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Timeline of the Malay Jawi Works: A Revisit to the Oldest Known Malay Manuscript

Che’ Razi Jusoh*
Aliza Elias @ Mayah**

Abstract
The paper examines the dating of writings on Islam originating in the Malay world in the form of either treatise (risālah) or book (kitāb) as there are disagreements on the date of the advent of Islam in the region. The researchers revisit the polemic of the topic of the oldest known Malay manuscript between the ‘Aqā‘id al-Nasafi by anonymous author dated 1590 A.D and the Bahr al-Lāhūt of Shaykh ‘Abdullah ‘Arif which was said to have been written in 12th century A.D., is 400 years older than the former. In order to light on this issue, the researchers employ the qualitative methodology in which the linguistic, textual and comparative analysis are applied on the manuscripts and material related to both treatises. Finding reveals that there are some methodological issues that need to be resolved in comparing both treatises.

Keywords: Literature, manuscript, ‘Aqā‘id al-Nasafi, Bahr al-Lāhūt, Islam, Malay Civilization.

Introduction
A definite answer to the question as to when exactly the writing activities in Malay-Jawi literature commenced has yet to be obtained because there is no sufficient data to unveil the real situation with regard to writing activities between 11th to the end of the 15th century A.D. The discovery of oldest Arab inscriptions in various places such as in Champa (431/1039), 1 Brunei (440/1048), 2 Leran, Jawa Timur (495/1082), 3 Aceh

* Assistant Professor, Dr. Department of Fundamental and Inter-Disciplinary Studies (FIDS), Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia. Email: cherazi@iium.edu.my
** Assistant Professor, Dr. Department of Fundamental and Inter-Disciplinary Studies (FIDS), Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia. Email: aliza_elias@iium.edu.my
2 Ibid., p. 83.
3 Ibid., p. 86.
(696/1297),\(^1\) did not confirm the usage of Jawi until the discovery of Terengganu inscription\(^2\) which was dated on Friday, the 4\(^{th}\) Rajab of 702/22\(^{nd}\) February 1303. The Terengganu inscription has marked a very important discovery in finding the earliest proof pertaining to the usage of Malay-Jawi script.\(^3\) It indicates that the Malay-Jawi script had been used at that time or perhaps even earlier. Thus, it is a strong indication that Malay-Jawi script had played a very important role in the field of da‘wah in conveying the message to the people at that time.

Professor Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas maintained that prior to the coming of Islam in this region there was no script or alphabet that capable to unite and to bind firmly a language that covers a group of people which could be given a title as Malay (Melayu).\(^4\) Hence, the Arab script which came along had been accepted as Malay script (tulis\(\text{an} Melayu) but with some additional special alphabets i.e. cha; nga; pa and ga\(^5\) known later on as Jawi Script. Moreover, the new script introduced with the coming of Islam has binding the unity of one language covers all Malay people. As a result, the term Malay language (Bahasa Melayu) never appeared in any writings between 16\(^{th}\) and 17\(^{th}\) centuries compared to Malay people (Orang Melayu) and Malay states (Negeri Melayu), because the accepted term for it was Jawi language (Bahasa Jawi)\(^6\) and not the Malay language.

With regard to the term “Jawi,” it originally comes from the word ‘Jawa’ and in some Arabic books on jurisprudence in Shāfi‘ī madhhab the word ‘jawa’, ‘jawah’, ‘jawi’ or ‘ahli jawah’ are all referred to the people who lived in the Malay region that include Malay as well.\(^7\) Meccan people are still using the term ‘jawah’ which signifies Malay and Indonesian even today. Thus, the term ‘jawi’ is an attribution which

\(^{1}\)Ibid.
\(^{2}\)Please refer to Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, The Correct Date of the Terengganu Inscription. Kuala Lumpur: Museum Department States of Malaya. Al-Attas outrightly mentioned Jawi (Malay-Arabic) script in which he is expert and familiar with not only in reading but also in writing, 1984, p.7.

\(^{3}\)Attas, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-, Islam dalam Sejarah dan Kebudayaan Melayu. (Fourth reprint), Petaling Jaya: Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM), 1990, p.43.

\(^{4}\)Ibid., p. 43.

\(^{5}\)Ibid., p. 41.

\(^{6}\)Ibid, p. 43.

connotes the people of Jawa whom originally from the soil of Jawa. But, in general sense especially in the Shafi‘ite fiqh books it also referred to Malay people and Jawah altogether because they originally one nation whom lived in the Malay Archipelago.\(^1\) It is understood from the term ‘Jawa’ and ‘Jawi’ are referred to Tanah Melayu (Malaya) and Malay people, and its writing script is also known as Malay-Jawi language (bahasa Melayu Jawi) or Jawi books (kitab Jawi).\(^2\) Nevertheless, Al-Attas asserted even though that term ‘Jawi’ commonly accepted as a name given by the Arab to attribute to all populations and nations that inhabit in the Malay Archipelago as discussed above, but most probably that the Malay themselves who gave the title.\(^3\) In short, the Jawi script as we have given a note as above emerged as a significant tool in conveying the message via risālah, treatises or kitāb as early as the arrival of Islam in this part of the world. It is believed there were number of works had been written since then but most of them were ceased to be used and no longer available anywhere except a few.

**The Emergence and Development of Malay Jawi Works**

The early Muslim propagators (da‘i, pl. du‘a) who first disseminated their teachings via writings in the Malay world which depended on written works which were originally written in Arabic and later had them translated into the native language for the local people to understand the teachings. This led to flourishing of the Malay-Jawi literature.\(^4\) Kitab literature (sastera kitab) is under the religious literature.\(^5\) It is of two parts; the first one refers to any piece of writings which are translated from Arabic into Malay by the medium of Jawi script. Second; any piece of writing in Malay language pertaining to Islam that is written in Jawi script.\(^6\) It then further divided into prose (karangan nasyar) and poem (puisi/ karangan bersajak) which include sha‘ir, nazam, pantun etc.\(^7\) As far as the research is concerned; the number of prose works in kitab Jawi literature supersedes the number of

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\(^1\) Ibid.  
\(^2\) Ibid, p.11.  
\(^3\) Ibid.  
\(^5\) The religious literature in Islam is based on the integrated framework whereby there is no total segregation between literary genre and religious genre.  
\(^7\) Ibid.
poetic literary works. In light to that some people argued that *kitab* literature should not be placed under the roof of literature (*sastera*) because the nature of *kitab* is not a kind of poetic literary work in the real sense, moreover its writings only focusing on the religious teachings.\(^1\) On the one hand the idea is rather rational because the purpose of the content in each *kitab* is to teach people about the religion and not to emulate the content as a literary work *per se*. On the other hand, since the writing of *kitab* depends on the knowledge, skills and peculiar approach taken by the author, thus some works probably written with amicable poetic literary style which people could acknowledge them as a highly regarded composition of religious work that is full of poetic literary approach. Amongst the poetic treatise written in Malay-Jawi literature are Shaykh Dawud’s ‘*Iqd al-Jawahir* and Raja Haji Muhammad Sa’id bin Raja Haji Muhammad Tahir Riau’s *Sha’ir Nazam Tajwid al-Qur’an*,\(^2\) etc.

The writings of Malay-Jawi *kitab* which started long time ago could be divided into three important main fields; tawhid (*Usul al-Din*), *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence or *Shari‘ah*) and mysticism (*tasawwuf*). They have become the prime subject of study since the spreading of Islam in this region at the very beginning and continually being studied until today. As for other disciplines like commentary of al-*Qur’an* (*tafsir al-Qur’an*), Hadith literature, *tajwid al-Qur’an*, Islamic history and etc. they are not so extensively being studied and their numbers in Malay-Jawi corpus are rather very small. Since the emergence of Jawi script and its outcome that yields in the form of treatises, pamphlets and books which became unending polemic among researchers and scholars, thus the exact turning point in claiming the early works is quite complicated. However, the initial development of the Malay-Jawi writings probably envisaged with the small number of writings before the 18\(^{th}\) century due to lack of instrument to multiply it except those of which transcribe them in a very small scale compared to the printing machine which only existed by the middle of the 18\(^{th}\) century.

**The Legacy of Malay Jawi Works**

Knowing the importance of Malay-Jawi literature as part of the Malay heritage, thus it is pertinent that Malay Jawi works need to be reintroduced

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to the contemporary generation and to familiarize them with the legacy of the past. Literally, Jawi here specifically refers to the Arabic loan scripts which have been officially used for writing in Malay language.\(^1\) Malay Jawi works refer specifically to those works which were written in Malay language, using the Jawi script and in the form of book or treatise. The combination of three words “Malay-Jawi works” is meant to differentiate the Malay literature as it refers to all types of literature in Malay language, be it written in Jawi or Roman scripts, Islamic or non-Islamic genres. They are also not Jawi literature \textit{per se} since the Jawi script is also subscribed by other types of languages such Sunda, Old Javanese, Bugis, etc. Thus, Malay-Jawi Literature here signifies literature which only uses Jawi script that subsumes its ‘Islamic’ nature and is written in Malay language\(^2\). There are thousands of works were written by the eminent scholars, writers in almost all fields of knowledge that available during their times such as ‘\textit{aqidah}, fiqh, tasawwuf, tafsir, hadith, Arabic syntac, life of the Prophet SAW etc.

**Arabic Work Being As a Source of Malay-Jawi Works**

The largest Muslim community in the Malay Archipelago are the follower of \textit{Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama‘ah} long time ago since Islam firstly reached this part of the world. In view to that fact it is not a probable assumption that in every field of study especially in the field of ‘\textit{aqidah}, fiqh and tasawwuf’ including the two stipulated works that we are dealing with are originated from the Arabic work, after all the very nature of both works are called as Malay underliner texts. As for other texts they could be varies. There are several ways to trace the original works of Arabic by looking at the Malay-Jawi works in which the authors usually mentioned the sources or references of earlier works that they have referred to, or by looking at the biography of the Malay

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\(^2\) There are many terms have been employed to refer to the similar nature of literature. Among the common terms used such as \textit{Kitab Melayu}, \textit{Kitab Jawi}, \textit{Kitab Kuning}, \textit{Kitab Tulisan Huruf Arab Bahasa Indonesia}, \textit{Kitab Bahasa Jawi-Melayu} and \textit{Kitab Gundul}. The term Malay-Jawi Literature which we used here is more comprehensive compared to those terms and the same spirit and understanding as held by Wan Mohd Saghir ‘Abdullah, (1997), “Tulisan Melayu/Jawi dalam Manuskrip dan Kitab Bercetak: Suatu Analisis Perbandingan”, in \textit{Tradisi Penulisan Manuskrip Melayu}, , Kuala Lumpur: Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia, 1997, pp. 87-89.
scholars with whom they have studied with and which lineage of study network they have undergone etc. It is important to note here that the purpose to get acquainted with the sources or references is to investigate the connection of Malay-Jawi sharh tradition with the mother of the tradition itself which have begun in the Arab world.

The first field in which the Arabic works became the main sources for Malay-Jawi works could be traced in fiqh. No doubt, there have been hundreds of Arabic works in this field since the 17th century. Many Arabic sources which are familiar to the Malay authors like Shaykh Nur al-Din al-Raniri in his Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm, Shaykh Dawud in his Kifāyat al-Muhtadī, Idah al-Bab etc. Among those works and authors are Sharḥ al-Minhāj of Imām Taqīy al-Dīn al-Subkī (d.1355), Fath al-Wahhāb of Shaykh al-Islam Abū Yaḥyā Zakariyā al-Anṣārī al-Shāfī’ī (d.1520), Mughnī al-Muhtāj of Imām al-Khāṭib al-Shārīnī (d.977/1569), Nihāyat al-Muhtāj of al-Imām Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Ṭalḥa ibn Hamzah al-Ramlī (d.1595), Tuhfat al-Muhtāj of ʿAlī ibn Ḥajar al-Haytānī al-Makkī (d.1566) Rawdat al-Ṭālibīn of al-Imām Muḥammad al-Dīn Abī Zakariyā Yaḥyā bint Sharf al-Nawawī (d.1277), al-Majmūʿ Sharḥ al-Muhadhdhab also by al-Imām al-Nawawī etc.

With regard to the field of Usūl al-Dīn, prominent Malay authors like Al-Raniri, Dawud al-Fatani, Zayn al-ʿAbidin al-Fatani, Muḥammad Zayn al-Asyīrī, Ṭayyib al-Masʿūdi etc. have composed their works based on some authoritative main Arabic sources such as ʿAqīḍa al-Nasafiyyah of ʿUmar Najm al-Dīn al-Nasafī (d.537/1142), Sharḥ al-Taftazānī ʿalā al-ʿAqīḍa al-Nasafiyyah of Imām al-Taftazānī (d.1390), Umm al-Barāhīn of Yusuf al-Sanussī, Ḥāshiyah al-Dusūqī ʿalā Umm al-Barāhīn by Imām al-Dusūqī (d.1823), al-Shārqawi ʿalā al-Hudhūdī of Imām Ḥiżāzī al-Shārqawī (d.1815) Tuhfat al-Murūd ʿalā Jawharat, Ḥāshiyah al-Bayjūrī ʿalā Sharḥ Matn Umm al-Barāhīn of Imām Ibrāhīm al-Bayjūrī (d.1871) Kifāyat al-ʿAwwām of Imām al-Fudālī (d.) ʿAqīdat al-Ṭahāwiyah of Imām al-Ṭahāwī (d.942) etc.

Similarly with regard to the field of tasawwuf, renowned Malay authors like Shaykh ʿAbd al-Samad al-Falimbarī (d.1831), Dawud al-Fatani (d.1847), Shaykh Arshad al-Banjari (d.1812) etc., have referred their works to the authoritative Arabic works in tasawwuf. Among the main references in Arabic are Iḥyāʿ ʿUḥūm al-Dīn, Bidāyat al-Hidāyah and other works of Ḥujjat al-Islām Imām al-Ghazzālī (d.1111), Al-Ḥikam of Abū al-Faḍl ibn ʿAṭāʾillah al-Iskandārī (d.1079), Ḥikam of Shuʿayb Abū Madyan al-Ghawth (d.1197), Futūḥ al-Ghayb and Al-Fath al-Rabbānī of ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jaylānī (d.1166). Hence for works that we are dealing with are coming
from the original work of ‘Aqāʿīd al-Nasafi by ‘Umar al-Nasafi (d. 1142) and Bahr al-Lāhūt or Dāhūt by ‘Abdullāh ‘Arif (d. c.12th A.D.).

In short, it can be concluded that the main texts composed by the leading scholars in respective fields together with commentaries benefitted all savants of knowledge. Thus, there are many other important works which have been referred and studied by the local scholars as their sources in their endeavor to further enhance the teachings so that many more people will benefit from them.

**Polemic Revolving the Earliest Malay-Jawi Work**

In relation to what we have mentioned earlier on that the writings on Islam originating in the Malay world in the form of either treatise (risālah) or book (kitāb) must have begun with the advent of Islam in the region however to date there is no clue as the exact dates of the earliest works and their writers have been definitely determined. Nevertheless, based on the research thus far, in order to be fair with the endeavor taken by our contemporary scholars about the early development in Malay-Jawi commentary works in the Malay Archipelago, we would abide with the strongest view of which any earliest writing materials that were discovered hitherto.

With regard to the first kitāb which was produced in Malay language, a group of researchers like Hawash ‘Abdullah and Mahayudin Yahaya opined that the translation work of Bah r al-Lāhūt was the first Malay-Jawi work since it had already used in the 6th/12th century. The author was known as Shaykh ‘Abdullāh ‘Arif, and believed to have spent some time in Acheh

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2 The original title is “Bah r al-Lāhūt, al-Kitāb fī al-Bayān al-Alīf. See Mahayudin Haji Yahaya, Naskhah Jawi Sejarah dan Teks, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Volume 1, pp. 78-89. Hereinafter cited as Naskah Jawi. Mahayudin of the opinion that the correct title is Bah r al-Lāhūt instead of Bah r al-Lahut, since the later has no meaning, nothing but corrupted word. Ibid., 1994, p.85.
3 Mahayuddin raised doubt to al-Attas’ discovery by proposing such a wild assumption “that there could be other works earlier than the one found by al-Attas”, and at the same time he claimed that “…this research proved that kitāb ‘Aqāʿīd by al-Nasafi which was elaborated by al-Taftazānī is not an oldest or the earliest arrived and spread in the Malay Archipelago, there were other works which have been taught and spread to the Malay society including the Bah r al-Lāhūt by ‘Abdullāh ‘Arif (on the 6th/12), kitab Durr al-Manẓūm by Abū Ishāq (9th/15 century), Kitab Um m al-Barāhin by al-Sanusi (d.895/1490)”, ibid, p.3.
4 Scholars have different opinion as to when he resided in the Malay World. According to Wan Mohd, ‘Abdullah ‘Arif sojourned in Acheh ca. 560/1165 and died in 1177, while Azyumardi Azra on the other hand said that ‘Abdullah Arif might arrived a bit earlier ca 506/1111 but no date cited for his death. Moreover, T. W. Arnold in his work
around 1165 and most probably he had written it around 560/1165 to 573/1177. In relation to that a renowned historian T.W. Arnold had verified the existence of ‘Abdullah ‘Arif as he said;

The Malay chronicles ascribe the honour of being the first missionary to Acheh in the North-West of Sumatera, to an Arab named ‘Abd Allah ‘Arif, who is said to have visited the island about the middle of the twelfth century; one of his disciples Burhan al-Dīn, is said to have carried the knowledge of the faith down the west coast as far as Priaman.¹

So, the account of which designates the arrival of ‘Abdullah ‘Arif as the first Muslim missionary in Acheh is due to the discovery of his work entitled *Bahr al-Lāhūt*.² However, there are few issues on the claim which somehow need to be verified.

First, with regard to the original Arabic work of *Bahr al-Lāhūt*, because what has been found was the Malay translation of it,³ but not found in any academic writings thus far the original work in Arabic. What available and produced by Mahayuddin in his work is in Malay language except few sentences in Arabic. This type of work can be categorized as direct translation from Arabic into Malay which most probably not being carried out by Abdullah Arif himself but by someone else. The reason being a writer shall not report what he had written rather he will straightforward say what he wanted to say. But in this manuscript what we found is that the author is reporting what the shaykh has said by saying “wa amma ba’du, qāla al-Syeikh ‘Abdullah dan kemudian daripada itu telah meriwayatkan Syeikh ‘Abdullah yang arif ...” Inferentially this work is written by an author who

² Mahayuddin, *Naskhah Jawi*, p. 36
³ Mahayuddin asserted that the original script is written in Arabic, then it was translated into Malay by anonymous author, with no clue when and where it was made, see *ibid.* Furthermore, Hawash Abdullah disclosed that he had obtained the Arabic version of the *Bahr al-Lāhūt* from the descendent of Shaykh Yūsuf Tāj al-Khalawati. See Hawash Abdullah, *Perkembangan Ilmu Tasawuf dan Tokoh Tokohnya di Nusantara*. Surabaya: al-Ikhlas, 1980, pp. 12-14.
reported what the Shayh has said somewhere untraceable. We need to be aware that the translation could have been done much later than the above mentioned date, after all there is no clue when and where it was composed.

Second, even though Mahayudin asserted that the Arabic version of Bahır al-Lāhūt was in possession of Hawash Abdullah, there is no solid and sound research carried out to support the argument thus far. The existence of the original Arabic work of Bahır al-Lāhūt is a primary importance to be established, failing which the argument that the Malay translation of Bahır al-Lāhūt as the earliest Malay text becomes irrelevant.

Third, assuming that the Malay translation of Bahır al-Lāhūt was truly written before 573/1177 - about 413 years earlier than the Malay-translation of ‘Aqā‘id al-Nasafī (written in 998/1590) but the Malay language used in the text could only possible to be written after the 14th century. This is simply because, the Terengganu inscription which dated 702/1303 was so difficult to understand even the experts in the field including Major H.S. Peterson and Dr. C.O. Blagden also failed to come out with the correct reading as well as to resolve the dating of the inscription\(^1\)of the text. Thus, how would it be possible for a 126 years old text than Terengganu inscription is easier to read and understood?

For the sake of comparing this work with the 16th century Malay underlinenar translation of ‘Aqā‘id al-Nasafī by anonymous author and one noted 13th century the Terengganu inscription which was regarded as the oldest artifact to prove the presence and influence of Islam in the land of Terengganu\(^2\) as the language used in Bahır al-Lāhūt having more similarities with the former rather than the latter. Here take for instance what is written in the first page of Bahır al-Lāhūt;

> “Bermula segala puji pujian bagi Allah Tuhan Yang Amat Murah pada menjadikan nur Muhammad Sallallahu‘alayhiwasallam itu dijadikan dengan QudratNya Dan salawat dan salamnya atas Nabi Muhammad itu iaitu kekasihnya yang terlebih hampirnya dan atas keluarganya dan sahabatnya dan

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sekalian umatnya laki laki dan perempuan, [wa amma ba’dahu Qala al shaykh Abu’d-‘abdullah dan adapun kemudian daripada itu telah meriwayatkan Syeikh Abdullah yang arif .......[Ta’ala Qaddasallahu ruhahu al’aziz fi bayan al magha’ib wa alshahadah fatanzuru fi bayan al haqq wataktubu kitab wasammaitahu Bahr al Dahut ...bahawa inilah suatu risalat pada menyatakan barang yang gha’ib gha’ib dan yang yang nyatanya daripada ini maka maka ketahui olehmu daripada kenyataan haq Ta’ala itu dan aku karangkan kitab ini dan aku namai akan dia Bahr al Dahut ertiya Bahr al Dahut itu yang tiada terhingga akan dia dan tiada berkesudahan akan dia dan barang siapa”

Now, let us compare with the 16th century of ‘Aqā’id al Nasafi;
“Kumulai kitab ini dengan Nama Allah yang Mahamurah, Yang Mengasihani hambaNya dalam akhirat. Segala puji akan Tuhan segala ‘alam dan pahala akhirat bagi segala yang takut akan Allah, dan rahmat Allah atas Pesuruhnya Muhammad dan Keluarganya sekalian”.

Both works are using lucid Malay language, straight forward and having not much different. But, try to look at the language in the Terengganu inscription as reformulated by al-Attas improvising what had Peterson deciphered prior to it;


Obviously, the language of the 14th century A.D was so different from the 17th century A.D. The syntax is different; terms used such as tamra, adi, disasanakala etc. are also so much different. Thus, it is absurd to regard the Malay translation of Bahr al-Lāhūt is older than the Malay underlinear translation of ‘Aqā’id al Nasafi simply because the Terengganu inscription

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1 Mahayuddin, Karya Klasik, p. 89.
which dated 1303 A.D. is almost impossible to be understood by the common people and what more the work that came earlier than the epoch.

Fourth, the argument that the teaching of Bahr al-Lāhūt had influenced the society in the 11th century seems unjustifiable, simply because there is no written document found so far to expose, to further discuss, to comment, to elaborate the teaching of the work like other important works which spread in this part of the world like al-‘Aqā’id al-Nasafī and Umm al-Barāhīn which have become the object of commentary by many later scholars. If a piece of work were neither being mentioned nor being referred to any piece of writing most probably the idea which germinated or discussed in them will not be well received and finally remain unnoticed.

In contrasting with the above scenario, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas who maintained that the finding of the Malay translation of ‘Aqā’id al-Nasafī was a great achievement and he has proved it based on a thorough research upon the original source of the manuscript that finally led him to proclaim it as the oldest known Malay manuscript as he clearly says:

As far as I know, then, there is no 16th century dated Malay text in manuscript form that has ever discovered and noticed. The text here presented, it will be shown, is the only one that has a date earlier than any of the Malay manuscripts so far considered by scholars to be among the oldest, which make it the oldest Malay manuscript text now extant. This momentous discovery is undoubtedly of great significance for the study of Malay language and literature as well as for the study of the religious and intellectual history of the Malays, seeing that it deals, not with the legends nor with the mundane affairs of state, but with the fundamental beliefs and faith of the Muslims based upon the essential of the religion of Islam.¹

It is very clear that the claimants of Bahr al-Lāhūt fall short in proving of what they had asserted. One may vividly notice that al-Attas who had published his important findings in 1988 produced a meticulous research and one can see the way he put forward all sorts of arguments and methodology in order to prove that the work was really an oldest compared with the arguments put forward by the opposite party which

¹ Al-Attas, The Oldest Known, p. 5.
only published his work in 1994\(^1\) and 2000\(^2\) respectively. Al-Attas’ work also deliberately marked that the Malay language could also comprehend the original meaning of Arabic. It is a known fact that al-Nasafi’s work is a remarkable treatise that had attracted Muslims people all over. And the Malay interlinear translation is not but a piece of work that really represents the idea of the author as held by Prof. Dr. Wan Mohd Nor;

“Sayogialah para pengkaji dan ulama memperbanyakkan kajian tentang teks penting dan awal ini bukan sahaja sebagai bahan sejarah tetapi sebagai bahan akidah dan falsafah yang masih boleh terus membantu kita menghadapi zaman yang mencabar ini. Professor Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas telah melakukan sumbangan besar dan telah meletakkan asas kukuh mengenai dua segi ini”\(^3\)

In view of this issue, the date as to when a piece of work is written is undoubtedly very important, nevertheless, the content, the influence and the contribution to the light of intellectual milieu to the Malay people is more significant and abiding. For instance, we could see clearly that ‘Aqā’id al-Nasafi is very much referred in most of the aqidah works such as Aqīdat al-Nājīn, Durr al-Thamīn and even al-Raniri who commented the work as al-Attas cited in his work;

_Durrat al-Fara’id bi sharh al-‘Aqā’id,_... a Malay translation, most probably of selected parts adapted to the spiritual and intellectual requirements of the people at the time, of Sa’d al-Din Mas‘ud ibn ‘Umar al-Taftazani’s commentary of the ‘Aqā’id of Najm al-Din ‘Umar al-Nasafi.\(^4\)

In sum, the polemic of which one is prior than the other should not happen if we acknowledge the proper method in verifying the truth. Thus, in general principle any claim made by an accuser must be attached by proof, which means those who reject al-Attas’ Malay interlinear translation of ‘Aqā’id being the oldest known Malay manuscript shall

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\(^1\) Mahayuddin published his work in 1994.


burden the proof of counter argument. The one that indispensable for them to do is to check the paper of *Bahr al-Lāhūt* whether it is truly coming from the 12th century, failing which no further argument is duly to pursue. As this research is carried out there is no published and published article indicated the process had been carried out.  

**Conclusion**

This research attempts to discuss on one specific area in Malay literature which is on the *Sastera Kitab* or kitab literature which emerged after the coming of Islam in this region. The polemic on the issue of the earliest Malay manuscript found in the region was attempted to be resolved in this research. Ultimately, the result of which has shown that Al-Attas who maintained that the Malay translation of *al-ʿAqāʾid al-Nasafī* of ʿUmar Najm al-Dīn al-Nasafī by an anonymous author being the oldest known Malay manuscript found hitherto stands firm cannot be challenged by the claimants of some biographers who criticized it. Moreover, from the Terengganu inscription the inferential has been made that it is impossible that the Malay language prior to the Terengganu inscription had a better and understandable as the claimant argued. Moreover, as clearly shown from the language used - as we have tried to compare as above- that it is most probable that the Malay translation of *Bahr al-Lāhūt* was written latest in the 17th or the 18th century A.D.

**References**


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1 The recent article by Ahmad Sahidah on *Bahr al Lahut* was not so much focus on the issue of the status of the manuscript either it originated from 12th century or otherwise, as much so it seems not answering the issue of authenticity of the Malay text of Bahr al Lahut and suitness of the main theme discussed in that work with the epoch of the 12 the century. Please see Ahmad Sahidah (2012), Finding Malay Islamic Identity through Manuscripts: A Textual Criticism of *Bahr Al-Lahut* the *British Journal of Arts and Social Sciences* ISSN: 2046-9578, Vol.11 No.I (2012) ©BritishJournal Publishing, Inc. 2012. http://www.bjournal.co.uk/BJASS.aspx


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