and Mugibrahman. I would like to thank Michael Laffan for his sharp criticisms and valuable corrections before publication. Needless to say, any mistakes still found are my responsibility.


3 Based on some of al-Nawawi’s printed works, his name is variously identified as Abi ‘Abd al-Mu’ini Muhammad Nawawi ibn ‘Umar al-Bantani al-Jawi al-Shafi’i, Muhammad Nawawi ibn ‘Umar al-Jawi, Muhammad Nawawi ibn ‘Umar al-Bantani, Muhammad Nawawi ibn ‘Umar, and Muhammad Nawawi al-Jawi. He is popularly known, however, as Nawawi al-Bantani.
2. Mustafa al-Babi al-Halabi wa Awladuhu

Our first port of call was the offices of Mustafa al-Babi al-Halabi wa Awladuhu, which is the oldest publisher in Egypt to print Southeast Asian kitabs. The Publisher was first founded by a Syrian, Ahmad al-Halabi, in 1859, the same year in which al-Bantani sent his work for printing. The press was initially located behind the Al-Azhar Mosque, and was first known as al-Maymunah. The current name was adopted in the late 19th century once it was taken over by Mustafa, a nephew of Ahmad al-Halabi, who continued running the business, whose markets by now included Southeast Asian destinations.

![Photo 1: Maktakah of Mustafa al-Babi al-Halabi wa Awladuhu behind the Al-Azhar Mosque.](image)

In 1934, a bookshop (Maktakah) was established by the Halabi family near the suburb of Madinat al-Bu'uth. Today it is run by Samir Mahmud al-Halabi, the fourth generation descendant of Mustafa. In the context of Southeast Asian Islamic scholarships, the Maktakah certainly has a special significance due to its role in spreading the works of Southeast Asian ulama among the Jawi community in Arab countries. That said, it is not the sole office to print Southeast Asian kitabs in Cairo.

3. Southeast Asian Kitabs in Cairo: A General Overview

By and large, the Southeast Asian kitabs collected by Sophia University include 80 titles, whose topical concentrations are indicated in the following chart:

![Southeast Asian Printed Kitabs in Cairo, Egypt (% of 80)](chart)

Most of kitabs I am dealing with are published by Mustafa al-Babi al-Halabi wa Awladuhu (55), and then subsequently Majlis al-Banjari lil-Tafaqquh fi al-Din (8), Dar al-Fikr (5), Dar al-Salam (4), and Dar al-Basa’ir (2). Other Publishers share one kitab on printing, namely al-Khizanah al-Banjariyah, Dar al-Basa’ir al-Islamiyah, Dar al-Haqqiah li al-Flam al-Duali, Dar Kunuz al-Ma’rifah, and Maktabah al-Shabbah.

As we can see, the kitabs on fiqh (Islamic Jurisprudence) dominate, followed by works of theology, ethics, Quranic science, sufism, language and literature, hadith science, hadith text, Prayer and Prinbnin, Quranic Exegesis, and hagiography (manaqib). This composition, however, excludes some forty kitabs listed in the catalogue but no longer available to find as will be discussed below. In regard to languages of exposition, the break-down is as follows: Malay (64%), Arabic (31%), Sundanese (3%), and Javanese (2%).

Although some of the Southeast Asian works had been printed in
Mustafa al-Babi al-Halabi wa Awladuhu since the mid 19th century, the *kitabs* collected during this fieldwork are generally come from the second part of the 20th century. The oldest printed *kitab* we collected is *Tuhfat al-ikhwan fi tajwidi al-Qur'an* by an Acehnese scholar, Isma’il ibn ‘Abd al-Muttalib al-Ashi. This work, which is completed in 1311/1893, is printed as the first edition in 1329/1910 [Heer 2011: 38], and reprinted in 1921. The most recent printed *kitab* is *Nikayat al-zayn fi irshad al-mubtadi‘in* by Muhammad Nawawi ibn ‘Umar al-Jawi al-Bantani which is published by Dar al-Basa‘ir in 2011. Nicholas Heer (2011) has updated his A Concise Handlist of Jawi Authors and their Works Version 2.2 (2011), which includes almost all *kitabs* by Jawi authors and printed in Cairo.

Regarding the authorship, the Southeast Asian *kitabs* of Cairo may be arranged as follows:

**Southeast Asian Authors and their *kitabs* Printed in Cairo (% of 56)**

- Muh. Nur al-Din Marbu Banjar al-Makki (10)
- Anonymous (16)
- Nawawi al-Jawi al-Bantani (9)
- Daud ibn ‘Abd Allah al-Fatani (5)
- Muh. Idriq ‘Abd al-Re’uf al-Marbawi al-Azhari (4)
- Raden Mukhtar ibn Raden Natanagara Jawi Bogori (4)
- Muh. Yasin ibn ‘Isa al-Fadani al-Makki (2)
- Nur al-Din al-Raniri (2)
- Muh. Zayn ibn Farid Jalil al-Din al-Ash (2)
- Muh. Tasyibi ibn Mashud al-Banjari (2)
- Sahl ibn Zayn al-Abidin ibn Muh. al-Fatani (2)
- Isma’il ibn ‘Abd al-Muttalib al-Ashi (2)
- Muh. Zayn al-Din ibn Muh. al-Rawdawi al-Sumbawi (2)

Based on this quick overview, the Southeast Asian *kitabs* printed and circulated in Cairo come from various regions in Southeast Asia, principally: Banjarmasin (South Kalimantan), Patani (Southern Thailand), Bogor (West Java), Padang (West Sumatra), Aceh (North Sumatra), Perak (Malaysia), Lingga (Riau Island), Pontianak (West Kalimantan), Mandailing (North Sumatra), Palembang (South Sumatra), Semarang (Central Java), Ternas (East Java), Banten, Jambi (South Sumatra), and Sumbawa (West Nusa Tenggara) (see the following chart):

**Origins of Southeast Asian *kitabs* Printed in Cairo (% of 80)**

Among those Southeast Asian authors, only Nawawi al-Jawi al-Bantani, Nur al-Din Marbu Banjar al-Makki (born in 1960), and Muhammad Yasin ibn ‘Isa a-Fadani al-Makki, wrote in Arabic, while the others wrote their works in local languages, mostly in Malay, though Sundanese and Javanese are also represented. It is interesting to note that some authors used different identities depending on the language of their texts. Raden Muhammad Mukhtar ibn Raden Natanagara Jawi Bogori of Sundanese texts became Muhammad Mukhtar ibn ‘Atarid al-Jawi al-Batawi al-Baqiri when he wrote in Malay.

One of the most prolific contemporary Southeast Asian authors of *kitabs* printed in Cairo, however, is Nur al-Din Marbu Banjar al-Makki. Originally from Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan, it appears that this current author has written more than thirty *kitabs* and has commented on at least eight Arabic works.
Reflecting the long-term shift away from the Halabi operation, all his works have been published by the Majlis al-Banjari lil-Tafaqquh li al-Din a foundation he established in Cairo in 1997.

Nur al-Din Marbu Banjar al-Makki was born on September 1, 1960 in the village of Harus, in Amuntai, South Kalimantan, where he received his early education in an elementary school before matriculating to the "Normal Islam" boarding school. In 1974, he moved with his family to Mecca, and became a disciple of Shaykh Isma'il Uthman Zayn al-Yamani at one of the oldest madrasahs in Mecca, al-Madrasah al-Sawatilayyah, until 1982. Al-Makki then studied Islamic law at Al-Azhar University, Cairo, from 1983 until 1986, and received his Master’s degree from Maḥḍar ‘Ali li-l-Dirasat al-Islamiya in Zamalkah.

Until recently, al-Makki is rather popular among Southeast Asian Muslim in Cairo, especially those who come from Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, and Thailand. However, his fame is rather localized among Malays as al-Makki’s works are not circulated in Indonesia, including even his home region of Banjarasim. Rather his works are mainly distributed in Cairo and Malaysia, where he frequently delivers sermons (Pengajian) in various forums.

It seems that in Banjarasim itself al-Makki is less popular than some local authors, such as Abu Fatinah Haji Munawir bin Ahmad Ghazali al-Banjari or Muhammad Shukri ibn Unus al-Amuntai. He is not even listed in the 27 Ulama Berpengaruh Kalimantan Selatan (27 Influential Ulama from South Kalimantan) published by Tim Sahabat (2010). Further research may be required to obtain more detail about his his scholarly activities and network.

4. Some ‘Missing’ Kitabs

As mentioned before, there are about 40 Southeast Asian kitabs printed by the Halabi clan, which were unobtainable when this fieldwork was carried out. The existence of these ‘missing’ kitabs can only be adduced from the catalogue printed by the publisher. An investigation to the libraries in Cairo should be conducted to find out whether or not they have the kitabs.

Whereas the authors of those ‘missing’ kitabs are not necessarily named, some are as well known as their titles, some as al-Durr al-naṣīf by Muhammad Naṣir al-Banjari, Kifayat al-ghulam by Isma’il ibn ‘Abd Allah al-Minangkabawi, and Munyat al-musadi‘ by Dawud al-Fatani.


5. A Special Attention of Nuzhat al-ikhwan and Bahr al-madhi

To end this very provisional overview, I will briefly discuss two Malay kitabs of personal interest, namely Nuzhat al-ikhwan fi al-lim al-lughat wa-tafsir ikhtila‘ al-lishan by ‘Abd Allah ibn Isma‘il al-‘Ashi, and Bahr al-madhi sharh bagi Mukhtasar Sahih al-Tirmidhi by Muhammad Idris ‘Abd al-Ra‘uf al-Makwawi al-Azhari.

Nuzhat al-ikhwan

The first kitab, Nuzhat al-ikhwan, is written by an Acehnese scholar, ‘Abd Allah ibn Isma‘il al-‘Ashi. He translated the title as “Timpat bersama-sama hati sekalian saudara pada berlajar dan semantara sekalian bahasa” (a nice place of brothers for learning and explaining activities in various languages). The author provides further explanation in the introduction: “Inilah suatu terjemah yang penting melengkapi ia atas empat bahasa: pertama bahasa Arab, kedua bahasa Turki, ketiga bahasa Melayu, keempat bahasa Aceh” (This is a short translation that complements four languages: Arabic, Turkish, Malay, and Acehnese). This kitab was printed in the late of Rabi’ al-alwad 1349 AH/August 1930 AD by Mustafa al-Babi al-Halabi wa Awladulu, and checked by Ahmad Sa‘ad Falafalan.

Considering the introduction of the Nuzhat al-ikhwan, the writing of this glossary may presumably be motivated by the needs of Aceh and Malay people to understand foreign languages, especially Arabic and Turkish. al-‘Ashi said: “...banyaknya mengetahui segala bahasa ini adalah bagian beberapa fahdah yang besar dan berkenal-kenal yang indah, seperti hadis Nabi: barangsiapa mengetahui akan bahasa orang niscaya terlepaslah ia daripada tipu daya mereka itu dan kejadiananya...” (to learn languages has great benefits and delightful knowledge, as the Prophet said: those who know a people language will safe from their trickery) (see Nuzhat, p. 3).

In addition, regarding the Arabic, al-‘Ashi pays more specific attention
as follows: “…segala puji bagi Tuhan yang menjadikan bahasa Arab terlebih fasih daripada sekaian bahasa…” (All praise is due to Allah Who made Arabic as the most eloquent of languages.) (Nuzhat, p. 2). Hierarchically, the Arabic phrases in this kitab are presented first, and then the Turkish, followed by Malay and Acehnese. It is easily understood that in line with the development of Islam in the area, to understand Arabic even in a very elementary level is needed, not only for learning Islamic teachings but also for social interaction with the native speakers. The history of islamization in the Malay world confirms that the early contact between the Arabs and Turks with the Acehnese people has occurred since the 15th century until recently. Such contact requires interaction and mutual understanding between them. In this context, we may place the significance of the Nuzhat al-ikhwan as a tool to bridge communication in a very elementary level.

This kitab specifically includes some examples of Arabic expression for sending a letter to the honorable people such as habib, hublabalang, teacher, and other colleagues. As is well known, habib, was a popular Hadrami variant of Sayyid, an honorific title used in Aceh since the 17th century by descendants of the Prophet Muhammad, while hublabalang was a local authority officer. The author says: “seitengah daripadanya kelakuan permaatan surut-surut dan kiriman buku segala tuan-tuan yang empunya pangkat yang tingi-tinggi seperti tuan habib-habib dan hubu-hubalang dan guru-guru dan sahabat dan lain daripada demikian itu daripada segala penerima dan, seperti bilangan dan segala nana bunat dan segala hari tahu”.

Beyond this, the Nuzhat al-ikhwan comprises a very simple and concise dictionary in Arabic, Turkish, Malay, and Acehnese that contains practical words for the daily life. The final section of this kitab includes some expressions of wisdom or “Suatu faham pada menyatakan segala bahagi misal” in Arabic, Turkish, and Malay.

However, Nuzhat al-ikhwan is apparently not the first glossary ever written in the Jawi language. Michael Laffian has discussed in detail a Jawi glossary entitled al-Tarjuman min al-lugyah al-`Arabiyyah bi al-Malayu wa-al-Mariki al-Jawı (Translation from Arabic into Malay and Javanese-Jawi) [Laffian 2003: 363]. This work is written by Abu Bakr ibn `Abd al-Qudus al-Tubani or Shaykh Abu Bakr Demuk on 14 Jumada al-akhir 1302/31 March 1885, and printed for the first time on 22 Shawwal 1302 (4 August 1885) [Laffian 2003: 363].

Bahar al-madhi

The second kitab I am dealing with is Bahar al-madhi sharh bagi Mukhtasar Sahih al-Tirmidhi, a complete Malay hadith kitab written on 2 Jumada al-akhir 1377 AH/24 December 1957 AD by an alim of Malaysian origin who was born in Mecca, Muhammad Idris ‘Abd al-Ra’uf al-Marbawi al-Azhari (1893-1987). It is a commentary on the Sahih al-Tirmidhi. This kitab is important due to the fact that, compared to kitabs by other categories such as Sufism, Theology, and Fiqh, Malay hadith kitabs are less in number; there are only few of them that have been ever written since the 17th century.

As far as my research concerns, the first Malay hadith kitab is a treatise written by Nur al-Din al-Raniri (d. 1658) and entitled Hidayat al-habib fi-al-targhib wa-al-tarhib which is translated by the author as Hikmah akan Nabi saw pada menyatakan menggemari segala kebaikan dan menafiskan daripada segala amal kejahatan (the Prophetic guidance to instill the desire to do good deeds and to frighten to keep them from doing bad deeds). This work is also popularly known as al-Faw’id al-bahiyyah ‘an al-adhthi al-nabawiyyah (the Beautiful benefits of the Prophetic traditions). The lack of studies on the writing tradition of hadith treatises, including the Hidayat al-habib, is evidently due to the still limited access to primary manuscript sources.

The Bahar al-madhi can be regarded as the most comprehensive Malay hadith kitab so far. As explained in the introduction to the first volume, al-Marbawi wrote this work on memory and the knowledge he obtained from his teacher, Muhammad Ibrahim al-Samalutsi, during hadith lessons at the Al-Azhar University, and augmented them by references from various reliable sources. He states:

“...kemudian manakala aku pulang ke rumah, tiadalah lagi berpaling melainkan aku jalankan batang kalam aku di pipi sahibah-sahibah sebagaimana yang kuingat dan aku faham daripadanya, berikut dengan sedikit-sedikit perkataan Imam Shafi’i di dalam al-Umm, dan perkataan Nawawi di dalam Sharh Muslim, dan perkataan al-Aqshulani, dan Ibn al-`Arabi, dan lainnya...”

“...thus, everytime I went home, I did not do anything else but I continued to write with my pen on the paper what I remembered and understood from him adding some words by Imam Shafi’i in the al-Umm and by Nawawi in the Sharh Muslim and by al-Aqshulani and Ibn al-`Arabi and others...”


To sum up, the Southeast Asian kitsabs discussed above can show that this region has produced a number of Islamic works written in local languages. The kitsabs absolutely reflect the ways people in this region perceive, translate, and vernacularize Islam into their local context. As Johns suggested, it is from a study of such works that a clearer and perhaps more worthy understanding of Islam in Southeast Asia may be won [Johns 1975: 33-55].

References


Tradition of Kitab Learning at Pondok Pesantren in Indonesia: Focus on its Learning Style

Mina Hattori

1. Introduction

Studying with kitab is at the core of learning in Indonesia's pondok pesantren (hereafter, pesantren), which has a long history of serving as a place for deepening various types of Islamic study in Indonesia. This article aims to explore how kitab learning is maintained today, based on a few case studies.

The pesantren is a traditional Islamic boarding school. Although the name varies from region to region, it has been existed broadly in Islamic areas of Southeast Asia. Pupils who completed their basic education and sought a higher level of Islamic education would gather under a kyai, the head of the pesantren, to further their Islamic studies, sharing meals and accommodation. In Indonesia, pupils of pesantren are called santri. The pesantren tradition in Indonesia has continued to the present day; although these vary in form, the number of pesantren and the santri that study in them is increasing year by year.

Major studies on kitab learning and pesantren include a series of pesantren descriptions by Geertz [Geertz 1960], a study by Hurgronje on education in colonial-era pesantren [Hurgronje 1906], a study by Mahmud Yunus on the development of Islamic education in various parts of Indonesia [Mahmud Yunus 1992], a study by Steenbrink on madrasah, pesantren, and other Islamic educational institutions, [Steenbrink 1984], and studies by Berg and Bruinessen on kitab kuning [Berg 1882] [Bruinessen 1984]. Japanese research on this subject includes a study by Nishino on pesantren in eastern and central Java [Nishino 1990]. To date, there have also been a number of other studies on pesantren and kitab, from an Indonesian study by Zamakhshariy Dhofer [Zamakhshariy Dhofer 1982] to various Master's and PhD dissertations at Islamic universities.

However, although some research has been carried out on the development of pesantren in various regions of Indonesia, not enough research has been devoted to the exact method used to study and teach the kitab. Conversely, although previous research pertaining the kitab exists, it is not clear how it was used in education. This article aims to focus on the present situation and analyze the case studies of kitab learning in two pesantren currently in operation in West Java.

1 Originally an Arabic word for “book.”