Jurnal **AFKARUNA** Vol. 20 No. 2 December 2024

History in Motion: Nūr al-Dīn al-Rānīrī's Retelling of ʿAbbāsid History in Seventeenth Century Aceh

DOI: https://doi.org/10.18196/afkaruna.v20i2.24794

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Article History
Received: 17 January 2024, Revised: 5 December 2024, Accepted: 21 December 2024

Abstract

This article focuses on the seventeenth-century Islamic scholar Nūr al-Dīn al-Rānīrī (d. 1658), who became especially known for his harsh oppression of monistic Sufism during his tenure tenure as Shaykh al-Islām at the Acehnese court. Yet, there are indications that suggest that Rānīrī's opposition to Sufism was not as clear-cut as it first seems. Revisiting a thus-far unanswered question about a strange idiosyncracy in Rānīrī's magnum opus, a universal history in Malay titled *Bustān al-Salāṭīn*, this article seeks to dislodge simplistic understandings of the legitimacy of certain strands of Sufism, the polemics around charges of being "monistic," and Rānīrī's own positionality.

Keywords: Aceh, Islamic historiography, Malay, Nūr al-Dīn al-Rānīrī, Sufism.

Introduction

On August 8, 1643, Pieter Sourij, a commissioner of the Dutch East Indian Company (VOC) in Aceh, wrote in his journal: "Daily a Moorish Bishop newly arrived from Suratte is causing no end of discussion, because the present (Bishop), Shaikh Nuruddin by name, has branded his doctrine as heretical" (Ito 1978: 489). What Pieter Sourij was observing was a struggle between two religious authorities competing for patronage of the Acehnese court. One of them, Nūr al-Dīn al-Rānīrī, was a Ḥaḍramī born in Gujarat who had been directing religious affairs in Aceh for the last six years, attempting to eliminate what he considered to be heretical monism. The other one was a Malay, more specifically a Minangkabau, who aimed to reverse al-Rānīrī's program. This paper is a study of one of al-Rānīr'īs efforts to shape Islam in Aceh according to his own agenda. While in Aceh, he summarized or translated works originally in Arabic into Malay,[1] one of which was a universal history in Malay titled *Bustān al-Salāṭīn*, the first Islamic universal history ever written in this language. More specifically, it seeks to revisit the question al-Rānīr'īs motivations for narrating the history of the ʿAbbāsid caliphate in an idiosyncratic way, skipping almost 500 years, despite his reliance on a source that continues well past the point where he ends, the well-known execution of al-Ḥallāj. This paper considers some details of al-Rānīr'īs telling of the story of the fourth century Sufi who was executed in Baghdad and discusses possible explanations for it, ultimately concluding based on a wider examination of al-Rānīr'īs attitudes toward Sufism and who is allowed to

pursue it that this narrative is not indicative of any particular theological program that is coherent and compatible with what else we know of him and his sojourn in Aceh.

Nūr al-Dīn al-Rānīrī and His Arrival in Aceh

As Azra (2004: 54-62) and Wormser (2012: 41-47) have detailed in their studies, Nūr al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Ḥasanjī al-Ḥamīd (or al-Ḥumayd) al-Shāfiʿī al-Ashʿarī al-ʿAydarūsī al-Rānīrī was born in Rānīr, modern-day Randir, a harbor town on the coast of Gujarat. His date of birth and early life events are unknown. The first record referencing his name tells us that he went on the hajj in 1030/1620-1, which likely means that he was born 20 to 30 years earlier. Al-Rānīrī's father was a Ḥaḍramī from Gujarat, while the identity of his mother is unknown.[2] Rānīr was an important harbor that attracted Ḥaḍramī settlers, who maintained close contacts with Ḥaḍramawt and the Ḥaramayn, typically studied in schools in their ancestral land as well as Mecca and Medina in their youth, and travelled elsewhere in the Muslim world. Al-Rānīrī's uncle Muḥammad Jīlānī b. Ḥasan Muḥammad al-Ḥumaydī, whom he mentions in the preface of *Bustān al-Salāṭīn*, had come from Gujarat to Aceh between 988/1580 and 991/1583 to teach *fiqh*. But because the Acehnese were more interested in studying *taṣawwuf* and *kalām*, something he did not feel competent to teach, he went to Mecca to acquire expertise in these subjects and returned to Aceh during the reign of Sultan ʿAlā' al-Dīn (r. 997/1589 - 1011/1602) to transmit his newly acquired expertise. This not only shows that mobility across the Indian Ocean as well as travel for the sake of teaching and learning was common at the time, especially among the Ḥaḍramīs. It also indicates that the presence of Ḥaḍramī teachers in Aceh and their influence on the development of Acehnese Islam preceded al-Rānīrī.

Al-Rānīrī began his education in Rānīr with Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar b. ʿAbd Allāh Bā Shaybān al-Tarīmī al-Ḥaḍrāmī, who, in turn, had studied in Tarim with some of the most notable Ḥaḍramī scholars of the seventeenth century. According to Azra, his teacher also initiated him into the Rifāʿiyya order, an ʿAlawī *ṭarīqa* tracing its *silsila* back through Abu Bakr al-ʿAydarūs, a Ḥaḍramī saint buried in Aden, and thereby connected him to his Ḥaḍramī heritage (cf. Ho 2006: 167). Additionally, he was also part of the ʿAydarūsiyya and the Qādariyya (Azra 2004: 56). Based on the authors he cites in his works it is likely that al-Rānīrī, having completed his education in Gujarat, studied in Medina for a while, but, as Wormser emphasizes, this is only a hypothesis for which we have no conclusive evidence (Wormser 2012: 42). It is also not certain whether al-Rānīrī travelled to the Malay world before he became an advisor in the Sultanate of Aceh at the court of Iskandar Thānī (r. 1047/1637 - 1051/1641) in 1047/1637, although Azra asserts the likelihood of such an earlier visit because of al-Rānīrī's immediate access to the sultan's patronage, which suggests that Sulṭān Iskandar Thānī alrady knew him.[3] He further argues that before 1047/1637, al-Rānīrī would not have been welcome at the Acehnese court, because Sulṭān Iskandar Thānī's predecessor Iskandar Muda (r. 1015/1607 - 1046/1636) patronized the service and doctrines of the Sufi Shams al-Dīn al-Samatrā'ī (d. 1039/1630), whom al-Rānīrī would later characterize as a heretic. Al-Rānīrī, Azra therefore claims, would have left Aceh in order to wait until the situation became more favorable to him (Azra 2004: 59).

As al-Rānīrī himself recorded in the introduction to his *Bustān al-Salāṭīn,* he arrived in Aceh on the 6th of Muharram 1047 (Harun 2004: 2) or May 30, 1637, and soon acquired an influential post at Iskandar Thān'īs court as an advisor for religious matters, but was also responsible for economic and political affairs. After his patron's death in 1051/1641, he remained at the court under the patronage of Iskandar Thān'īs widow, the Sulṭāna Ṣaffiyat al-Dīn (r. 1051/1641 - 1086/1675). In this role, al-Rānīrī began to launch an attack of the doctrines of the two most influential Malay Sufis at the time, Hamza

Fansūrī[4] and the aforementioned Shams al-Dīn al-Samatrā'ī who had been the religious advisor of the previous sultan, both of whom he branded as adherents of the heretical Wujūdiyya.[5] Al-Rānīrī went so far as having their books burned and their followers killed if they refused to recant.[6] In 1054/1644, al-Rānīrī abruptly left Aceh, returning to Rānīr where he stayed until his death in 1068/1658.

As we know from the diary of the aforementioned VOC employee Pieter Sourij, the reason for his sudden departure was that his rival attained the upper hand in their competition for patronage. This was Sayf al-Rijāl, a Minangkabau from West Sumatra who had studied in Aceh before al-Rānīrī's arrival with a shaykh, Maldin, who had since fallen victim to al-Rānīrī's heresy-hunt and had been executed (Ito 1978; Laffan 2009). After a short period of confusion and disorder,[7] Sayf al-Rijāl's counter-attack turned out to be successful as the Sulṭāna Ṣaffiyat al-Dīn refused to settle the matter herself and left the decision to the *uleebalangs*, the local aristocracy, who in turn favored Sayf al-Rijāl. Al-Rānīrī thus left Aceh hastily, humiliated and having fallen from grace.

Bustān al-Salāṭīn: al-Rānīrī's Universal History and *Rawḍ al-Manāẓir* of Ibn al-Shiḥna

Bustān al-Salāṭīn is an extensive literary work of more than a thousand pages. It is subdivided into seven books. The first two books comprise a universal history, beginning with creation and ending with the reign of Sultan Iskandar Thānī. Book I covers the creation of heaven and earth from the Muḥammedan Light as well as the geography of the world, while Book II relates the history of the world beginning with Adam. The five remaining books form a didactic text of the kind that is often called a mirror of princes, including a variety of subjects, such as the rules of right behavior for kings and their subordinates, examples of righteous and tyrannical kings, the virtues of courage and generosity, anatomy, medicine, and women (Wormser 2012: 57). The second book, which will be the main object of inquiry of this paper,[8] begins with a history of the prophets (chapter 1) and kings after Adam (chapter 2), followed by the kings of Greece and Rome (chapter 3), Egypt (chapter 4), Arabia (chapter 5), Kindah (chapter 5) and the history of the Hijāz (chapter 7). Subsequently, it relates the biography of the prophet and the Rāshidūn caliphs (chapter 8), the reign of the Umayyads (chapter 9) and the ʿAbbāsids (chapter 10), followed by the kings of India (chapter 11), the kings of Melaka and Pahang[9] (chapter 12), and finally the kings of Aceh (chapter 13).

In the introduction of *Bustān al-Salāṭīn,* al-Rānīrī enumerates eleven book titles, all of which are in Arabic, from which his own works are translated or summarized. As Wormser has noted (77), the second book of *Bustān al-Salāṭīn* is in large parts a faithful translation of *Rawḍ al-Manāẓir*,[10] a universal history written by Muḥibb al-Dīn Abu al-Walīd Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Ghāzī b. Ayūb b. al-Shiḥna,[11] a man of Turkish descent who was born in 749/1086 in Aleppo.[12] He grew up and was educated there and occupied at different times the post of the Ḥanafī *qāḍī* of Aleppo as well as Damascus, but had a wide area of expertise including *uṣūl al-fiqh*, *adab*, and history, in which he also instructed students (Ibn al-Shiḥna 1997: 11). His life was marked by some political turmoil, as during his tenure as the Ḥanafī *qāḍī* of Damascus he was seized by the Mamlūk Sultan al-Malik al-Ẓāhir Sayf al-Dīn,[13] likely during the latter's campaign against the revolting governor of Aleppo, Ylbughā Nāṣirī, in 791/1389, and he was taken as a prisoner to Cairo. He was freed, spent some time in Cairo teaching, and made his way back to Aleppo, where he resumed his post as the Ḥanafī *qāḍī*. He came into conflict with the new Mamlūk Sultan Nāṣir al-Dīn Faraj[14] and was imprisoned, but was again let go and restored to his post as Aleppo's Ḥanafī *qāḍī*. He was also present in Aleppo during Tamerlane's sack of the city in

803/1400-1 and, as he describes in *Rawḍ al-Manāẓir,* was summoned by him to answer questions about Islam and himself (299 ff.). Ibn al-Shiḥna died in 815/1412 in Aleppo.

Rawḍ al-Manāẓir begins with creation, followed also by nine short chapters on a total of 17 prophets, a chapter each on the kings of Persia, Greece, Rome, Egypt, Arabia, Kinda, and the Hijaz, followed by ten chapters on different peoples (*umma*), including the Jews, the Indians, and the Chinese.[15] Beginning with the Prophet Muḥammad and the Ḥijra, Ibn al-Shiḥna switches to an annalistic format.

Al-Rānīrī made use of Ibn al-Shiḥna's *Rawḍ al-Manāẓir* in chapters 3 to 10 of Book II of *Bustān al-Salāṭīn.* He then switches to the history of Islamic India in chapter 11, which is of course not included in Ibn al-Shiḥna's work. While sometimes he skips or summarizes passages, other times he translates the model verbatim. There is, however, one curious difference between the two works: whereas Ibn al-Shiḥna's history goes to 806/1405, a few years before his death, al-Rānīrī's history of the ʿAbbāsids abruptly ends in 309/922 and continues in Chapter 11 with the history of Muslims in India, beginning with the dynasties of the Ghurids and Khiljīs. Speculating about the reason why *Bustān al-Salāṭīn* skips 500 years of Middle Eastern history that are available in its model, Paul Wormser (2012: 157 f.) makes three suggestions. One is that the chapter was simply never finished, perhaps because al-Rānīrī ran out of time. We could also add that it is equally possible that his manuscript of *Rawḍ al-Manāẓir* was incomplete. Either of these two possibilities is plausible, especially because the chapter ends rather abruptly, unlike the other chapters which have more of a sense of closure. On the other hand, it is also possible that al-Rānīrī meant to end his chapter in the year 309/922. Wormser's second suggestion is that al-Rānīrī meant to evoke or emulate the history of al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, which also ends around that time.[16] But Wormser does not think that this is the likely reason, since al-Rānīrī did not make extensive use of al-Ṭabarī's history as a model in *Bustān al-Salāṭīn. W*e can grant that it is nonetheless possible, especially because the next entry in *Rawḍ al-Manāẓir* after the end of the chapter on the ʿAbbāsids in *Bustān al-Salāṭīn* notes the death of al-Ṭabarī (Ibn al-Shiḥna 1997: 168 f.), which means that even without a copy of *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk,* al-Rānīrī would have known that al-Ṭabarī's history could not go any further. Nonetheless, in the light of both al-Ṭabar'īs marginal role in *Bustān al-Salāṭīn* and the abrupt ending, I share Wormser's skepticism about the plausibility of this possibility and will therefore not pursue it further in this paper.

Paul Wormser's third suggestion is that al-Rānīrī wanted to end his chapter with the year in which Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj was condemned and executed for heresy. As we have seen, one of al-Rānīrī's main concerns in the service of Iskandar Thānī and Ṣaffiyat al-Dīn was the purging of the heretical teachings of Hamza Fansuri and Shams al-Dīn al-Samatrānī. By ending his ʿAbbāsid history with al-Ḥallāj's execution, al-Rānīrī may have intended to effectively communicate the message that the purging of heresy was an established practice among Islamic rulers and their advisors and to draw a parallel between al-Ḥallāj, the first notable and one of the most frequently advertised renegade Sufis in the history of Islam, and his own adversaries. The story of al-Ḥallāj has long been well-known in Islamic Southeast Asia, although not to the extent imagined by Massignon, who, drawing on Dutch orientalists such as Doorenbos and Kramers, asserted that "[w]e have proof that the account of Ḥallāj's martyrdom was one of the main apologetical means used by all of the early pioneers of Islam to convert the Hindu circles of Java, in which Brahmanic and Buddhistic asceticism had already inculcated an ideal of self-sacrifice" (Massignon 1982/II: 289). As Feener has shown, the narrative of the Javanese mystic Seh Siti Jenar, who was killed at the hand of the *wali sanga*, the half-mythical nine saints who Islamized Java, is not a reflection of Ḥallājian doctrine or the veneration of Ḥallāj as a Sufi martyr (Feener 1998: 576 f.) Sufism in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago was much more influenced by Neoplatonic ideas in the

tradition of Ibn al- ʿArabī on the one hand, and a sober Sufism in the Ghazālian vein on the other, than by a Ḥallājian school (584). However, the story of al-Ḥallāj and its iteration in the traditions around Seh Siti Jenar points to the use of common motifs in the literature of medieval Sufism as a not necessarily conscious reference to a historical occurrence that had become a trope.

Al-Rānīrī's Double Standard: Arab-Haḍramī's Superiority Over Malay-Indonesian?

In the following, I will investigate the plausibility of the third suggestion vis-à-vis the first. I will proceed with two lines of investigation. The first is a comparison of al-Rānīrʿīs narration of al-Ḥallāj's story with the version in its model. The divergences between the two can serve as indicators of al-Rānīrʿīs program in his historical work. And second, these differences will be discussed against the background of al-Rānīrʿīs theological and ideological commitments. Specifically, I will discuss whether there are sufficient grounds to believe that al-Ḥallāj is presented as a negative example in *Bustān al-Salāṭīn.*

The condemnation of al-Ḥallāj is reported by Ibn al-Shiḥna'a *Rawḍ al-Manāẓir* in the following words:

> And in [this year]: Al-Ḥallāj b. al-Ḥussain b. al-Mansūr[17] was killed. He used to assemble[18] fruit of the winter in the summer for the people and the other way around, and he would extend his hand in the air and pull it back filled with[19] Dirham on which was written: Say, He is Allah, the One,[20] and he called them Dirham of power. And he would tell the people what they produced in their houses, and he talked to them about what was in their hearts, and he captivated many people through this[21]. And they disagreed with each other like the Christians disagreed about the Messiah.[22] And he would fast for a long time, and break his fast with water and three bites of flat bread.
>
> And he came from Khurasan to Baghdad, and moved on to Mecca, and he lived there for a year. Then he returned to Baghdad and Ḥāmid[23], the vizier, requested of al-Muqtadir[24] to hand al-Ḥallāj over to him, and [al-Muqtadir] handed [al-Ḥallāj] over. The vizier was seriously intent on killing [al-Ḥallāj]. [The vizier] interrogated [al-Ḥallāj] on the meetings he had had in the presence of[25] the ulama and on the last [meeting], that he read his book that contained that who could not go on the hajj should single out from among his buildings a clean[26] house and not have anybody enter it. Then, on the day of the hajj, he should circumambulate it and do what a person on the hajj would do. Then he should gather thirty orphans and give them good food in this house and clothe them, and give each one of them seven Dirham. He will be like one who performs the hajj. And the qāḍī[27] said, "From where do you have this?" Al-Ḥallāj said, "from the book *Al-Ikhlās* by Ḥasan al-Baṣrī". And the qāḍī Abū ʿAmar[28] said, "You lied, oh one whose blood is licit, we have heard [the book] in Mecca and this is not in it". And the vizier demanded of [the qāḍī] in his handwriting that it was permissible for a few days[29] and he refused. Then he responded[30] favorably to making his blood licit, and a group of the ulama agreed with the qāḍī. Al-Ḥallāj said, "How is my blood licit for you when my religion is Islam, and my path is the sunna, I have a book regarding it available, and Allah is in my blood". The vizier sent fatwas to al-Muqtadir, and the caliph gave permission to kill him. Al-Ḥallāj was beaten a thousand times, then his hand was cut off, then his foot, then he was killed and burnt, and his head was displayed in Baghdad (Ibn al-Shiḥna 1997: 168; my translation).

Several things are remarkable about this representation of al-Ḥallāj's condemnation and execution. The first one is that Ibn al-Shiḥna does not narrate the more well-known story of al-Ḥallāj's *shaṭḥiyāt* and his having proclaimed *ana al-ḥaqq* to explain why he was killed; instead, it is a passage from his book, supposedly copied from a text by Hasan al-Baṣrī, on a substitute for the hajj that antagonized the ulama. In fact, if it weren't for his ascetic practice, al-Ḥallāj would not even be recognized as a Sufi. The second one is that Ibn al-Shiḥna's account is not a polemic against al-Ḥallāj. Although his suggestion of how to replace the hajj and to circumambulate around some other building is not consistent with Islamic law, the charitable actions of feeding and clothing orphans at least seem to attribute good intentions to the Sufi. In the absence of more information about Ibn al-Shiḥna and his own biases, it is helpful to compare this text and to look for its divergences from the historical work from which it was taken and which it summarizes, which is Ibn al-Athīr's (d. 630/1233) *Al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh,* a universal history from the beginning of the world to the year 628/1231, with the post-Ḥijrī era written in an annalistic format.[31]

Ibn al-Athīr's account is visibly the model of the narrative of al-Ḥallāj's prosecution and death in *Rawḍ al-Manāẓir*, although the latter is much shorter. In Ibn al-Athīr's account, we learn more about al-Ḥallāj's extrarodinary acts of piety during his stay in Mecca, his extended fasting, his seeking exposure to the elements without shelter, and his sojourn at Abū Qubays, allegedly waiting for God (Ibn al-Athīr 1965-1967/VIII: 126 f.). Furthermore, the circumstances of his trial and condemnation are described in more detail, as Ibn al-Athīr elaborates on the observation that some people's views on the Sufi were similar to the views held by some Christians regarding Jesus, such as people who believed he was divine, that he was commanding jinns, or that he was doing magic (ibid.). However, when summoned to the council of ulama, al-Ḥallāj swears that he has claimed neither the status of divinity or prophethood, and that he is merely a servant of God (127). The incriminating passage from his book is only read when none of the assembled ulama see any grounds to condemn him (127 f.) and even after the passage is read, Abū ʿAmar at first refuses to make his blood licit and has to be forced by Ḥāmid to do so (128). In this account, Ḥāmid is vilified, whereas Ibn al-Athīr does not appear unsympathetic toward al-Ḥallāj.[32] While Ibn al-Shiḥna's rendering of Ibn al-Athīr's text and his omission or summary of passages makes it difficult to assess Ibn al-Shiḥna's views on al-Ḥallāj, we now know that al-Rānīrī was working with a text that, in turn, was based on an account, i.e. Ibn al-Athīr's, that at the very least refused to condemn al-Ḥallāj. With this in mind, let us now turn to al-Rānīrī's version of the story in *Bustān al-Salāṭīn.* As we will see, al-Rānīrī's version, while clearly being adopted from Ibn al-Shiḥna's text, differs from it in important aspects:

> Husain ibn Mansur Hallaj fasted for a long time, and he broke his fast with water and three small pieces of bread. He walked from the land of Khurasan to the land of Iraq, until from there he went to Mecca. He lived in Mecca for about a year. Then he returned to the city of Baghdad. Sultan Muktadir was asked by his vizier Hamid that Hussein be surrendered to him. And Sultan Muktadir consented to what had been asked of him. The vizier Ḥāmid wanted to kill him, so Husain ibn Mansur was brought to an assembly of ulama and was instructed to talk to them. At the end of this affair, Wazir Hamid read from book written by Husain ibn Mansur, which read as follows: "It is mentioned in this book that whoever does not manage and is unable to go on the hajj should construct a holy house in another land. Then do not let another person enter the house after it has been built. At the time of the hajj, circumambulate by going around the house and bring them the best food to the house, and greet them, then you can be given by all those people seven dirham. It will feel the same way as going on the hajj." Qadi Abu Umar said to Husain ibn Mansur, "Oh Husain, from where did you get these words?" He replied, "from *Kitab al-Ikhlas*, by Shaykh Hasan al-Basri, may God be pleased with him." Then Qadi Abu Umar said, "What you are allowing is a falsehood. Verily, we have been in Mekka and we have heard[33] no such thing as what you are talking about." Then Wazir Hamid asked for a letter of permission from the Qadi to have Husain Ibn Mansur killed. But the Qadi was reluctant to give it to him. Then after a few days he also asked Qadi Abu Umar to be given [by him] a letter saying that Husain ibn Mansur Hallaj had to be killed. Further Wazir Hamid brought together all the ulama to kill Husain. Then Husain ibn Mansur Hallaj said, "It is not halal for you to shed my blood! Indeed, your religion is Islam and my path is the path the people of the sunna and al-jama'a. Then Wazir Hamid instructed that fatwas should go to Sultan Muktadir Billah to ask for permission to kill Husain ibn Mansur Hallaj. And Sultan Muktadir Billah gave the permission to kill him (Harun 2004: 310-312; my translation).

Comparing these two narrations of the same events, two divergences are immediately apparent. The first one is that al-Rānīr'īs version covers less, passing over both the beginning and end of Ibn al-Shiḥna's account. In the beginning, he skips al-Ḥallāj's miracles, such as his access to unseasonable fruit, his sudden presentation of money, quite literally out of thin air, and his knowledge of people's actions and thoughts. Al-Rānīr'īs account also ends before Ibn al-Shiḥna's, concluding the story quite abruptly with al-Ḥallāj's condemnation to death, but omitting the actual execution, which Ibn al-Shiḥna does relate. And the second major difference is the account of the passage that was read from al-Ḥallāj's book: Where *Rawḍ al-Manāẓir* has him instruct those who cannot afford to go on the hajj to clothe and feed orphans and to give them seven Dirham, *Bustān al-Salāṭīn* does not advise engaging in such

charitable action, but rather appears to be an instruction in how to scam people or to at least do a clever business transaction, as the recipient of the money would not be the orphans, who never appear in this version, but rather the one inviting the pilgrims to his house. This difference between Ibn al-Shiḥna's text and *Bustān al-Salāṭīn* as well as al-Rānīr'īs omission of al-Ḥallāj's miracles and knowledge do appear to point at al-Rānīr'īs intent to portray the events in fourth century Baghdad as an exemplary story of the persecution of Sufis who are fraudulent, like al-Ḥallāj. If this had indeed been his purpose, he would have had every reason to portray al-Ḥallāj negatively, thus passing over his miracles and changing the story to further discredit him.

On the other hand, there are several aspects that are rather at odds with this conclusion. First, even less so than in Ibn al-Shiḥna's account, al-Ḥallāj's Sufism is not the issue in this narrative. He is killed for being a fraud, not for being an antinomian Sufi. At best, it is conceivable that al-Ḥallāj's story was already sufficiently well-known in 17th century Aceh to not necessitate a telling of the whole story. Second, there is no parallel account of the trial of renegade adherents of the Wujūdiyya in the last chapter of *Bustān al-Salāṭīn,* which does narrate Iskandar Thānī's ascencion to the throne, but does not mention followers of Shams al-Dīn[34] or Ḥamza Fansūrī. Had al-Rānīrī wanted to draw attention to the similarity between what happened in fourth century Baghdad and the Aceh of his day, why did he not make it more explicit? And finally there is a third piece of evidence against this conclusion. Al-Rānīr'īs passing over the execution itself seems to be counterproductive if he had wanted to deter the Acehnese Sufis from their adherence to certain tenets and practices that may have been associated with the name of al-Ḥallāj and to present an example of the ulama and the king safeguarding the orthodoxy of Islam in opposition to deceitful Sufis. If this had indeed been his intention and the reason why he even dramatically ended his ʿAbbāsid history at this point to amplify the effect, why would he not want to relate the execution itself?

Another avenue to answering the question if al-Rānīrī cut off his ʿAbbāsid history to make a point about orthodoxy and the persecution of Sufis can be sought in al-Rānīr'īs background as a peripatetic Ḥaḍramī scholar. Figures like him arriving in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago from the west in the 17th and 18th centuries carried great authority. With a progressive intensification of contacts across the Indian Ocean from the 13th century onward, foreigners became incorporated more easily into new Muslim states and polities that were in communication with each other (Ho 2006: 100: f.). As Engseng Ho has argued, mobile sayyid migrants understood themselves as bringing a gift of genuine Islam and prophetic genealogy[35] to other places (92), specifically through their genealogical line through Aḥmad b. ʿĪsā the Migrant (d. 345/956), the Iraqi-born founding ancestor of the sayyid line in Ḥaḍramawt, who was a ninth-generation descendant of the Prophet Muḥammad (38). This understanding of their status based on their place of origin vis-à-vis others, their "resolute localism" (94), as Ho calls it, created "a moral geography in which qualities are attached to places, and places in turn become signs for values" (ibid.). Gujarat, at the time of al-Rānīr'īs life, was an important trading center for goods circulating between the Middle East and Southeast Asia, and China beyond, and was therefore a cosmopolitan center. During al-Rānīr'īs childhood in 1603, a book was completed in Aḥmad Ābād, the capital of Gujarat, by a fellow Ḥaḍrāmī, ʿAbd al-Qādir al-ʿAydarūs (d. 1038/1628). This book, *Al-Nūr al-Sāfir ʿan Akhbār al-Qarn al-ʿĀshir*, is an annalistic chronicle of the first thousand years of Islam, with an alternative chronology of Muḥammadan Prophetic genealogy embedded in it (125). According to Ho, *Al-Nūr al-Sāfir* represents an "imaginal cosmogony" (129) according to which the Muḥammadan Light is transported through history. In pre-Muḥammadan times this happened through the prophets, and after Muḥammad through the genealogy of the sayyids (129 f.): "Its pre-Muḥammadan spiritual travel became geographic travel, as his descendants spread out with the early Islamic conquests and beyond" (130). Thus, *Al-Nūr al-Sāfir*

propagated the idea that the prophetic spirit was disseminated into the world by Arabs, and more specifically Ḥaḍrāmī sayyids.

Another text that emerged as normative in seventeenth century Ḥaḍramī Gujarat was Muḥammad al-Shillī's (d. 1093/1682) *Al-Mashraʿ al-Rawī fī Manāqib al-Sāda al-Kirām Āl Abī ʿAlawī*, a biographical dictionary of Haḍrāmī sayyids and their various destinations in countries across the Indian Ocean. Although the text was written in Mecca, al-Shillī, originally from Tarīm, spent part of his life in India, possibly Gujarat. Ho considers *Al-Mashraʿ al-Rawī* to build and expand on al-ʿAydarūs's *Al-Nūr al-Sāfir*, with which he was familiar (139), and to represent a didactic account of the missionary and civilizing role of the sayyids (146 f.), thus formulating collective social goals for the descendants of the Haḍrāmī sayyids it enumerates. Although the publication of this book may have postdated al-Rānīrī's death, we nonetheless know that he was brought up and educated in the milieu in which these two books were studied or in which the conditions for their production already existed. His teacher, the aforementioned Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar b. ʿAbd Allāh Bā Shaybān al-Tarīmī al-Ḥaḍramī, had studied in Tarīm with the brothers of both ʿAbd al-Qādir al-ʿAydarūs and Muḥammad al-Shillī (166).

Ho's characterization of the intellectual environment of 17th century Haḍrāmī sayyids and their idea of Arab superiority and their civilizing and Islamicizing mission maps onto Paul Wormser's observations on the views al-Rānīrī expounds in his own writings. As Wormser has shown, al-Rānīrī "aggressively and militantly" (Wormser 2010: 8; my translation) heralded an Arab Sunni identity and took no interest in learning from the Southeast Asians he encountered, as is visible in his fidelity to his Arabic models in his writings as well as the total absence of any evidence of knowledge of local customs or even the Acehnese language (11). According to Wormser, we have to understand al-Rānīrī's advances against the Acehnese Sufis against this background. Al-Rānīrī's main accusation against Ḥamza Fanṣūrī and Shams al-Dīn was that in their works, they violated the doctrine of *tawḥīd* and confounded God and the cosmos. In *Ḥujjat al-Ṣiddīq li-dafʿ al-zindīq*, a work by al-Rānīrī that has been Romanized and translated by al-Attas, al-Rānīrī wrote that according to these heretics "the creatures are God's Being and the Being of God is the being of the creatures" (al-Attas 1966: 85 in Romanized Malay, 103 in English). In this work, he compares four different groups, i.e. the Mutakallimīn, the Sufis, the philosophers, and the adherents of the potentially heretical Wujūdiyya (al-Attas 1966: 82 in Romanized Malay, 99 in English). The last group, in turn, is subdivided into the *muwaḥḥida* or those who profess the unity of God, and the *mulḥida* or heretics (85 in Malay, 103 in English). Such heretics were like the Shiʿi who, he declares, believe that ʿAli b. Abī Ṭālib is an incarnation of God, the Jews, according to whom ʿUzayr is the son of God, and the Christians, who believe in the divinity of Jesus (86 f. in Romanized Malay, 104 in English). Sufis, he notes, belong to the former group of *muwaḥḥida* and are therefore not heretical.[36] His defense of Sufism is not surprising, given that he himself was initiated into several *ṭarīqa.* What is more astonishing is that al-Rānīrī continues to say that Ibn al-ʿArabī, on whom Hamzah Fansuri heavily drew in his own works, "denied and rejected the heretical Wujūdiyya" (86 in Romanized Malay, 104 in English). This shows that it was not Sufism *per se*, and not even controversial Sufi ideas such as Ibn al-ʿArabī's teachings of the simultaneous identity and non-identity of God and the cosmos, that al-Rānīrī attacked.

Wormser has shown that al-Rānīrī displayed a curious double standard when criticizing the works of Hamza Fansuri and Shams al-Dīn (Wormser 2010: 15 ff.). For example, al-Rānīrī accused Hamza Fansuri of worshipping the sun like a Zoroastrian because of his reference to the creation of the cosmos departing from the Muḥammedan Light (Voorhoeve as cited in Wormser 2010: 17 f.), although this theory of creation was, as we have seen, used in Haḍrāmī works such as al-ʿAydarūs's *Al-Nūr al-Sāfir* and even appears in the creation story of al-Rānīrī's *Bustān al-Salāṭīn.*[37] His condemnation of Hamza's

writing and the charge of sun worship is based on a very literal interpretation of Hamza's words, whereas he himself felt entitled to use the same words metaphorically. Similarly, again in *Ḥujjat al-Ṣiddīq,* he condones some people's use of *shaṭḥāiyāt* and defends them for the following reasons: "The Ṣūfīs call those who utter *shaṭḥāiyāt* 'they who are in the state of being overpowered' (*maghlūbu'l-ḥāl*) and 'they whom God has caused to be exempt from the recordings of the Pen' (*marfū ʿu'l-qalam*). It is permitted to them to utter in such a state only such words as 'I am the Truth!'" (Al-Attas 1966: 96 in Romanized Malay, 111 in English). On the other hand, "[w]hosoever utters *shaṭḥāiyāt* and believes in its interpretation as being literal without being truly extinct in his intoxication in the manner of the People of Allāh, then he is a Deviator and a Zindīq […] Such a person is to be condemned to death in this world and eternal Hell-fire in the next" (97 in Romanized Malay, 112 in English). Therefore Wormser appears to be right in saying that al-Rānīrī was thus quite capable of excusing *shaṭḥāiyāt,* but was only willing to do so for some. Unsurprisingly, we see that the criterion is ethnicity, not doctrine, as he makes clear in *Jawāhir al-ʿUlūm fī Kashiʿ al-Maʿlūm,* a text edited and translated by Johns.[38]

> [Adherents of the heretical Wujūdiyya] have gone astray because they have taken in a wrong sense the words of Shaikh Muḥi'l-Dīn al-ʿArabī in the Fuṣūṣ (al-Hikam) (sic): The world of God is manifested through all His attributes. Likewise, they have misinterpreted the words of shaikh ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Jīlī[39] in his book Sharḥ Mishkāt Futuhāt: There is no division between God and the world, for He is the world and the world is He… God forbid that ibn al-ʿArabī should have meant what the heretics (*zindīḳ*) mean when he said: the world is God. Indeed what ibn al-ʿArabī meant is clear to anyone who has the least idea of Ṣūfism namely that the meaning of *tajallī* is manifestation.

In brief, as Wormser has said, whereas the sentence "the world is God', when uttered by Hamza Fansuri, Shams al-Dīn, and their Malay followers, is heretical, the Arab Sufis are defended for the same sentence (Wormser 2010: 17). The difference was not one of theological doctrine or orthodoxy, but simply one of ethnicity: because they were not Arabs, and perhaps because they were newly converted and supposedly did not understand the fundamental principles of Islam or the subtleties of the Arabic language, because they tended to misunderstand, and to take things too literally (cf. Daudy 1987: 30 f.). the Malays had no business occupying themselves with Sufism.[40]

Conclusion

With al-Rānīrī's militant Arab chauvinism in mind, a deliberate changing of al-Ḥallāj's story to deter the Acehnese from Sufism appears even more unlikely. Al-Ḥallāj may not have been a sayyid, but he was an Arab, and if the pattern explained above is applicable here as well, al-Rānīrī would have had no objections to an Arab Sufi. Since he did not hesitate in his other works to give permissions and make accommodations for Arab Sufis that he would withhold from the Malays, it seems quite unlikely that he would do differently in his history. In the light of the available evidence, it seems more likely that al-Rānīrī was working with an incomplete manuscript. The story's abrupt ending suggests that this might have been the case, as I have noted above. The fact that in his account al-Ḥallāj is not even portrayed as comparable to the adherents of the Wujūdiyya against which he was railing in Aceh makes the explanation that he wanted to achieve a rhetorical effect by means of the abrupt ending rather implausible, as does as his pro-Arab bias. Of course this leaves open the question of why al-Rānīrī's story differs from Ibn al-Shiḥna's in a way that makes al-Ḥallāj appear in an unfavorable light. It is conceivable that al-Rānīrī's manuscript of *Rawḍ al-Manāẓir* was not only incomplete, but also defective, and that the changes thus occurred through no intention of his own. Perhaps future research can compare Ibn al-Shiḥna's and al-Rānīrī's histories more extensively and based on more manuscripts and editions than the present paper was able to. But for now, we may conclude that an incomplete manscript was the most

likely reason for *Bustān al-Salāṭīn*'s curious divergence from *Rawḍ al-Manāẓir* through such a strange lucuna, and appreciate the not strictly theological basis of al-Rānīrī's policies in Aceh.

Endnotes

[1] For a detailed list of al-Rānīr'īs works and his Arabic models cf. Wormser 2010: 4 ff.

[2] Al-Attas has suggested that al-Rānīrī's mother was Malay because of al-Rānīrī's command of the Malay language (Al-Attas 1966: 12). Wormser considers this unlikely because Malay communities overseas were very rare at the time (Wormser 2012: 41).

[3] Azra 2004: 58 f. Wormser is more circumspect, emphasizing that we do not know for certain (Wormser 2012: 42). Ho also notes that the sayyid-stranger was a known type across the Indian Ocean at that time and that personal acquaintance was not necessary for accessing the courts (Ho 2006: 98).

[4] Hamza Fansūrī (d. 933/1527 in Mecca) from the North Sumatran city of Barus was the first Malay Muslim writer we know. Although three prose works are attributed to him, his is better known for his poetry (Guillot & Kalus 2000).

[5] The term wujūdiyyah, those adhering to the unity of being, is a polemical term that long predated al-Rānīrī, having been used by Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) and al-Taftāzānī (d. 790/1390) with regard to Ibn al-ʿArabī and his followers (Knysh 1999: 124, 149).

[6] Cf. Al-Attas (1966: 16) for a translation of al-Rānīrī's own account of the persecution: "The entire ʿUlamā of Islām pronounced against them the *fatwā* of unbelief and condemned them to death… Some of them acknowledged the charge of unbelief levelled against them, and some recanted whilst others refused to recant… Thus were executed the host of unbelievers."

[7] As Pieter Sourij complained in his diary, "all the world seems to be infected with muddle-heads, much delaying our business" (as cited in Ito 1978: 490).

[8] For this paper I have used Jelani Harun's Romanized edition of Books I and II, which is primarily based on MS Raffles 8 in the Royal Asiatic Society, London. For reasons of time and the scarce availability of sources, I was not able to consult another edition or manuscript.

[9] The kingdom of Melaka was Islamized in the course of the 15th century and expanded to include the Malay Peninsula, east Sumatra, and the islands in the Strait of Melaka (Federspiel 2007: 49). It was conquered by the Portuguese in 1511. Pahang was the place of origin of the Acehnese Sultan at al-Rānīrī's time, Iskandar Thānī, whose noble genealogy and legitimacy as a Muslim ruler was meant to be confirmed in this chapter (Wormser 2012: 63).

[10] My study of this text is based on my examination of a printed edition from 1997 by Dar al-Kotob al-Ilmiyah (DKI), Beirut, which, in turn, is a transcription of a manuscript available at the Library of Ahmad III, Istanbul. Because of Wormser's warning that this edition is quite incomplete (Wormser 2012: 40), I have also used two manuscripts (Bibliothèque Nationale de France Manuscript Arabe MS 1538 and probably Majlis Library MS 1647, henceforth only referenced as MS 1538 and MS 1647, respectively) to check for variations, which are quite negligible for the parts of interest to this paper, but which are nonetheless indicated whenever applicable.

[11] It is unclear why al-Rānīrī used Ibn al-Shiḥna's history. *Rawḍ al-Manāẓir* neither appears in survey works of Islam in Southeast Asia (Riddell 2001; Azra 2004) nor Ḥaḍramī traditions (Freitag 2003; Ho 2006) nor in two catalogues of Arabic manuscripts in Jakarta I was able to consult (van den Berg 1877; van Ronkel 1913).

[12] Cf. Ibn al-Shihna 1997: 13. If we join Wormser (2012: 77) and Massignon (1982v.4: 39) in accepting this birth and death date, we have to assume that the author of *Rawḍ al-Manāẓir* is different from another historian and fellow Ḥanafī *qāḍī* with the same name, the author of *Al-Durr al-muntakhab li-tārīkh Ḥalab*, who died in 890/1485 (cf. EI^2, Sourdel 2012). According to Ohta, the former was the father of the latter, and their similar names as well as both of their appointments as Hanafi qadis has led scholars to misattribute the father's work to the son (Ohta 1990: 4).

[13] Al-Malik al-Ẓāhir Sayf al-Dīn was the 24th Mamlūk Sultan and the first of the Circassian dynasty (r. 784/1382 - 801/1399, with a short interregum of his rival Hajjī in 791/1389 - 792/1390) (cf. EI^2, Wiet 2012).

[14] Al-Malik al-Nāṣir Zayn al-Dīn Faraj, al-Malik al-Ẓāhir Sayf al-Dīn's son, was the 26th Mamlūk Sultan (r. 801/1399 - 815/1412, with a 70-day long interregnum of his brother, al-Malik al-Manṣūr, in 808/1405). It is unclear in which revolt Ibn al-Shiḥna participated, since Faraj made a total of seven campaigns to Syria during his reign (EI^2, Wansbrough 2012).

[15] Although they are not part of his history, al-Rānīrī made use of some of the content of these chapters in Book I of *Bustān al-Salāṭīn,* where he describes the geography of the world (Wormser 2012: 78).

[16] More specifically, al-Ṭabarī's annalistic history goes until the year 301, under which he lists al-Hallāj's and his companion's apprehension in the house of vizier Alī b. Īsā and his torture. He explains that he has heard that the reason for his punishmant was that al-Hallāj claimed divine status. He was executed after a long time in prison, a point in time which al-Ṭabarī does not specify further, because he captivated many people (Ṭabarī 1960-[1977] /X: 147). Massignon considers this episode to be authentic, although it does not appear in all manuscripts (Massignon 1982/I: 456 f.), a view which Rosenthal shares (cf. Rosenthal 1985: 200 n.948).

[17] MS 1538: Ḥussain b. Mansūr al-Ḥallāj.

[18]DKI: *yajmaʿu*; MS 1538 and MS 1647: *yukhriju* (to extract, to take out of a pocket or bag).

[19]DKI and MS 1647: *mamlūʾa*; this word is missing in MS 1538.

[20]This is a Qur'ānic citation (112 Al-Ikhlās 1).

[21]DKI, MS 1647: *bihi*; MS 1538: *bidhālik*. The two expressions are approximately coterminous.

[22]Ibn al-Shiḥna is likely suggesting that those who had been captivated by al-Ḥallāj disagreed with each other about al-Ḥallāj's nature and whether he was divine, like the Christians, e.g. Miaphysites and Chalcedonians, disagreed about the nature or natures of Jesus. This is also confirmed by the account of Ibn al-Athīr's *Al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh* (cf. Ibn al-Athīr 1965-1967/VIII: 126), which served as Ibn al-Shiḥna's model, as we will see below.

[23]Ḥāmid b. al-Abbās succeded Ibn al-Furāt as vizier in 306 and was expelled in 311 by his assistant and rival ʿAlī b. ʿĪsā b. al-Jarrāḥ. He died soon after, probably poisoned (EI[2] Massignon 2012).

[24]ʿAbbāsid caliph (r. 295-320).

[25]DKI: *bi-ḥuḍūr;* MS 1538 and MS 1647: *bi-ḥaḍrat.* The two terms are approximately coterminous.

[26]DKI, MS 1647: *naẓīfan*; MS 1538: *laṭīfan* (pleasant, agreeable).

[27]In DKI, the qāḍī is not identified here. In MS 1538 and MS 1647, it is *al-qāḍī Abū ʿAmar*.

[28]Although all three editions agree that this qāḍī's name was Abū ʿAmar, Massignon refers to him as Abū ʿUmar, a Mālikite qāḍī who died in 320 (Massignon 1982/IV: 7). Abū ʿUmar is also the name that is given in *Bustān al-Salāṭīn.*

[29]The word *ayyāman* is found in all three versions (DKI, MS 1538, and MS 1647), but its meaning is not clear to me.

[30]DKI: *ajāba*; MS 1538 *fa-arsala idhnahu* (sent his permission); MS 1647: *ajābahu* (responded to him).

[31]Ibn al-Athīr, in turn, drew heavily on al-Ṭabarī's history for the early period (Robinson 98), although for the events around al-Ḥallāj, he used other sources that I have not yet identified. His history is furthermore characterized by his attempt to make it appeal to a wide audience, therefore eliminating *isnāds* and summarizing or omitting difficult passages in its models (99), which was possibly the reason why it was chosen by Ibn al-Shiḥna.

[32]Another indicator that Ibn al-Athīr considered al-Ḥallāj innocent is that Ibn al-Athīr's brother, Majd al-Dīn (d. 606/1210), a Shāfiʿī fāqih, made the pronouncement of *iʿtidhār* (justification with excuse) regarding al-Ḥallāj (Massignon 1982/II: 37; cf. also EI[2] Massignon & Gardet 2012). While this is no conclusively evidence ʿIzz al-Dīn's view on the matter, the brothers' shared upbringing and education (EI[2] Rosenthal 2012) at least indicate a likelihood.

[33]Harun's edition reads "kami dengan dalam Makkah tiada ada seperti katamu ini" (Harun 2004: 311). The word *dengan* (Eng.: with) must be a mistake, surely what is meant is *dengar* (Eng.: to hear), which not only fits better into the sentence's syntax but also agrees with the same passage in *Rawḍ al-Manāẓir*.

[34]Shams al-Dīn himself is mentioned briefly in the passage on the reign of Iskandar Muda. Recording his death on 1037, al-Rānīrī notes that Shams al-Dīn was a well-known scholar well versed in all the sciences, including Sufism. There is no tone of accusation or polemic to this note (Harun 2004: 341 f.).

[35]To our knowledge, al-Rānīrī did not marry in Aceh, but historical reports from smaller Buginese and Malay sultanates from the 18th century narrate the marriage of sayyids to local princesses, thus entering the royal lineages in the archipelago and bringing the gift of genealogy. (Ho 2006: 1972).

[36]The text does not explain if all Sufis are also part of the *muwaḥḥid* group or if there are Sufis who do not belong to the Wujūdiyyah. The latter seems likely, since the category of Sufis separate from the two groups of Wujūdiyyah would not be necessary. It is equally possible that al-Rānīrī was not interested in a strict taxonomy but rather enumerated these groups for pedagogical or polemical reasons.

[37]Specifically, al-Rānīrī writes: "When He wanted to make apparent His divine being, He created light […] and from this light all the prophets were created and all degrees (*martabat*) were illuminated by Him (Harun 2004: 1; my translation).

[38]Johns 1957: 104 Romanized Malay, 105 English; cf. also Daudy 1987: 33 f. for an edition of another one of al-Rānīrī's texts (*Al-Fatḥ al-Mubīn*), in which he makes the same point about the legitimacy of *shaṭḥāiyāt.*

[39]Al-Jīlī (d. around 832/1428) was a famous adherent of Ibn al-ʿArabī, to whose *Futūhāt al-Makkiyya* he wrote a commentary. His understanding of key concepts, such as *al-Insān al-Kamīl*, is quite similar to Ibn al-ʿArabī's (EI[2] Ritter 2012).

[40]Cf. Wormser 2010: 29. Of course, as Al-Attas (1970: 31-65) and Wormser (2010: 19 f.) have shown, these reservations against Hamzah Fansuri and Shams al-Dīn on the basis of their learning and their knowledge of Islam were quite groundless. Irrespective of his learning, Hamza Fansuri's orthodoxy remains contested, just like Ibn al-ʿArabī's. Whereas al-Attas (1966: 20) considers him an orthodox Sufi, Johns (1957: 30) calls Hamza and Shams al-Dīn "Pantheists of an extreme kind".

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