ORIGINAL ARTICLES

The Role of the Malay Archipelago Scholars in Terengganu in the Development of the Shafi’i Sect

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ABSTRACT

The influence of the Shafi’i sect in Terengganu is apparent to others less prominent schools of thought. The influence of this sect cannot be obtained except by recalling the history and background of Islamization in the state. This can be seen from the point of receipt and return-oriented preachers Shafi’i, local scholars and works of local scholars. Hence this paper will delve into the influences of the Shafi’i sect in Terengganu so strong that it can influence the educational practices, legal and production of a fatwa.

Key words: The Scholars of the Malay Archipelago, the Shafi’i Sect, Terengganu.

Introduction

This article answers the question of how the Shafi’i sect achieved dominance among the Terengganu Malay community, leading to their contribution towards the comprehensive strengthening of education, law and the issuance of Shafi’i sect-based rulings. What were the elements that contributed towards its growth and following amongst the community through the education and legal system, and an organised ruling system. Did the background of religious leaders, religious masters, essays used in both formal and informal learning help to strengthen the understanding and practice of the Islamic community in Terengganu of this sect, and reinforced from the aspect of legal and institutions of rulings (fatwa).

In answering the question, this article shall indentify the principle role these scholars of the Malay Archipelago played to spread the Shafi’i sect, especially in the education, legal and ruling (fatwa) issuance areas. The primary method employed in this article is to use field studies and analysis of ancient written materials. Information acquired was then formulated and analysed qualitatively.

Arrival of Islam in Terengganu:

Terengganu is one of the oldest states in Malay Peninsula especially, and in South East Asia generally. The earliest information found can be traced to the Ptolemy Map, Claudius (127-151 A.D.). From the era of early Christianity, Terengganu was, as noted by Ptolemy, known as "Primula" (Kuala Terengganu) as well as 'Kole' which possibly refers to Kuala Kemaman (Cohen, Bernard. 1966; Muhammad Salleh bin H. Awang 1978).

The acceptance of Islam in Terengganu is indeed special and unique. Islamization in Terengganu was recorded on the Terengganu Inscription Stone (TIS), found in the year 1902 at Kampung Buluh, Hulu Terengganu (Engku Pangiran Anum. 1961). It is however thought that the acceptance of Islam in Terengganu occurred earlier than the date inscribed on the TIS. This is because as at the date proclaimed on the TIS, Islam had been firmly established in Terengganu. The date Islam was declared on the TIS was Friday, Rajab, 702 Hejira (Shafie b. Abu Bakar. 2003). Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas (1970) stated that that date would be equivalent to 22nd February, 1303 A.D.

According to Amir Syarifuddin (1995), the date of acceptance of Islam followed the trend of Islamization of that time occurring in other areas, such as Pasai in the year 1282 A.D., which had close relationship with Malay states on the east coast. Historically, Pasai was one of the centres of the rapid growth of Islam in the Malay Archipelago. Muslim preachers from the Arab Peninsula such as Mecca and Hadramaut, Yemen were from Shafi’i sect.

The spread of Islam in Terengganu may be said to be closely connected with the acceptance of Islam in particular in Pasai. This is as in the 13th century, Pasai was an important port for Muslim traders. Kuala Berang

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