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The importance to study and understand Aceh and Malay Archipelago Heritage from a socio-scientific perspective seems more relevant than ever. Currently, there is no specific journal that offers a platform for discussion on Aceh and Malay Archipelago Heritage. Nahrasiyah: Journal of Aceh and Malay Archipelago Heritage aims to fill this gap by providing an active forum for the discussion of new ideas, fieldwork experiences, challenging views, and methodological and theoretical approaches to Aceh and Malay Archipelago heritage. The journal is not only a forum for normative reflections in Aceh and Malay Archipelago heritage studies but approaches Aceh and Malay Archipelago Heritage as a lived tradition in today's global societies.

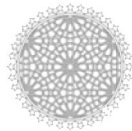
The journal focuses on Aceh and Malay Archipelago heritage studies. As the first socio-scientific journal to focus on Aceh and Malay Archipelago heritage, Nahrasiyah: Journal of Aceh and Malay Archipelago Heritage will be of interest to scholars and students in various academic fields related to the topics.

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Ulama and Knowledge in Modern Aceh: Abu Teupin Raya on Religious Sciences

Zuhri Arif,^{1*} Habib Zarbaliyev,² & Ja'far³

Abstract: This article examines the intellectual tradition of Abu Teupin Raya in Aceh. The researcher utilizes the theories of Martin van Bruinessen, Zamaksyari Dhofier, and Azyumardi Azra on pesantren and the tradition of yellow books (*kitab kuning*), as well as the theory of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas on the classification of knowledge. This study is a literature review with a historical approach. Primary data, including the writings of Abu Teupin Raya and various biographical notes, are analysed using content analysis methods. The study argues that Abu Teupin Raya is an Acehnese scholar who successfully transmitted traditional Islam as found in yellow books written by several scholars of the Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamâ'ah and Shâfi'i schools. Additionally, he expanded the treasury of traditional Islam by composing his own books, some of which were written in Malay using Arabic script. Abu Teupin Raya is a traditionalist scholar who preserved elements of traditional Islam and actively safeguarded religious knowledge through teaching and writing yellow books during the Aceh conflict. This study contributes to the study of Islam in Aceh.

Keywords: ulama, Aceh, religious sciences, dayah, intellectual networks

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Introduction

Martin van Bruinessen is a Dutch anthropologist who conducted research on the transmission of religious knowledge in traditional Islamic educational institutions by teaching the yellow books (*kitab kuning*). The results of his research can be seen in two of his articles, *Pesantren and Kitab Kuning: Continuity and Change in a Tradition of Religious Learning*,¹ and *Kitab Kuning: Books in Arabic Script Used in the Pesantren Milieu*.² One of his books on this topic has been published in Indonesian under the title *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren dan Tarekat*.³ Many researchers in Indonesia have since developed studies on the yellow books in Indonesia.

Martin van Bruinessen's study, which focuses on traditional Islamic educational institutions rather than modernist Islam, emphasizes two important points. First, Islamic School (*pesantren*) has successfully transmitted traditional Islam as found in classical books written centuries ago. These books are referred to as *kitab kuning* by the Muslim community in Indonesia. *Kitab kuning* is studied in Islamic educational institutions such as *pesantren*, *surau*, *dayah*, and *pondok*. Another crucial point is that there is a difference in the use of these books between traditional Islamic educational institutions and modernist/reformist Islamic educational institutions. In traditional Islamic educational institutions, *kitab kuning* is taught orally by a teacher commonly referred to as *kiai*, *ajengan*, or *tuan guru*. Traditional Islam is oriented towards a specific school of thought (*mazhab*), while modernist Islam is not bound by a particular school of thought. Second, most *kiai* teach *kitab kuning*, but there are many who have expanded the traditional Islamic knowledge by composing their books. Traditional scholars write their works in Arabic or the local language but still use the Arabic script. On the other hand, modernist scholars write their works in Indonesian using the Latin alphabet. The use of Arabic language and script serves as a distinguishing characteristic between traditional and modernist scholars.⁴

Meanwhile, the topic of yellow books in Indonesia, especially in Aceh, has been studied by several researchers.⁵ However, the role of Acehnese scholars in the modern era, particularly during the period of conflict, in preserving

religious knowledge through the tradition of yellow books has not received attention. Similarly, studies on the role of Abu Teupin Raya in preserving religious knowledge and the tradition of yellow books have not been conducted at all. Some researchers have explored Abu Teupin Raya, including Al Husaini M. Daud,⁶ Abdul Mukti and Candra Wijaya,⁷ Muhammad Rizal and Muhammad Iqbal,⁸ Rejal Afriansyah, et al.,⁹ Jauhari Hasan,¹⁰ and Arwin Juli Rakhmadi Butar-butur.¹¹ Biographies of this Acehese scholar have been published in several books and online articles. However, none of these researchers have discussed the role of Abu Teupin Raya in the development of religious knowledge in Indonesia.

This article examines the intellectual tradition of Abu Teupin Raya in modern Aceh. Specifically, the article addresses two questions: What is the intellectual tradition of Abu Teupin Raya? How did Abu Teupin Raya transmit Islamic religious knowledge through teaching and writing yellow books in Aceh during the Aceh conflict era? To answer these questions, researchers utilize the perspectives of Martin van Bruinessen, Zamaksyari Dhofier, and Azyumardi Azra on pesantren and the tradition of yellow books, as well as the theory of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas on the classification of knowledge. This study argues that Abu Teupin Raya was an Acehese scholar who successfully transmitted traditional Islam as found in the yellow books written by several scholars of the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah* and *Shāfi'ī* schools of thought. He also expanded the traditional Islamic knowledge by composing his books, some of which were written in Malay using the Arabic script. Abu Teupin Raya is identified as a traditionalist scholar who defended the elements of traditional Islam. He actively preserved religious knowledge through teaching and writing yellow books during the Aceh conflict. His contributions include not only transmitting the existing traditional Islam but also enriching the traditional Islamic knowledge by producing his writings. Several of his works were composed in the Malay language using the Arabic script. Overall, Abu Teupin Raya played a significant role in preserving and transmitting traditional Islamic knowledge during the Aceh conflict.

Methods

This study employs a literature review approach with a historical perspective. The literature review methodology proposed by Mestika Zed¹² the stages of historical research according to Kuntowijoyo will be applied in this study.¹³ The data sources for this study consist of documents related to Abu Teupin Raya. The data sources are divided into two groups: primary sources, including the works of the studied scholars and biographies written by his grandson, and secondary sources, such as books and articles written by experts on the biography, role, and thoughts of this scholar. Additionally, other sources deemed relevant to the discussion topic are also included. Data for this study are obtained through interviews with several informants who possess knowledge about the biography and works of Abu Teupin Raya. Interviews are also conducted with informants regarding the curriculum of Dayah Darussa'adah, the educational institution established by this scholar. The literature review and interviews with knowledgeable individuals contribute to a comprehensive understanding of Abu Teupin Raya's intellectual legacy, his contributions to Islamic knowledge, and the development of Dayah Darussa'adah.

Results and Discussion

1. A Brief History of Abu Teupin Raya

Muhammad Ali Irsyad, also known as Abu Teupin Raya, was born on May 24, 1921 (17 Ramadan 1339 H) in Kayee Jatoe, Teupin Raya, Aceh, Indonesia. At that time, the people of Aceh were still engaging in guerrilla warfare against the Dutch colonialists. He was the son of Muhammad Irsyad and Aisyah. In terms of lineage, his father's family descended from Panglima Doyen of Aceh Besar, while his mother's family originated from the scholarly lineage in Lapang Lhoksukon.¹⁴

Abu Teupin Raya has received traditional Islamic education since childhood. Zamakhsyari Dhofier stated that traditional Islam is "*Islam yang masih terikat kuat dengan pikiran-pikiran para ulama fikih (hukum Islam), hadis, tafsir, tauhid (teologi Islam) dan tasawuf yang hidup antara abad ke 7 sampai abad ke 13.*"

However, according to Dhofier, this does not mean that traditional Islam is confined to the thoughts and aspirations created by scholars in those centuries.¹⁵ Theoretically, according to Dhofier, the pesantren education system is a common pattern of traditional Islamic education, and there are five basic elements of the pesantren tradition: the hut, mosque, students (*santri*), the teaching of classical Islamic books, and the religious leader (*kiai*). In the context of student references, the teaching of classical Islamic books has referred to the works of scholars who adhere to the Shâfi'î school of thought. The primary goal of traditional Islamic educational institutions is to educate future scholars, where they must master various branches of Islamic knowledge such as grammar and morphology (*nahw* and *şaraf*), jurisprudence (*fiqh*), principles of jurisprudence (*ushûl al-fiqh*), hadith, exegesis (*tafsîr*), theology (*tauḥîd*), Sufism and ethics, history (*tārîkh*), and rhetoric (*balāghah*). All reference books are divided into three groups: basic books, intermediate-level books, and major books.¹⁶ In this regard, Abu Teupin Raya is one among many religious scholars in Aceh's modern era who has received religious education in traditional Islamic educational institutions; and after becoming a teacher (*teungku* or *abu*) at the *dayah*, he actively defended traditional Islam in Aceh during the conflict era.

Despite having the opportunity to study general knowledge at modern educational institutions like the Schake School (1927-1939), Abu Teupin Raya was more interested in studying religious sciences at the *dayah*. He initially learned about religion from his father, who was a Qāḍī. As a nobleman, he had the chance to study at Dutch schools, and as the son of a religious scholar, he also studied religious sciences. Therefore, he gained knowledge in both Dutch and Arabic languages. At the age of 18, he moved to Uteun Bayu and studied religion at the *dayah* owned by Teungku Abdurrahman from 1940 to 1947. According to Armia, he moved to Uteun Bayu because he preferred studying religious sciences with scholars rather than learning general knowledge with Dutch teachers. He then continued his education at another *dayah* in Pulo Kiton, Bireun, for a year (1947-1948). However, he spent more time teaching than learning in this *dayah*, perhaps because there was no curriculum difference between the *dayah* in Uteun Bayu and the one in Pulo Kiton. He later moved

to Gandapura to study religion under Teungku Usman Makam, a scholar who had studied astronomy in the Middle East. He was very interested in delving into this field and studied under Teungku Usman Makam for two years while teaching grammar to several students. During this period, he also authored books in the field of grammar and morphology. In 1949, he established a dayah in Lampoh Pala, Teupin Raya. The dayah building was constructed on waqf land donated by a local leader named Teuku Ampon. Students from Geurugok and Bireun came to this dayah to deepen their knowledge of religion. At that time, Abu Teupin Raya was recognized as a young scholar with the ability to teach Arabic perfectly.¹⁷

By Abu Teupin Raya, the dayah was named Dayah Darussa'adah. This institution has been conducting traditional Islamic education. On September 21, 1953, a portion of the Acehnese people resisted the Indonesian government, marked by the emergence of the *Darul Islam/ Tentara Islam Indonesia* (or DI/TII) movement in Aceh. This event had an impact on educational activities in Aceh, leading to the temporary closure of learning activities at Dayah Darussa'adah. Some students even joined the ranks of this resistance movement. In 1959, the DI/TII group made peace with the Indonesian government, and all forces received amnesty. The government also provided various facilities to the scholars who had supported the movement, including Abu Teupin Raya. The Aceh Governor and the Commander of the Iskandar Muda Military Regional Command awarded scholarships to Abu Teupin Raya, who wished to study at Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt, to deepen his knowledge of Islamic astronomy. He departed for Egypt in 1962 and was guided by an astronomy expert named Shaykh Abū al-Ulā al-Banna until 1966. Afterward, Abu Teupin Raya obtained a degree from al-Azhar University and became an expert in the field of astronomy.¹⁸

The data above indicates two aspects related to Abu Teupin Raya's religious education. First, he pursued religious knowledge from one dayah to another. Second, he built an intellectual network with Middle Eastern scholars, particularly in Egypt. Karel A. Steenbrink has stated that a typical pesantren student often moves from one pesantren to another for the pleasure of undertaking scholarly journeys and the desire to learn from renowned kiai to study higher

and more complex sciences and texts. After feeling proficient in religious studies at the pesantren, students usually go to Mecca to deepen their religious knowledge. This was a common practice for pesantren students during the 19th century.¹⁹ However, Abu Teupin Raya, as a dayah teacher, chose Egypt over Mecca. William R. Roff revealed that the intellectual interests and orientations of Indonesian students in the early 20th century shifted from religious to political matters. In Mecca, they studied religion, while in Egypt, they studied politics due to the emergence of modernist movements in the region.²⁰ However, this motivation is not entirely applicable to Abu Teupin Raya. A more fitting perspective is provided by Mona Abaza, who stated that the version of Islam in Egypt is more aligned with the religious understanding in Indonesia than the Saudi Arabian version influenced by Wahhabism.²¹ Wahhabism is also endorsed by the Saudi Arabian government.²² Abu Teupin Raya was an Islamic scholar who opposed Wahhabism and wrote on this topic. It is clear that Abu Teupin Raya studied religious sciences at the dayah as a traditional Islamic educational institution in Aceh and continued his education at Al-Azhar University, which is an Islamic university perpetuating the Sunni tradition,²³ where he studied under various scholars.

2. Abu Teupin Raya and Religious Sciences in Dayah Darussa'adah

In 1968, Abu Teupin Raya reopened Dayah Darussa'adah after it had been temporarily closed due to the conflict between the Government of the Republic of Indonesia and the DI/TII movement.²⁴ Like other traditional scholars, Abu Teupin Raya (1) orally conveyed or read aloud religious knowledge found in various yellow books, and (2) enriched the traditional Islamic knowledge by composing his books. In the context of the first point, he recommended several books written by scholars in the Middle East during the classical era as references for the students at Dayah Darussa'adah.

Based on Ibn Hajar's information,²⁵ the teachers at Dayah Darussa'adah have imparted knowledge of Islamic religious studies and have made yellow books the primary reference for the students. These books continue to be studied

by the students to this day. The students studied *Matan Taqrīb*, *Hāshiyah Ibrāhīm al-Bajūrī ‘ala Ibn Qāsim*, *Hāshiyah I‘ānah al-Ṭalībīn*, and *Sharḥ Jalāl al-Dīn al-Maḥalli ‘ala Jam‘ al-Jawāmi‘* for the field of jurisprudence (*fiqh*); kitab *Awāmil fī al-Naḥu*, *Kawākib al-Durriyah*, *Abi al-Naja*, *Alfiyah Ibn Mālik*, and *Sharḥ al-‘Allamah Ibnu ‘Aqil ‘ala Alfīyah* for the field of syntax (*naḥw*); kitab *Taṣrīf*, *Dhammun*, *Matan Binā wa al-Asās*, *al-Kailānī*, *al-Salsil al-Madkhal fī ‘Ilm al-Ṣaraf*, and *al-Mathlūb bi Sharḥ al-Maqṣūd fī al-Taṣrīf* for the field of morphology (*caraf*); kitab *Tijān al-Darārī*, *Kifāyah al-‘Awwām fī ‘Ilm al-Kalām*, and *al-Dusūqī ‘ala Umm al-Barāhīn* in the field of Islamic theology (*tauḥīd*); *Tafsīr Jalālain* for the field of exegesis (*tafsīr*); *Hāshiyah al-Dimyātī Sharḥ al-Waraqāt* and *Ghāyah al-Wuṣūl Sharḥ Lubb al-Uṣūl* in the field of legal principles (*uṣūl fiqh*); kitab *al-Sulam al-Munawaraq fī ‘Ilm al-Mantiq*, *Īdāh al-Mubham* and *Hāshiyah ‘ala Sharḥ al-Malawī* for the field of logic (*‘ilm al-mantiq*); kitab *Nūr al-Yaqīn* for the field of Islamic history; kitab *Naṣā’ih al-‘Ibād*, *Ta‘lim al-Muta‘allim*, *Sirāj al-Thālibīn* dan *al-Ḥikam* for the field of Sufism; and kitab *Sharḥ Tanqīh al-Qaul al-Ḥadīth*, and *Fath al-Bārī Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* for the field of hadith.

In addition, Abu Teupin Raya has authored several books in the local language (Malay and Acehnese) using the Arabic script. He was a prolific scholar, as evidenced by the research of Al Husaini M. Daud, who documented that Abu Teupin Raya produced 28 titles that have become references for the students at Dayah Darussa’adah.²⁶ Abu Teupin Raya has written books in the fields of Arabic language, Quran, Islamic theology (*‘aqīdah*), ethics and Sufism, jurisprudence (*fiqh*), Islamic history, and logic (*‘ilm al-mantiq*).

According to the theory of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas on the classification of knowledge, which divides knowledge into two types, namely the God-given knowledge (the religious sciences) and the acquired knowledge (the rational, intellectual, and philosophical sciences),²⁷ Abu Teupin Raya has preserved religious sciences. According to al-Attas, the religious sciences encompass: a) Al-Quran: its recitation and interpretation, b) Al-Sunnah: the life of the Prophet, the history and messages of previous Messengers, hadiths, and their authoritative narrations, c) Al-Shariah: laws and regulations, principles, and

practices of Islam, d) Theology: God, His Essence, Attributes, and Names, as well as His Actions (tauhid), e) Islamic Metaphysics (Sufism): psychology, cosmology, and ontology, and f) Linguistic Sciences: Arabic language, grammar, lexicography, and literature. From his body of work, Abu Teupin Raya has preserved all these religious sciences. He taught various yellow books on these disciplines and authored books in the local language using the Arabic script.

The conclusion above further strengthens the findings of Bruinessen and Azra. According to Bruinessen, some *kiai* (Islamic scholars) in the Nusantara region, aside from teaching yellow books in their pesantren (*pondok*, *surau*, or *dayah*), have also authored their books. He notes that traditional Islamic scholars write books in Arabic and sometimes in the local language but still applying the Arabic script.²⁸ Azra, on the other hand, asserts that yellow books are religious texts in Arabic, Malay, Javanese, or other local languages in Indonesia written in the Arabic script. These books are authored by scholars from the Middle East as well as scholars in Indonesia.²⁹ Based on these perspectives, Abu Teupin Raya, in addition to being classified as a traditional scholar rather than a modernist or reformist, has contributed to both the quality and quantity of yellow books in Indonesia.

Conclusion

The main findings of this study indicate that Abu Teupin Raya, one of the scholars in Aceh during the Aceh conflict era, successfully transmitted traditional Islam as found in the yellow books (*kitab kuning*) written by various scholars of the Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah and the Shāfi'ī school of thought. Additionally, he expanded the treasury of traditional Islam by authoring his books, some of which were written in Malay using the Arabic script. He was considered to have authority in traditional Islam, having studied in several dayahs in Aceh that uphold traditional Islam and yellow books. It is evident that Abu Teupin Raya successfully maintained elements of traditional Islam and actively preserved religious knowledge through teaching and writing yellow books during the Aceh conflict. His contribution to the preservation and development

of religious knowledge is seen in the variety of yellow books taught in his dayah and the writing of several books in Malay and Acehnese while still using the Arabic script. The study suggests that research on this scholar should be continued by other researchers, as there is a lack of research on Abu Teupin Raya's thoughts as reflected in all his writings. Researchers in the fields of Arabic language, the Quran, creed, ethics and mysticism, Islamic jurisprudence, Islamic history, and logical reasoning need to study his authored works.

Endnotes

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²⁵ Wawancara dengan Ibn Hajar, mantan guru di Dayah Darussa’adah, di Lhokseumawe, 5 Januari 2024.

²⁶ Al Husaini M. Daud, *Geneologi Pemikiran Pendidikan Timur Tengah Di Aceh: Perspektif Sejarah Pemikiran Abu Teupin Raya* (Yogyakarta: The Phinisi Press, 2020), 90-93.

²⁷ Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *The Concept of Education in Islam: A Framework for an Islamic Philosophy of Education* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1999), 40-42.

²⁸ Bruinessen, “Pesantren and Kitab Kuning: Maintenance and Continuation of A Tradition of Religious Learning.”

²⁹ Azyumardi Azra, *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi Dan Modernisasi Di Tengah Tantangan Milenium III* (Jakarta: Kencana, 2012), 143.

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Articles should be written in American English between approximately 5000-7000 words, including text, all tables, and figures, notes, references, and appendices intended for publication. All submissions must include 200 words of abstract and five keywords. Quotations, passages, and words in local or foreign languages should be translated into English. *Nahrasiyah: Journal of Aceh and Malay Archipelago Heritage* accepts only

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All notes must appear in the text as citations. In a matter of bibliographical style, Nahrasiyah follows the Turabian style.

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