

INTRODUCTION

It is common knowledge that among non-Arab Muslims Arabic proper names are as much in use as are biblical names and names from sacred history among Christians of all races. The Indonesian Muslims are no exception to this practice; a large number of the most popular proper names are of Arabic origin, although owing to abbreviation and corruption they are not always directly recognizable as such.

A considerable number of these are composed of the numerous Arabic theophorous names, that is to say, names beginning with ^ʿAbdu 'l- (servant of the —), followed by one of the many honorific epithets of Allah. In common parlance several of these names have lost the initial ^ʿAbdu 'l- or have been otherwise corrupted, which results in names such as Aziz, Gani, Hamid, Kahar, Karim, Latip, Majit, Malik, Nasir, Patah, Wahab, Wahit, and even Dul (= ^ʿAbdu 'l-). Another category consists of names of important figures in Muslim history and names of prominent scholars, theologians and mystics. Many years ago Snouck Hurgronje, referring to the adoption of a new name by Indonesian pilgrims in the holy city, observed that among these there was a marked preference for the most illustrious names in the field of religious sciences¹; hence everywhere one meets with names once borne by famous jurists as well as with the names of writers on theological subjects and mysticism, and founders of fraternities.

One of the names of Arabic origin belonging to this category is Rislan or Ruslan. This name has nothing to do with Dutch 'Rusland' (Russia), in Indonesian pronunciation 'Ruslan', but derives from Raslān, the arabicized form of Arslān (lion), a Turkish proper name borne, among others, by many ancient Turkish princes and at the present time the name of a prominent Syrian family, to which belonged the well-known scholar and diplomatist Emīr Shakīb Arslān, some time President of the Arab Academy of Damascus.

Naturally, the question that arises is this: Which man with the name of Raslān was so highly regarded by Indonesian Muslims that people chose to adopt his name? The obvious answer is that he could have

been none other than Shaikh Raslān al-Dimashqī, the patron-saint of Damascus, whose *Risāla fī l'-tawhīd* was held in high repute in former times, as is testified by ms. copies of this Epistle originating from various regions of Indonesia.

This *Risāla* is neither a "theosophic treatise"² nor a "dogmatical poem",³ nor a "concise work on the Essence of Allah"⁴ but a mystical tract denouncing the hidden polytheism lying at the base of self-assertion and reliance on fellow-creatures and things created. Not only because self, other persons and things (*al-aghyār*), and secondary causes (*al-asbāb*) constituted so many screens between man and the Supreme Reality, but any trust in these was essentially a denial of God being the Only Agent in the universe, a profession considered consequent on the declaration of God's unity and uniqueness (*tawhīd*) as laid down in the first clause of the creed. It is easy to understand that, given the leaning to mysticism characteristic of Indonesian Islam, this tract appealed strongly to pious people who took this profession seriously and tried to live up to their conviction.

The popularity of the *Risāla* in Indonesia is borne out by the number of ms. copies preserved in the Jakarta and Leiden libraries. One should, however, look for them in the catalogues of Arabic MSS.; in the indexes of the catalogues of Indonesian MSS. one would look in vain for the name of the author and the title of the work, and to the best of my knowledge Indonesian translations of the *Risāla* do not exist as separate works. In some of the Arabic MSS. part of the text of the *Risāla* is found accompanied by an interlinear translation⁵; in others the complete text is embodied in a commentary⁶ often furnished with an interlinear translation.⁷ These MSS. are evidence of the dissemination of this text through the Archipelago, for the interlinear translations are in Malay, Javanese and Bugi.

The commentary furnished with an interlinear translation is always Zakariyyā' al-Aṅṣārī's *Fatḥ al-Raḥmān*,⁸ the wide circulation of which in Indonesia was noted by Snouck Hurgronje many years ago (*Ad-viezen*, Vol. II, p. 1219). Another commentary that was known in Indonesia is the one written by ʿAlī b. ʿAtiyya ʿAlawān al-Ḥamawī (d. A.H. 936/A.D. 1530)⁹ and represented by cod. or. Leiden 7031(2). Finally, a third commentary is mentioned in Kemas Fakhrudin's *Kitab Mukhtasar* (to be discussed presently), namely, *Khamrat al-khān* ('Wine from the inn') by ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī (d. A.H. 1143/A.D. 1731).¹⁰ Neither the Leiden nor the Jakarta library has a copy of it.

The popularity of the *Fatḥ al-Raḥmān* in Java can be inferred from

the fact that, at the latest in the early part of the 18th century, it was put in verse in Cerbon; or rather, that a Javanese composed a poem claiming to be a poetical version of this commentary (*němbangakěn kitab arabi, kitab Patahulrahman*). The first Canto of this poem, comprising 23 stanzas, is contained in cod. or. Leiden 7563,¹¹ while the only complete text extant, numbering three Cantos,¹² is found in MS. India Office no. 3102, now in the library of the School of Oriental and African Studies in London¹³; a copy of this is preserved in the Leiden library (cod. or. 8448). This MS. ends with the statement that the copying was finished (*mantuning sěrat tiněḍak*) on Jumadilakir 2nd A.J. 1663 (A.D. 1738).

This poem can hardly be called a regular poetic version, nor even an adaptation of the *Fatḥ al-Raḥmān*. The author has borrowed a number of passages from the text of the *Risāla* as found in this commentary and in places has made use of al-Anṣārī's comments, but neither the name of the Damascus mystic nor that of his commentator is mentioned in the poem. The greater part of it is made up of other materials which apparently were more to the poet's liking.¹⁴ It is, in fact, a didactic poem composed by an adept in the doctrine of the seven grades of being. Failing to understand the fundamental difference between Walī Raslān's message and the doctrine of the seven grades, or, perhaps, endeavouring to harmonize them, he uses the quotations as a starting-point for an exposition of the ever returning, crucial subject of the relationship between the intelligibles (*a^cyān thābita*) and their exteriorization in the phenomenal world (*a^cyān khārija*).

Subsequently, in about the 1750's the Palembang theologian Shihabuddin, who had already prepared a Malay version of an Arabic commentary on al-Laḡānī's well-known dogmatical poem *Jawharat al-tawḥīd*, composed a Malay Epistle (*risalah*), starting from the interpretation of manifest and hidden polytheism as given by Zakariyyā' al-Anṣārī in his *Fatḥ al-Raḥmān*. This Epistle, in which both Walī Raslān and al-Anṣārī are quoted as authoritative, expresses an admonitory spirit. Its purpose is to check the spread of the doctrine of the seven grades among the masses and to warn against the rampant neglect of religious observances apparently ensuing from it.

In Shihabuddin's Epistle there is no mention of a royal principal. Even so, it may be assumed that the Court of Palembang was not wholly unconcerned about this issue. For we see that later on Kemas Fakhruddin, who enjoyed the favour of the Sultan and the crown-prince, translated Raslān's *Risāla* in full and provided it with a com-

mentary, no doubt with the approval, or possibly even at the instigation, of his royal patron.

Though recorded in the catalogues under the title *Kitab Mukhtasar* ('Compendium'), Kemas Fakhruddin's book actually has no title. It owes its name to a misunderstanding of the words: *Inilah kitab yang mukhtasar bagi ta'lif Shaikh al-Walī Raslān* ('This a concise work composed by Shaikh al-Wali Raslan'). Then the translator goes on to say, *Maka adalah aku menterjemahkan kitab ini* ('I have translated this book'), while the last phrase of the translation is: *Telah selesailah risalah yang mukhtasar dengan bahasa Jawi* ('Here the Malay translation of the short Epistle ends'), etc. From all this it is perfectly clear that the work meant by *kitab* or *risalah yang mukhtasar* is the Arabic *Risāla*.¹⁵ Each single phrase of the original is followed by a Malay translation, to each one of which the translator has added his comments. For these comments he has consulted the *Fath al-Rahmān* and the *Khamrat al-khān*.

The library of the Museum Pusat in Jakarta has three copies of Kemas Fakhruddin's work: MS. BG. Mal. 120; V.d.W. 7 and 8.¹⁶ The first of these belonged to the consignment of kraton MSS. shipped from Palembang to Batavia in 1822 (see the Appendix, sub I, 5); the V.d.W. MSS. were probably copied from this. The Leiden library has two copies: cod. or. 1712 and cod. or. 7329, formerly listed as S.H. 102.¹⁷ The former was copied from MS. BG. Mal. 120 at the Scriptorium of the General Secretariat in Batavia in 1822; the latter, dated Batavia 1870, is a copy written by a certain Muhammad Kelana b. Fakir 'Abd al-Mujib Muhammad Zabidi of Kampung Laksa.

The present work is arranged as follows. CHAPTER I deals with Shaikh Walī Raslān of Damascus, his life and personality, his writings, the miracles attributed to him and the veneration in which the population of Damascus still holds him today. CHAPTER II is dedicated to Zakariyyā' al-Anṣārī, the famous 15/16th century Egyptian theologian and writer, whose *Kitāb Fath al-Rahmān*, a running commentary on Walī Raslān's *Risāla fī 'l-tawhīd*, constitutes CHAPTER III.¹⁸ As is usual in works of this kind, the commentator sticks closely to the original text and embodies it in his comments, so that there was no need to print the *Risāla* separately. CHAPTER IV contains the Javanese poem *Patahulrahman*, accompanied by a translation. CHAPTER V contains the Malay tract written by Shihabuddin of Palembang about the middle of the 18th century and a summary of its contents. Finally, in CHAPTER VI, there

follows Kemas Fakhruddin's Malay adaptation of the Arabic commentary, with a complete translation.

In order to avoid repetition no particulars about these two Palembang writers are given in chapters V and VI. The scanty information available concerning their activities is brought together in the Appendix sub IV, Pts. I and II, to which the reader is referred.

An inquiry into the Palembang background of these writers and, in particular, into other Palembang activities in the domains of literature and learning, both religious and profane, in the period under discussion, proved most fruitful. Scanning the catalogues of the principal collections of Malay manuscripts, I found that a good deal of works written in Palembang or originating from there are preserved in these collections. This induced me to review all the materials available and draw up an inventory of the MSS. in question and a list of Palembang writers. The results of this investigation are laid down in an Appendix to the book proper.