

# The Contribution of Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah and his Descendants in Pondok Education System in Malay Peninsula

Zurita Mohd Yusoff

Faculty of Islamic Contemporary Studies, Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA),  
Terengganu, Malaysia.

Email: zurita@unisza.edu.my

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## Abstract

*Pondok* education played a major role in the spread of Islamic knowledge in the Malay Peninsula. In Terengganu, *pondok* educational system was founded in the 17th century AD by local scholars. However, writing about the history of the foundation of the *pondok* system in the Malay Peninsula is so rarely. Syeikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah or known as Tok Pulau Manis is one of the Terengganu state scholars who has been directly involved in introducing the *pondok* educational system in this state. This noble effort is continued by the descendants of Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah. Thus, this paper aims to explain the contribution of Sheikh Abdul Malik and his descendants in the development of *pondok* studies in Malay Peninsula. The data in this brief study was collected by using document analysis and interviews. The result of this writing found that Syeikh Abdul Malik has played a big role in the foundation of the *pondok* educational system in the state of Terengganu. As a result of his efforts, *pondok* studies were continued by his great-grandchildren either in Terengganu or in Kelantan. In addition, the students of his descendants have continued the *pondok* educational system in the state of Terengganu.

**Keywords:** Syeikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah, Tok Pulau Manis, Pondok Education System

## Introduction

The state of Terengganu has many figures of scholars from the past who are authoritative and meritorious. Among the great scholars are Syeikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah or known as Tok Pulau Manis (1650 AD- 1736 AD), Sayyid Muhammad bin Zainal Abidin al-Idrus or Tukku Tuan Besar (1794 AD-1878 AD), Haji Wan Abdullah bin Haji Wan Mohd Amin who is also known as Tok Syeikh Duyong (1802-1889) and Sayyid Abdul Rahman Muhammad al-Idrus or Tukku Paloh (1817-1917). They have played an important role in the spread of Islamic knowledge. The spread of Islamic knowledge occurs when these scholars deliver their lectures in

madrasah, mosque or in any knowledge gatherings organized in the community. The spread of Islamic knowledge occurred with the efforts of the scholars of the past to produce literary manuscripts of books that became a guide for the local society. One of the figures who has been heavily involved in the spread of Islamic knowledge is Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah.

### **Methodology**

In completing this article, the writer used the method of document analysis to obtain the data related to the biography of Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah. The document study was carried out using books and articles related to scholars. In addition, some of Sheikh Abdul Malik's books have also been carefully read by the author to obtain data about the date of writing and the content of the books. In addition, interviews were also conducted to obtain data from the descendants of Sheikh Abdul Malik.

### **Birth and Death of Sheikh Abdul Malik Bin Abdullah**

Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah is a scholar born in Terengganu who is descended from a muslim scholar from Baghdad. According to the birth and death records found at his tomb in Kampung Pulau Manis, Kuala Terengganu, Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah was born in the year 1089H/1678M and died in the year 1149H/1736M (Visit to the tomb of Abdullah on 2019). These recorded dates show that Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah died at the age of 58. However, according to the heirs of Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah who are still alive today, his age when he died was over 80 years old (Interview with Mohamad, on 2011). Some other facts also show that the date of birth recorded on his tomb is unreasonable and debatable. This is because in an essay by Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah, it is recorded that he once studied with a famous Meccan scholar, Sheikh Ibrāhīm al-Kurānī or known as Maulā Ibrāhīm al-Kurānī or al-Kurdī and also al-Madīnī who lived between years 1025H/1661M-1101H/1690M (Shafie, 1977). If it is said that Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah was born in 1678 AD, he was only 12 years old when his teacher died. It is not reasonable for a child to migrate to Mecca to seek knowledge and study with a very famous teacher before the age of 12 (Shafie, 1984).

The result of an interview conducted by Shafie Abu Bakar with the heirs of Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah, they said that Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah returned from studying in Mecca when he was about 40 years old and his teacher Maulā Ibrāhīm also died when Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah reached the age of 40 (Shafie, 1984). The date recorded on his tomb which is 1089H/1678M - 1149H/1736 shows that during that period he was still alive (Saleh, 1983). With this, it can be concluded that Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah was born in the middle of the 17th century AD, approximately in 1650 AD.

The date of Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah's death recorded on his tomb is reasonable and not disputed by any party, which is in the year 1149H/1736AD. He died when he was about 86 years old. This fact is in accordance with an information that mentions that in the last stage of his life he was an elderly person. Oral stories from his descendants also mention that Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah died when he was quite old (Shafie, 1984).

### **The Study of Sheikh Abdul Malik Bin Abdullah**

Sheikh Abdul Malik's studies can be categorized into two levels, namely studies in Java and Aceh, and also studies in Mecca and Medina. His studies in Java and Aceh can be described as a search for religious knowledge at the basic level, while in Mecca and Medina, he sought knowledge at a higher level.

Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah's first teacher was his own father, Sheikh Abdullah bin Sheikh Abdul Qahar. Before migrating to other states, he also studied with local scholars (Mohamad, 1999). Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah studied in Java and in Aceh for 10 years when he was 20 to 30 years old. He followed his uncle named Ismail to trade and preach in Java. His migration has also increased his religious knowledge (Shafie, 1989).

At the age of 20, Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah migrated to Aceh together with some of his friends. Upon his arrival in Aceh, Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah studied with Sheikh Abdul Raūf Singkel, a very famous Aceh scholar (Shafie, 1989). Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah is known as a great and prominent student of Sheikh Abdul Raūf Singkel (Azra, 1994). The proof of Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah's journey to Aceh is that there is a handwritten book by him entitled *Tafsiran Baiḍawī* and written in Malay by Sheikh Abdul Raūf Singkel (Shafie, 1989).

Sheikh Abdul Raūf Singkel was a student of two famous scholars in Mecca, namely Sheikh Ibrāhīm al-Kurānī and Sheikh Aḥmad al-Qusaisyī. Sheikh Abdul Raūf Singkel was a scholar in the field of hadith, fiqh, usuluddin, nahu, naraf, tafsir, Sufism and also the leader of the Shatari Order. After Sheikh Abdul Raūf Singkel found that Abdul Malik bin Abdullah mastered the knowledge of hadith, tafsir, nahu, naraf, fiqh and Sufism, he recognized him with Tarekah Shatariyyah (Shafie, 1989).

After nearly 10 years of studying in Aceh, Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah migrated to Mecca, around 1680 AD. Studies conducted by past scholars show that Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah was among the earliest residents of Malaya to study in Mecca. He finally returned to his homeland and made a significant contribution as did other scholars such as Muhammad Arsyad al-Banjari, Nawawi al-Bantani and Sheikh Daud al-Fatani (Redzuan, 1998).

### **The Prominence Of Sheikh Abdul Malik Bin Abdullah In The Field Of Sufism And Fiqh**

Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah is very interested in Sufism based on the *ubudiyah* ethical approach of Imām al-Ghazālī. The order that followed was the *Shādhiliyyah* that developed in Egypt and was founded by Abū al-Ḥassan al-Shādhilī who came from Morocco. He recognized this order through his studies which used the book of Ibn 'Ata Allāh (D. 709/1309) (Shafie, 1989).

With deep knowledge of Sufism, Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah managed to produce his greatest work, *Hikam Melayu* when he was still in Mecca and it is his greatest work. *Hikam Melayu* is a description (*syarh*) on *Matan Hikam* written by Imām Tāj al-Dīn 'Aṭāillāh al-Sakandary which follows the *Shādhilī* school (Shafie, 1984).

Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah has a high position among his friends. *Hikam Melayu* book was lectured and used as a teaching material in Mecca which was advanced with printing and publishing, this book was widely copied, printed and spread widely throughout the Malay region. This book is still used in places of study whether in the village or in the city.

Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah was a scholar in various fields of Islamic knowledge. Although he is more famous in the field of Sufism, he is actually very knowledgeable in the field of fiqh. This is because it has been the practice of scholars in the past to master Sharia or Fiqh before delving into the knowledge of Sufism. Among the contributions of Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah in fiqh are

### **Role as Mufti and Religious Advisor to the Sultan**

Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah played the role of Sheikh al-Ulama and also mufti for the state government at that time and played the role of issuing fatwas related to Islamic laws

and beliefs. For example, a book entitled *Risālah Naql* was written by Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah to explain the problem of the number of congregations for Friday prayers. In his time, the number of residents in the villages along the Terengganu River was still so small that it was difficult for them to perform Friday prayers. *Risalah al-Naql* was finally composed by him to explain the opinions of scholars about the problem (Shafie, 1985).

The greatness of Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah as a mufti is also told from generation to generation by the community, especially his descendants. According to Dato' Haji Ambak, Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah is a jurist, Sufi and scholar. His greatness can be seen in his essay entitled *Kitab Hikam* which was not only translated, but compiled and explained based on the current reality (interview with Dato Haji Ambak bin Ismail, on 1 February 2011).

According to Haji Ismail bin Embong, Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah was a scholar who was ahead of his time and his services are remembered to this day. In the *Maal Hijrah Seminar* in Kuala Terengganu, a resolution was presented to put the name of Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah as a historic name. Finally, a boarding religious high school was named as the Sheikh Abdul Malik National Religious High School (Interview with Haji Ismail bin Embong, on 2011).

### **The Role of Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah as the Author of Fiqh Books**

Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah not only acted as a mufti or religious adviser, but also authored several fiqh books as teaching material for his students and also as a guide to the community in his time.

There are three writings in the field of fiqh that are clearly authored by Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah, namely *Kitab al-Kifāyah*, *Risalah al-Naql* and *Risalah Kayfiah Niyah*. Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah has been active in the field of book writing since he was in Aceh.

#### **i- Kitab al-Kifāyah**

The second largest book written by Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah is *Kitab al-Kifāyah* which talks about *Usuluddin* and fiqh. He talks about issues of faith and jurisprudence such as *taharah*, prayer, fasting, zakat, halal and haram animals to eat (Sheikh Abdul Malik, MSS587). This book was written to be used as teaching material by him for the local community. However, this book has never been printed and has not been successfully found by researchers except for two copies stored in the National Library of Malaysia and one more copy in the Malaysian Islamic Art Museum.

#### **ii- Risalah al-Naql**

*Risalah al-Naql* is a book that only contains 23 pages. There is also a manuscript that only has 14 pages. This is because in the manuscript containing 23 pages there are several repetitions of copies and there are also additional comments that may have been made by Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah (Shafie, 1984). This book was written by Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah about three years after he returned to his homeland and refers a lot to the book written by Sheikh Jalāluddn as-Suyūṭi (849-911/ 1445-1505) (Ibrahim, 1999). It is accompanied by evidence from the Quran, hadith, consensus, *qiyas* and so on. The main purpose of this short pamphlet or book written by Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah is to provide guidance on the problem of the number of congregations not being 40 enough to perform Friday prayers (Shafie, 1984).

**iii- Kayfiyyah Niyyah**

Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah wrote Risalah Kayfiyyah Niyyah based on his teacher's essay entitled *A'māl al-Fikri wa Rawiyyatu* (Practices Based on Thoughts and Narratives) and also Sheikh Aḥmad Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh's essay entitled *Miftāḥ al-'Ulā* (Highest key). The book *Miftāḥ al-'Ulā* is also filtered from the writings of al-Imām al-Ghazālī entitled *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-dīn*. This pamphlet contains a discussion about the intention that is the basis of every act of worship (Shafie, 1984).

**The Role of Sheikh Abdul Malik Bin Abdullah As The Founder of Islamic Education in Terengganu**

Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah has been the pioneer of traditional and oldest studies in Terengganu. He has built his house near the Masjid Kampung Pulau Manis. The Sultan and Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah have moved to Kampung Pulau Manis, the Administrative and Spiritual Center of Islam. Many students came from all over the country to study with him (Ibrahim: 28). In fact, his students not only come from Terengganu, but from the entire Malay Peninsula. The students who came have built small houses or known as pondok around the mosque as their accommodation throughout their studies (Tok Pulau Manis, <http://Islaminus.Blogspot.com/2009/06/Tok-Pulau-Manis-1650-1736.html>). In addition to being the earliest center of Islamic education, the study area of Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah has also been filled with books that are used as teaching and reference materials. He has used books brought back from Mecca, Aceh and books he wrote himself (Shafie, 1991). Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah uses the study model at Masjid al-Haram which is centered on the mosque. There were also many students from outside his village who came to study and set up residences during their studies. The curriculum includes fiqh, usuluddin, Sufism, hadith interpretation, nahu naraf and religious literature. The mastery of knowledge of nahu and naraf is emphasized because students need to understand books in Arabic (Shafie, 1984). As the result of the foundation of the pondok educational system, the tradition of pondok education system in Terengganu was continued by descendants and students of Syeikh Abdul Malik.

**Continuation of Pondok Education System By Descendants of Sheikh Abdul Malik Bin Abdullah**

Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah has 4 children namely Sharif Badruddin, Yaakub, Imam Yusuf and a daughter whose name cannot be clearly ascertained. His son named Lebai Hasan has migrated to Kampung Aur China, Pasir Mas, Kelantan (Che Daud, 2012). Lebai Hasan was blessed with several children and one of them was named Yaakub or nicknamed Haji Yaakub. Haji Yaakub had migrated to Mecca twice. During his lifetime, which is before he died in 1913, Haji Yaakub or the great-grandson of Tok Pulau Manis managed to open a hut in Kampung Aur China, Pasir Mas, Kelantan (Che Daud, 2012).

Another descendant of Sheikh Abdul Malik Bin Abdullah who is involved in the teaching of Islamic knowledge in the lodge is Tuan Guru Haji Abdullah Aur China (Interview with Abdullah, on 2019). He died on April 2, 1970. Tuan Guru Haji Abdullah Aur China is the grandson of Haji Yaakub. His father, Haji Adam Kutan, was one of Haji Yaakub's children. Haji Adam Kutan during his lifetime was a visiting teacher of the kingdom during the reign of Sultan Ismail ibn Sultan Muhammad IV (Che Daud, 2012)

In Terengganu, the most famous descendant of him who runs the pondok study institution is Haji Abdul Malik bin Isa, who is the great-grandson of Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah. The

Study Center run by Haji Abdul Malik bin Isa is often visited by many students who eventually become famous scholars. Among them are Ali bin Qadi Muhammad Patani and Lebai Jaafar bin Zakariyya al-Fatani. The son of Haji Abdul Malik bin Isa, namely Haji Muhammad bin Haji Abdul Malik, also continued the tradition of studies that had been started by Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah (Bakar, 1991).

The Study Center inherited by the descendants of Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah has moved from Pulau Manis to Beladau, then to Serengas and finally to Padang Midin, Kuala Terengganu. Pondok studies in Terengganu reached the peak of its success during the era of management by Haji Abdul Malik bin Isa, who is the great-grandson of Tok Pulau Manis. This study center became the focus of many students whether from Terengganu or outside Terengganu (Bakar, 1991).

Among the prominent students who came to study at the *pondok* run by Abdul Malik bin Isa were Ali bin Qadi Muhamad Patani and Lebai Jaafar bin Zakariyya al-Fatani. The sentra of studies in Beladau have finally moved to Serengas. The activity of spreading knowledge in Serengas was continued by Abdul Malik's student Haji Mat Lapok (Shafie Abu Bakar, 1991).

But, the place of teaching has moved from Beladau to Serengas. Haji Mat Lapok is not a scholar of the lineage of Sheikh Abdul Malik Bin Abdullah, but he is from the state of Johor and has migrated to Terengganu at the same time as a disciple of Haji Abdul Malik bin Isa. Another descendant of Sheikh Abdul Malik Bin Abdullah who delivered the Islamic knowledge was Haji Muhammad Khatib. He is the son of Abdul Malik bin Isa and has made some changes in the podok educational system inherited from his ancestors and father (Abu Bakar, 1991).

### **Conclusion**

Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah is a scholar who has started a tradition of learning in Terengganu. His contribution whether in the form of teaching the community, producing religious books and being a religious adviser to the Sultan has left such a great impact on the development of Islam in Terengganu. His noble efforts to establish a study lodge in Terengganu had a great impact on the development of Islam and was successfully continued by the legacy of his descendants. The descendants of Sheikh Abdul Malik are not only involved in pondok education in Terengganu but are also active in Kelantan.

### **Corresponding Author**

Zurita Mohd Yusoff

Faculty of Islamic Contemporary Studies, Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin, Gong Badak Campus, 21300 Kuala Terengganu, Malaysia.

Email: zurita@unisza.edu.my



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