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INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA
بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

**THE INFLUENCE OF AL-GHAZZALI ON
EIGHTEENTH AND NINETEENTH CENTURY
MALAY THINKERS AND THEIR WORKS,
WITH AN ANALYSIS OF SHAYKH 'ABD AL-
SAMAD AL-PALIMBANI'S *SIYAR AL-SALIKIN*, A
MALAY RENDITION OF THE *MUKHTASAR
IHYA' 'ULUM AL-DIN***

BY

MEGAWATI MORIS

**INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY
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requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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MALAYSIA**

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ABSTRACT

It is a widely-held claim that Abu-Hamid al-Ghazzali, popularly known as Hujjat al-Islam, had a great and profound influence on the religious life and thought of the Malays. However, no in-depth and systematic study has been undertaken to demonstrate the extent of his influence. This study aims to fill this gap by attempting to show his influence on Malay thinkers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries through the medium of translations and commentaries of his works into Malay-Jawi. The text chosen to examine the influence of his teachings and the response of the Malay scholars is the *Siyar al-salikin*, a Malay rendition of the *Mukhtashar ihya' ulum al-din* written by Shaykh 'Abd al-Samad al-Palimbani. This study which utilized both methods of survey and textual analysis has shown that al-Ghazzali's influence was present in the Malay world from the introduction of Islam to the nineteenth century in various forms and with varying degrees of intensity. This influence culminated during the period under study with the appearance of his works in Malay. These works consisted of literal translations and translations-cum-commentaries of al-Ghazzali's basic books on Sufism. Malay works of the latter category have become larger and more comprehensive than their originals with the inclusion of teachings of other thinkers encompassing the tripartite sciences of the principles of religion (*ushul al-din*), jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and Sufism (*tashawwuf*) within the framework of Ash'arite theology, Shafi'i-jurisprudence and Ghazzalian Sufism. An examination of the *Siyar* has shown that 'Abd al-Samad incorporated the Sufi doctrine of the seven degrees of the soul and the controversial metaphysical doctrine of the seven levels of Being derived from al-Burhanpuri and accommodated them within the general framework of al-Ghazzali's Sufism. These additions have made the *Siyar* a complete Malay text containing knowledge from jurisprudence to metaphysics. 'Abd al-Samad, by elucidating the doctrines in al-Ghazzali's *Ihya'*, the teachings on the soul and Ibn al-'Arabi's metaphysics, also addressed the root problems of knowledge and orthodoxy faced by the Malay Muslim community during his time. From the findings derived from the analysis of the *Siyar* we can conclude that these Malay works are the agents for the transmission of al-Ghazzali's perspectives and teachings with the dual purpose of educating as well as commenting on local issues and concerns. The Malay scholars led by 'Abd al-Samad have proven through their works, the depth of their understanding of al-Ghazzali's teachings as well as their creativity and versatility in making this received knowledge relevant and useful.

ملخص البحث

يُزعم أنّ أبا حميد الغزالي -حجّة الإسلام- أثر على حياة و فكر الملايويين الدينية أثراً عميقاً. هدف هذا البحث أن يكشف أثر الغزالي على المفكرين عن طريق شرح الملايويين و ترجمة كتبه إلى اللغة الجاوية الملايوية خلال القرن الثامن عشر إلى التاسع عشر. و المتن الذي أختير ليحقق فيه أثر تعليمات الغزالي هو: "سير السالكين" و هو مختصر كتاب إحياء علوم الدين، صنّفه الشيخ عبد الصّمد الفلمباني. يستخدم هذا البحث المنهجين؛ المعاينة و التحليل النصّي، قد أظهر أنّ أثر الغزالي كان موجوداً في العالم الملايوي من زمن انتشار الإسلام إلى القرن التاسع عشر في صور متعددة. و إنّ قد أثبت أنّ أثر الغزالي ارتفع عمودياً في أثناء المدّة التي دُرست فيها كتبه أثناء ظهورها باللغة الملايوية. و هذه التصنيفات احتوت على ترجمة نقيّة و ترجمة شارح كتبه في التصرّف الأساسي. و صارت التصنيفات الملايوية في القسم الثاني أضخم و أجمع من أصلها مع تضمن تعليمات المفكرين الآخرين، فهي منحصرة في العلوم الثلاثة؛ أصول الدين و الفقه و التصرّف في ضمن قالب كلام الأشعرية و الفقه الشافعي و التصرّف للغزالي. تحقيق السير قد أظهر أنّ عبد الصّمد ألحق العقيدة الخلوطية في سبع مراتب الروح بالعقيدة الفلسفة الأولى المتناقضة في سبع مراتب الوجود صدرت من البرهاننوري و وقّفا في هيكل تصوّف الغزالي العامّ. هذه الإضافات جعلت السير متناً كاملاً ملايويّاً شامل العلم من الشريعة إلى ما وراء الطبيعات. خاطبَ عبد الصّمد بشرح العقائد في أحياء الغزالي و تعليمات الروح و ما وراء الطبيعات لإبن العربي. مشكلات التعليم الأساسية و/أرثونكسي قابلها مجمع المسلمين الملايوية في زمانه. نحن نستطيع أن نستنتج من المعلومات المشتقة بتحليل السير أنّ التصنيفات الملايوية وكيلاً لإرسال تعليم و نظرية الغزالي مع المقصود المثني: التعليم، و تعليق المسائل المحليّة. العلماء الذين قاندهم عبد الصّمد قد أثبتوا بتصنيفاتهم عموق فهمهم تعليم الغزالي و أيضاً اخترعهم و مهارتهم في جعل العلم الحاصل موافقاً و مفيداً.

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation of Megawati Moris has been approved by the following:

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

Megawati Moris

Signature

Date

INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

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To my forefathers

Whose spiritual and intellectual legacies make me proud to be a Malay

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Abu>Hāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Tūsi>al-Ghazzālī¹ (d. 505/1111), is one of the most significant figures in Islam. He occupies an important and influential position in its religious and intellectual life. He has been given such titles as the Proof of Islam (*ḥujjat al-Islām*), the Ornament of Faith (*zayn al-dīn*) and the Renewer of Religion (*mujaddid*) to attest to his prominent role and profound influence in the Muslim community. He is considered by many Muslims to be the greatest figure in Islam after the four Caliphs, (*al-khulafa' al-rashidun*) and some acclaim him to be the greatest Muḥammad after the Prophet (Muḥammad).²

¹ In this work, his name is spelled with double 'z' following the standard (*mashhu'*) view i.e., the *nishah* derived from 'Ghazzaḥ' which denotes spinner or vendor of spun yarn, an occupation his father is said to have held. The alternative view is that it is spelled with one 'z' which is derived from 'Ghazala,' the name of a village near Tūsi which was his birth place. For an elaboration of the debate on the two views, see W. Montgomery Watt, *Muslim intellectual: A study of al-Ghazali*, (Edinburgh: The Edinburgh University Press, 1963), 181-183. See also D. B. MacDonald, "The Name al-Ghazzālī?" *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, (1902): 18-22 and S. M. Zwemer, *A Moslem Seeker after God: Showing Islam at its best in the life and teaching of al-Ghazzālī> mystic and theologian of the eleventh Century*, (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1920), 63-5 and 140-43.

² For example 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sha'raṇi>and Taḥ al-Dīn al-Subkī>(d. 771/1370) held him in such high esteem. Al-Subkī>said, "If there had been a prophet after Muḥammad, it surely would have been al-Ghazzālī>." Quoted by al-Zabīdī>in *Ithāf al-saḍat al-muttaqīn*, 1:9 from al-Subkī's, *Tḥbaqa' al-Shaḥī'yyah al-kubra>* For an account of his life, see the **Classical sources**, for example, Taḥ al-Dīn al-Subkī> *Tḥbaqa' al-Shaḥī'yyah al-kubra>* 10 vols., ed. Maḥmūd Muḥammad al-Tanāḥi>and 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Muḥammad al-Hālu> (Cairo: Da' Ihya>al-Kutub al-'Arabiyyah/Faisḥal 'Isa>al-Bābī>al-Hālabī, n.d.), 6:191-389; Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Hūsaynī>al-Murtadḥ>al-Zabīdī> *Ithāf al-saḍat al-muttaqīn bi-sharḥ>asra' ihya' ulum al-dīn*, 8 vols., (Cairo: Da' al-Fikr, 1311/1893-94), 1:6-64. There is also a compilation of the principal traditional biographies of al-Ghazzālī>in Arabic by 'Abd al-Karīm al-'Uthmān, *Sirat al-Ghazzālī>wa aqwa' al-mutaqaddimīn fihi*, (Damascus: Da' al-fikr, 1960). For an English translation of major portions of 'Abd al-Ghaḥīr al-Fārisī>s (d. 529/1129) biography, included in the compilation and considered the most authentic, see R. J. McCarthy, *Freedom and fulfillment: An annotated translation of al-Ghazālī's al-Munqidh min al-dḥlāḥ and other relevant works of al-Ghazālī>* (Boston: Twayne Publishers), 1980, xiv-xxi. New Edition of this book: *Al-Ghazali: Deliverance from error, five key texts including his spiritual biography, al-Munqidh min al-dḥlāḥ*, (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 1999). **Modern sources** on his life in English are now abundant but the standard references are for example, Duncan B. Macdonald, "The Life of al-Ghazzālī> with especial reference to his religious experiences and opinions," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 20 (1899): 71-132; Margaret Smith, *Al-Ghazālī>the mystic*, (Lahore: Hijra International Publishers, 1983); W. Montgomery Watt, *Muslim intellectual: A study of al-Ghazālī>*; M. Saeed Sheikh, "Al-Ghazālī>" in *A history of Muslim philosophy*, 2 vols., ed. M. M. Sharif, (New Delhi: Low Price Publications, 1995), 1:581-87; and

As a thinker and scholar he is renowned for his breadth as well as depth of learning. He was well accomplished in the religious sciences of jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and theology (*kalām*) and at thirty years old was the foremost authority on Shafī‘ī Law.³ At the age of thirty-four he already held the coveted Shafī‘ī-Islamic Law and Jurisprudence Chair at the Nizāmiyyah University in Baghdad. He studied philosophy (*falsafah*) on his own without a master⁴ and after having read extensively and understood completely the doctrines of the philosophers he embarked on the decisive and consequential attack of the Muslim philosophers and their doctrines which is contained in his seminal work *Tahāfut al-falasifah* (*The incoherence of the philosophers*). Al-Ghazzālī was also a great logician and was responsible for the Islamization of logic by drawing equivalent terms from the Qur’ān with those used in Greek philosophy. Some of the “Islamized” terminology of formal logic (*al-mantiq al-sharīf*) are found in his elaborate work, *Mi‘yār al-‘ilm* (*The standard of knowledge*). Despite, and in spite of, his knowledge and intellectual accomplishments he fell into religious doubt and experienced a spiritual crisis which led him to search for certitude (*yaqīn*) and faith (*īmān*). His search and experience caused an inner realization on the necessity of Sufism as the only cure to skepticism and means of attaining to certitude. Henceforth, he was convinced that Sufism is the highest

Gerhard Bowering, “Gazālī: i. Biography” in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. 10, fascicle 4, (1985), 358-63. There is also an excellent website on al-Ghazzālī which provides important information on his life and works from primary and secondary sources, as well as current research on him at <http://www.ghazali.org/>

³ His legal writings include the compendia known as *al-Basīṭ*, *al-wasīṭ* and *al-wajīz* and his treatise on the foundations of Islamic jurisprudence entitled *al-Muṣṭafā min ‘ilm al-uṣūl*

⁴ As claimed by al-Ghazzālī himself in his autobiographical work *al-Munqidh min al-dhalaḥ* (*Deliverance from Error*) in R. J. McCarthy, *Freedom and fulfillment*, 70 and in *The faith and practice of al-Ghazzālī*, trans., W. M. Watt, (Oxford: One World Publications, 1994), 29. It is said that because he didn’t have a master he misunderstood some of the arguments of the philosophers and accused them of infidelity.

aspect of the religion and dedicated his remaining life towards the practice and teaching of this discipline. In his own words, he said:

I knew with certainty that the Sufis are those who uniquely follow the way to God Most High, their mode of life is the best of all, their way the most direct of ways, and their ethic the purest. Indeed, were one to combine the insight of the intellectuals, the wisdom of the wise, and the lore of scholars versed in the mysteries of revelation in order to change a single item of Sufi conduct and ethic and to replace it with something better, no way to do so would be found.⁵

It is widely recognized that al-Ghazzali accomplished two important tasks in his life which had great significance in Islamic history.⁶ First, he curtailed the power of rationalism in Islam. His attack on philosophy had the effect of limiting the excessive rationalism in Islamic thought and changed the direction of Islamic philosophy. It created a conducive environment and prepared the ground for the spread of the Illuminationist (*ishraqi*) philosophy of Shihab al-Din Yahya al-Suhrawardi (d. 587/1191) and the doctrinal Sufism (*ma'rifah*, *'irfaan*) of Ibn al-'Arabi (d. 638/1240). The claim that his attack destroyed philosophy can be countered by the presence of philosophy after his death especially in the eastern lands of Islam, such as Persia and certain parts of Iraq and India, in which his philosophical writings had a great influence on later philosophers including the great Persian metaphysician and sage Mulla Sadra (d. 1640 C.E.) who founded the school of transcendent theosophy (*al-hikmah al-muta'aliyah*).⁷ Al-Ghazzali had no intention of destroying

⁵ Al-Ghazzali in *Al-Munqidh min al-dhalal*, trans. R. J. McCarthy, *Freedom and fulfillment*, 94.

⁶ A vast amount of literature in English discusses on these two tasks he accomplished, for example, Margaret Smith, *Al-Ghazali the mystic*, 209-17, 227-36; W. Montgomery Watt, *Muslim intellectual*, 172-180; M. Saeed Sheikh, "Al-Ghazali," in *A history of Muslim philosophy*, 592-95, 617-18; Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Three Muslim sages*, (Lahore: Suhail Academy, 1988), 53-55, 88-89 and *The faith and practice of al-Ghazali*, trans. W. Montgomery Watt, 13.

⁷ According to S. H. Nasr, Mulla Sadra knew intimately al-Ghazzali's teachings and were influenced by them. He was well-versed with the latter's works on philosophy, *kalam* and *tashawwuf*, especially the *Ihya'*, and quoted them in his own works. In addition, Mulla Muhsin Fayd Kashani, one of Mulla Sadra's famous students, wrote a Shi'ite version of the *Ihya'* entitled *Mahhajjat al-bayda' fi-ihya' al-*

Islamic philosophy but only wanted to restrict the excessive rationalistic tendencies of the philosophers whose doctrines went against the tenets of the Islamic Revelation.⁸

Second, al-Ghazzali made Sufism official and acceptable in Sunni orthodox circles which consequently led to its teachings being taught openly even in the religious schools or *madrasas*. This rapprochement between orthodoxy and Sufism was brought about and made a success by his writings on Sufism as well as his authority and influence as a jurist and theologian. Although from time to time there were attacks made on Sufism they did not succeed in eliminating the respect of the religious community for the Sufis.⁹ His defense of Sufism additionally served as an important function in determining the status given to the Sufi orders and their doctrines and practices in the Muslim community.¹⁰ In a larger context, al-Ghazzali was important for his efforts to revive the ethical norms of Islamic society having lived during a time when it was experiencing a state of moral and religious decadence.¹¹ He revived ethics by breathing into it Sufism, specifically, by emphasizing and clarifying spiritual meaning into right action. Through his writings, for example the *Ihya' 'ulum al-din* (*Revivication of the religious sciences*), he elaborated on the inner meaning and significance of Islamic devotional practices (*'ibadat*) besides discussing just the legal questions. In such a work, he exteriorized certain teachings of Sufism or esotericism in order to protect it and allow it freedom

ihya': See Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Sadr al-Din Shirazi and his transcendent theosophy: Background, life and works*, (Tehran: Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy, 1978), 21-8, 73-4 and 81 note 10.

⁸ S. H. Nasr, *Three Muslim sages*, p. 53.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 88-89.

¹⁰ If al-Ghazzali was noted, more than anyone else, to have prepared the way for the general recognition of Sufism, it was his younger contemporary 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani who made the recognition fully operative. See Martin Lings, *What is Sufism*, (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1993), 111.

¹¹ For a brief sketch of this time of turmoil during which al-Ghazzali lived and wrote his works, see R. J. McCarthy, *Freedom and fulfillment*, ix-xii.

to be practiced, within the official confines of exotericism, in the Muslim community.¹²

It is clear that in terms of al-Ghazzali's influence in the Muslim world, it is at once profound, pervasive and abiding. He left a remarkable legacy which continues to exert influence and stimulate thought and activity in the religious life of both ordinary and intellectual Muslim even after nearly nine hundred years of his death. The influence of his teachings, which stress the importance of religious knowledge and right action, is not only present in the heartland of Islam and its surrounding areas but also reached regions located in the peripheries, such as the Malay Archipelago. His works which encompass nearly every sphere of Islamic thought ranging from law and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) to logic (*mantiq*), philosophy (*falsafah*) and theology (*kalām*) and culminating in Sufism (*tashawwuf*) continue being taught, studied and commented upon by Muslims until today obviously because of their abiding relevance. Perhaps, as G. Bowering concluded, the only ambiguity in relation to his influence is: "given the great volume of Ghazzali's writings, it is difficult to state succinctly the significance and influence of his life and work."¹³

In the West, al-Ghazzali's intellectual influence was indisputable especially on the Latin scholastics of medieval times. The translation of his *Maqasid al-falasifah* into Latin (*Logica et philosophia Algazelis Arabis*)¹⁴ had a great impact on the scholastics, such as St. Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274 C.E.), who identified him as a Peripatetic philosopher.¹⁵ It was partly due to the influence of this work and that of Ibn Sina's *Kitab al-shifa'* (*Sufficientia* in Latin) that eventually led to a new kind of

¹² S. H. Nasr, *Three Muslim sages*, 88-89 and Osman Bakar, *Classification of knowledge in Islam: A study in Islamic philosophies of science*, (Kuala Lumpur: Institute for Policy Research, 1992), 171.

¹³ G. Bowering, "Ghazzali", 362.

¹⁴ By Dominic Gundisalvi in the twelfth century. See G. Bowering, "Ghazzali" 360.

¹⁵ For a study of the *Maqasid*'s influence on St. Thomas see T. Hanley, "St. Thomas' use of al-Ghazzali's *Maqasid al-falasifa*," *Medieval Studies*, vol. XLIV (1982): 243-70.

theological writing in Latin which related theology with physics and metaphysics.¹⁶ Presently, there is still great interest in his thought and works. Translations of his books into English and other Western languages are being produced by Western scholars on Islam and books on him and his ideas are also continually being written and studied.¹⁷

The same elements of pervasiveness, authority and relevance are present in relation to his religious and intellectual influence in the Malay world,¹⁸ the geographical domain of interest in this study. It is claimed that al-Ghazzali's teachings were already known by the Malays during the thirteenth century or even earlier when Islam was brought into the Archipelago and spread by the Sufis who were well-versed in his teachings. However, his influence was slowly established through his works with the consolidation of Islam among the Malays and consequentially, with their interest to study the Islamic sciences in a more in-depth

¹⁶ W. Montgomery Watt, *The influence of Islam on medieval Europe*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1972), 69.

¹⁷ This interest is very much evident as reflected in the research projects and other intellectual activities carried out and listed in the al-Ghazzali's website.

¹⁸ In this study, the terms 'Malay World' and 'Malay Archipelago' are used interchangeably. Occasionally, the term 'Southeast Asia' is also used to signify the same meaning. By these three terms is meant the region which has been the home of people of the Malay racial stock and whose *lingua franca*, historically and presently, is Malay. This region comprises present day Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, South Thailand and the Philippines. For definition, see Osman Bakar, "Sufism in the Malay-Indonesian World" in *Islamic spirituality: Manifestations*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, (New York: Crossroad, 1991), 287 note 1. It is significant to point out that there is no uniformity among scholars in their usage of these terms and the meanings applied to them. For example, according to Wan Mohd Shaghir Abdullah, these three terms are not similar: 'Malay World' (*Alam Melayu*) covers a bigger area than that of present day 'Southeast Asia' (*Asia Tenggara*) and 'Malay Archipelago' (*Nusantara*) an even smaller area than 'Southeast Asia' (*Asia Tenggara*) since it forms only the 'Indonesian Archipelago.' Additionally, another common term used in old Malay texts, '*Tanah Jawi*' (Land of the Jawi/Jawah) can be considered to be equivalent to 'Southeast Asia' (*Asia Tenggara*). See Wan Mohd Shaghir Abdullah, "Tiga zaman pembentukan istilah ilmu keislaman di Asia Tenggara," International Conference for Terminology Planning, Kuala Lumpur, 20-22 November, 1990, 1. A Dutch study by B. H. M. Vlekke entitled *Nusantara* (The Hague, 1965) has shown that the original meaning of '*Nusantara*' as used in fifteenth century Javanese texts is, 'The other islands' as seen from Java or Bali. Based on this finding, another Dutch scholar, Dekker, used the term as an Indonesian name 'for the whole of the Indies.' See Syed Naguib al-Attas, *Preliminary statement on a general theory of the Islamization of the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago*, (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1969), 18-9 note 12. The *Kamus Dewan, edisi ketiga*, (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 2000), defines '*Nusantara*' as "Kepulauan Melayu" (Malay Archipelago).

and systematic manner. His influence and popularity among the Malays were facilitated by the fact that he belonged to the same school of law and jurisprudence i.e., the al-Shafi'i as well as generally upholding the same theological position i.e., Ash'arite. Hence, his works play an important role in propagating Islamic orthodoxy.¹⁹ They are also considered by the Malays to be the more authoritative reference in terms of teaching and solving problems of religious matters from the basic to the highest levels compared to works of other Muslim scholars who are not from the Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah school.

The widely-held claim is that his writings, especially on Sufism which emphasized on ethics (*akhlak*) and science of the soul or spiritual psychology (*'ilm al-batin*; *'ilm al-nafs*), had a great impact on Malay thinkers and scholars in the past. These scholars translated his books into Malay and other local languages, commented, summarized and adapted them, and wrote their own works in the different areas of thought based on his views and interpretations. From these translations his teachings are known which otherwise would not be accessible to the majority of Malays who do not understand Arabic. For example, his monumental work, *Ihya' 'ulum al-din* which is regarded by them as the most authentic and comprehensive work on the teachings of Islam has been translated into nearly every provincial language by religious scholars and due to its popularity has been published and reprinted numerous times through the years. As one of the most important Islamic work and popular *tashwuf* text in the Malay world it is said to have influenced the substance and content of most of the Malay books on ethics (*akhlak*)

¹⁹ On the question of orthodoxy, Islamic scholar Seyyed Hossein Nasr states, "The question of orthodoxy in any religion is of the utmost importance, for the very word means 'correctness of belief or doctrine.'... In Islam, orthodoxy means possession of religious truth, and orthopraxy, the correct manner of practicing and reaching the truth... orthodoxy and orthopraxy can be understood as the state of being on the 'straight path' (*al-sirat al-mustaqim*)..." For further discussion on this issue see his, *The heart of Islam: Enduring values for humanity*, (New York: Harper Collins, 2002), 84-85.

used in the traditional, religious schools (*madrasahs; pesantrens*). In these institutions of learning, besides the *Ihya'*, his other works such as *Bidayat al-hidayah* and *Minhaj al-'abidin* and their Malay translations continue to be used as main texts for teaching students in the subject of *tasawwuf* at the secondary (*thanaawi*) and high (*'aliy*) levels.²⁰ Today, his books are not only being studied by all levels of students in the Islamic education system but they are being read by the average Malay Muslim as well since they consider this work to provide true Islamic knowledge and guidance to right action. This thesis aims to investigate this significant religious and intellectual influence, brought about by the *mujaddid* (Renewer) al-Ghazzali in the history of Islam in the Malay world within a specific scope and time frame, as will be stipulated and explained below.

I. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Historians and scholars of Islam in the Malay world generally agree on the presence of al-Ghazzali's influence on the Malays in both aspects of religious thought and practical matters. However, their conclusions differ in terms of when his teachings started to permeate the minds of the Malays, underwent assimilation and the process of transmission took place. Notwithstanding the impossibility of determining the exact time the Malays began to have interest in his teachings and were influenced by them, one theory is that al-Ghazzali's thought was gradually introduced during the thirteenth century, with the clear and strong influence of Islam in the Malay

²⁰ The latter six years out of the total nine of the *madrasah* education which are divided into three levels of three years each—primary, secondary and high. Based on Martin van Bruinessen's study of texts (*Kitab kuning*) used in Indonesian *pesantren* which he published as part of his book, *Kitab kuning: Pesantren dan tarekat, tradisi-tradisi Islam di Indonesia*, (Bandung: Penerbit Mizan, cetakan 3, 1999), 148, 155-57, 163-65. He wrote his findings in an English article, "Kitab kuning: Books in Arabic script used in the pesantren milieu", *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, vol. 146, (1990), via <http://www.let.uu.nl/~martin.vanbruinessen/personal/publications/kitab_kuning.htm> 28, 41-42.

Archipelago, through the Sufis who were well-versed in his teachings.²¹ This gradual process was marked by the presence of Muslim missionaries mainly from Arabia, Persia and India who taught the Islamic sciences—with an emphasis given to *taṣḥẉẉuf* and theology—to the locals under the patronage of newly converted Malay rulers. Learning and intellectual discourses were held in the court of the Sultans with their active participation and hence, promoted an environment conducive for the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge.

Another common time period put forward is during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.²² This period however, does not necessarily represent the stage of initial exposure to or interest in al-Ghazzali's teachings among the Malays but one of greater intensification. The occurrence of two events have been instrumental in the assimilation and transmission of al-Ghazzali's teachings during this period. Firstly, after the persecution of the seventeenth century Wujudīyyah group by the Aceh Sultanate because of the perceived necessity to bring back orthodoxy into the

²¹ Nurman Said, "Al-Ghazzali's works and their influence on Islam in Indonesia," (M.A. thesis, Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, Canada, 1992), 19. Although historical records have shown that Islam came into this part of the world even earlier during the first century of *hijrah* or the seventh century C.E. but its influence was more evident later when the modes for the spread of the religion, for example, inter-marriages of Muslim traders with the locals and into ruling families bringing about political power, were entrenched and took effect. A more detailed discussion on this topic will be presented in Chapter Two of this study. See sources on the coming of Islam into the Malay world such as, T. W. Arnold, *The preaching of Islam: A history of the propagation of the Muslim faith*, (London: Darf Publishers Limited, new impression, 1986, first published 1935), 363-365; Syed Naguib al-Attas, *Preliminary statement on a general theory of the Islamization of the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago*, (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1969), 11-17; Azyumardi Azra, *Islam Nusantara: Jaringan global dan lokal*, (Bandung: Penerbit Mizan, 2002), 31-36; Hj. Wan Mohd. Shaghir Abdullah, *Penyebaran Islam dan silsilah ulama sejagat Dunia Melayu (Pengenalan)*, *Siri ke-2*, (Kuala Lumpur: Persatuan Pengkajian Khazanah Klasik Nusantara & Khazanah Fathaniyah, 2001), 1-10. For more sources see Chapter Two.

²² See for example, Azyumardi Azra, *Jaringan ulama: Timur Tengah dan Kepulauan Nusantara abad xvii dan xviii*, (Bandung: Penerbit Mizan, cetakan 5, 1420/1999, Cetakan 1, 1994), 266-282; idem, "Opposition to Sufism in the East Indies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries," in *Islamic mysticism contested: Thirteen centuries of controversies and polemics*, ed. Frederick De Jong and Bernd Radtke, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1999), 677-86; Nurman Said, "Al-Ghazzali's works," 19, Martin Van Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning*, 44-48, V. I. Braginsky, *Yang indah, berfaedah dan kamal: Sejarah sastra Melayu dalam abad 7-19*, (Jakarta: INIS (Indonesian-Netherlands Cooperation in Islamic Studies), 1998), 476; and R. Michael Feener, "Tracing a life across the Indian Ocean: The case of 'Abd al-Samad," International Conference on Cultural Exchange and Transformation in the Indian Ocean World, UCLA, 5-6 April, 2002, 9-10.

religion or the reconciliation between *tashawwuf* and the *Shari'ah*. Al-Ghazzali's teachings were used in the works of the local scholars as authority to support their own views on Sufism. This movement towards a more sober (*shahw*) school of Sufism and normative Shafi'i jurisprudence, characteristic of Al-Ghazzali's works, was part of a bigger movement which centered and developed in Arabia and which spread to other parts of the world prominently, Southeast Asia, Africa and India. Some scholars of Islamic history²³ claim this resurgence of interest in al-Ghazzali's thought and writings represent one of the hallmarks of Islamic reformism (*tajdid*) beginning in the seventeenth century. Secondly, when the Malays began to travel to Arabia especially to Mecca to do the pilgrimage (*hajj*) and stayed on to study the various Islamic sciences under the tutelage of authoritative teachers with the aim of returning to teach their Malay counterparts the new knowledge they have acquired. This newly-acquired knowledge from the learning centers in the Haramayn represent an input of several streams of thought from cosmopolitan networks of scholars with a prevalent tendency towards restoring equilibrium between the exoteric and esoteric dimensions of Islam and who affiliate themselves with Sufi orders (*thruq*) in terms of practice. It was during this time period also that the first translations of al-Ghazzali's works into the Malay language were written and which played a crucial role in introducing and disseminating his teachings among the native population. For the purpose of this study, influence is operative when al-Ghazzali's ideas started to be

²³ See for example, John O. Voll's study, "Hadith scholars and tariqahs: An ulama group in the 18th century Haramayn and their impact in the Islamic World," *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, vol. xv, no. 3-4 (1980): 263-73; Nehemia Levtzion and John O. Voll, "Introduction" in *Eighteenth-century renewal and reform in Islam*, ed. Nehemia Levtzion and John O. Voll, Syracuse University Press, 1987), 3-20; and A. Azra's *Jaringan ulama*, 15-21.

reflected in the works of the Malay scholars in an evident and active manner through translations and commentaries of his works.

Most of the studies which have either mentioned or dealt with the influence of al-Ghazzali are mainly works of a survey type on the religious and intellectual history of the Malays claiming his influence in a particular phase or trend of its history. These works do not carry out any critical analysis of their claims except for three major works. The first is a very important study done by Dutch scholar Martin van Bruinessen on traditional Islamic education in Indonesia and the origins and development of *thariqahs* in Southeast Asia. On the subject of education in *tashwwuf* in the eighteenth century, he included the practices and readings of ‘Abd al-Samad and carried out a detailed analysis of the sources used by the Malay scholar in the *Siyar al-salikin*.²⁴ The second equally significant work is by Malay-Indonesian scholar Azyumardi Azra entitled *Jaringan ulama: Timur Tengah dan Kepulauan Nusantara abad xvii dan xviii (Networks of Malay-Indonesian and Middle Eastern ‘ulama’ in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries)*.²⁵ This study aimed to prove the religious and intellectual connections between scholars in Arabia and the Malay Archipelago in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which necessarily showed the transmission of al-Ghazzali’s teachings to the Malay scholars. We have primarily used the conclusions from this study to show the modes of al-Ghazzali’s influence on Malay thinkers during this period. The third work written by another contemporary Malay-Indonesian scholar Alwi Shihab in his comprehensive work, *Islam Sufistik: “Islam pertama” dan pengaruhnya hingga kini di Indonesia (Sufistic Islam: “The first*

Islam pertama” dan pengaruhnya hingga kini di Indonesia (Sufistic Islam: “The first

²⁴ Martin Van Bruinessen, *Kitab kuning*, 66-87.

²⁵ Azyumardi Azra, *Jaringan ulama*. There is an English version of this book which is based mostly on the author’s Ph.D dissertation, *The origins of Islamic reformism in Southeast Asia: Networks of Malay-Indonesian and Middle Eastern ‘ulama’ in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries*, (NSW and Honolulu: ASAA in association with Allen & Unwin and University of Hawai’i Press, 2004). This study will mostly refer to the Malay version of this work since it was made available to us earlier.

Islam” and its influence until the present in Indonesia),²⁶ analyzed and showed al-Ghazzali’s influence on the thought of a few Javanese and Malay thinkers including Shaykh ‘Abd al-Samad al-Palimbanī. There are also studies which focused on the thought and works of individual Malay thinkers who mentioned al-Ghazzali as a source of their ideas and hence, some investigations were done to show his influence. However, they are generally neither extensive nor systematic in terms of presenting his influence since this was not their primary concern.²⁷

Clearly, both types of study have not made al-Ghazzali’s intellectual influence and contribution on Malay thinkers as the main aim of their study. There is an important albeit preliminary study in English done on the significance of al-Ghazzali’s works on the Muslims in Indonesia which is an M.A. thesis, and a published article based on this work.²⁸ However, there has not been a study which identifies the Malay thinkers who have been influenced by al-Ghazzali’s teachings, indicating their works which reflect this influence and at the same time examining their response towards his teachings through these works. The term ‘response’ here is significant since it is claimed that the Malays did not just translate these works but also made important contributions in terms of adding their own ideas and those of other thinkers as an expansion of al-Ghazzali’s own teachings. Hence, questions such as the following are very important and pertinent in this study: What aspects of al-Ghazzali’s teachings impressed the Malays? What aspects of his teachings did they consider important and relevant to be studied and commented upon and in turn to be

²⁶ *Islam Sufistik: “Islam pertama” dan pengaruhnya hingga kini di Indonesia*, pengantar K. H. Abdurrahman Wahid, (Bandung: Penerbit Mizan, 2001), 48-159.

²⁷ See for example the studies on Nuṣ al-Dīn al-Rānīrī by S. M. N. al-Attas, *A commentary on the Hījjat al-sjddiq of Nuṣ al-Dīn al-Rānīrī* (Kuala Lumpur: Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, Malaysia, 1986) and Ahmad Daudy, *Allah dan manusia dalam konsepsi Syekh Nuruddin ar-Raniry*, (Jakarta: PT Bulan Bintang, edisi kedua, 2002).

²⁸ On this work, see the “Review of Related Literature” section in this chapter.