

CHAPTER THREE

BIOGRAPHY OF AL-FALIMBĀNĪ

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses at length the biography of al-Falimbānī to the extent of the availability of the resources about him. It includes the following sections: on the dispute of his real name, his family background, his birth, his educational background, his teachers, his contemporaries, his works, the influence of scholars on him, his death and last but not least, his contribution.

3.2 His Name

In spite of the fact that al-Falimbānī is one of the greatest Malay scholars in eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and having left many aspiring works, yet nothing much is known about this great scholar – neither the dates of his birth nor death has been established. All that is known is that he hailed from Palembang.¹

Even the exact name of his father remains unresolved and debated. Perhaps this scarcity of information² that had forced P.Voorhoeve to write down only a few lines about al-Falimbānī in the *Encyclopedia of Islam New Edition*.³

¹ Palembang is a city on the southern side of the Indonesian island of Sumatra. It is the capital of the Southern Sumatra province. The city was once the capital of the ancient, partly Buddhist kingdom of Srivijaya.

² I beg to differ with Azra's statement that "we have a rather complete account of his life and career...", see Azra, *Networks*, 113. What we do have, however, are merely books written by him which have survived until these days, but as far as a complete biographical background of his is concerned, apart from in *Salasilah* and his short remarks here and there about himself in some of his works, we could hardly gather any other information concerning him. As far as Arabic biographical dictionaries such as the one by al-Baytar are concerned, they do not throw much light except repeating what has already been written and found in the Malay sources.

³ P. Voorhoeve, "Abd al-Samad b. 'Abd Allāh al-Falimbānī", in *EI2*.

Nico J.G. Kaptein has expanded the article of the same in the *Encyclopedia of Islam, Third Edition*.⁴

However, the record about his father is quite substantial as opposed to his own, which might indirectly throw some light on al-Falimbānī's family background and origin. The only detailed information about al-Falimbānī is as recorded in '*Tarikh Salasilah Negeri Kedah*' (Chronicles of Kedah)⁵ written by Muhammad Hassan bin To' Kerani Mohd Arshad. It was perhaps the earliest best available source⁶ mentioning al-Falimbānī written around 1344-1346/1926-1928 by a close aide of the then Regent of Kedah (northern state of Malay Peninsula), Tunku Ibrahim bin Sultan 'Abd al-Hamid (d.1353/1935), whose name is Muhammad Hassan bin Muhammad Arshad bin Haji Abu Bakar (1284-1360//1868-1942).⁷ It relates that al-Falimbānī's father went to Palembang and then fathered a son, and

⁴ Nico J.G. Kaptein, '*Abd al-Samad al-Palimbānī*', in *EI3*.

⁵ It was published by Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Kuala Lumpur in 1968. The book was originally published in Jawi script around 1928 and was republished in 1968 by Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka in its Romanised version. It has been regarded by many scholars such as Azyumardi Azra, Chatib Quzwain, and others as not quite reliable. Nonetheless, since there is no other better source than *Salasilah* that gives more accurate account about al-Falimbānī's family origin and his early life, this book is worth citing. The other sources from the Arab world such as the work of 'Abd al-Rahmān Sulayman al-Ahdāl (d.1250/1835) entitled '*Al-Nafas al-Yamānī*', (henceforth abbreviated as *Al-Nafas*) and a work by 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Baytār (1253-1335/1837-1917) *Hilyat al-Bashar fi Tārikh al-Qarn al-Thālith 'Ashar*, (henceforth abbreviated as *Hilyat*) do not really mention much about al-Falimbānī's life and family origin, except to list the names of the teachers he had studied with and the networking that he had established among the Arab scholars.

⁶ This book is basically a historical document that records all the main events happening in the state of Kedah based on the sources available in the royal court as well as from the reliable and popular folklore. It is more of folkloristic than historical in its proper sense and for that reason some scholars, such as Azra, Quzwain quite reluctant to refer to it unsparingly or without reservation, as a reliable historical text. El-Muhammady believes that in spite of many information therein requires further verification, nonetheless, it can be accepted until more reliable sources are found, see *Pengasuh*, Bil. 507, 24. It also lists the royal lineage of the ruling kings of Kedah from the earliest king, that is King Derbar Raja until the 33rd king, Sultan 'Abd al-Hamid Halim Shah who ascended to the throne in 1881. Compared to another work of the same genre, *Hikayat Merong Maha Wangsa* which is said to have been written much earlier around 575-598AH/ 1179-1201CE, the latter is full of mythical legends and therefore not that reliable as a historical text. The latter has been criticised by many historians such as R.O. Winstedt, and Crawford. This makes *Salasilah* a more reliable source, see Muhd. Yusof Ibrahim, *Persejarah Melayu: 1800-1960*, 5; see also *Salasilah*, xxiii.

⁷ For a detailed biography of Muhammad Arshad, see his *Salasilah*, xix-xx.

was given the the name ‘Abd al-Samad (later known as ‘Abd al-Samad al-Falimbānī).

Al-Falimbānī is known by several names in the Malay sources, with different works sometimes citing his name differently. Shaghir has observed this inconsistency in several manuscripts and books written by al-Falimbānī’s disciples, and even by al-Falimbānī himself. The variation is not so much on his name, but rather on his father’s. In *Salasilah*, for example, his father’s name is referred to as Shaykh ‘Abd al-Jalil bin Shaykh ‘Abd al-Wahhāb bin Shaykh Ahmad al-Mahdani⁸ (d.1196/1782). Apart from ‘Abd al-Jalil, his father’s name is also written in some other sources as ‘Abd Allāh al-Jāwi al-Falimbānī. “ ‘Abd Allah” being the name of ‘al-Falimbānī’s father appears in many Malay manuscript.⁹ The third variant, which Shaghir believes to be the correct version of al-Falimbānī’s father’s name, is [*Faqih*] Husayn bin ‘Abd Allah al-Falimbānī.¹⁰

Finally, the fourth variant and perhaps the last one known thus far is ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Jāwi al-Falimbānī¹¹ These variations could also be found in

⁸ See Muhammad, *Salasilah*, 123. This name (not others) is engraved on the monument of al-Falimbānī’s father in Tanjung Pauh, Jitra Kedah, Malaysia.

⁹ This appears in *Zahrāt al-Murid*, Cod. Or. 7667, Universiti Bibliotheek, Leiden. Quzwain notes the name appeared in a manuscript of *Zahrāt al-murid* in Jakarta, M1 788F.(V.d.W.49), *Katalog Koleksi Naskhah Melayu Muzium Pusat Jakarta*, (National Museum of Jakarta), see Quzwain, *Mengenal*, 19, n.55; Shaghir discovers that ‘Abd Allah al-Jāwi al-Falimbānī’ also appeared in a manuscript written by Muhammad Husayn bin ‘Abd al-Latif (a.k.a “Tok Kelaba al-Fatānī”), see Shaghir, *Shamad*, 5-6. Azra however seems to believe this variant is mostly quoted in the Malay sources, see *Networks*, 113, while in reality it is not necessarily true as we have proven that there are other variants which are equally used in the Malay sources.

¹⁰ In *Dian Digest*, no.100, Ogos 1977, Shaghir says al-Falimbānī’s full name is ‘Syeikh ‘Abd al-Samad bin Faqih Husein bin Faqih Abdullah al-Falimbani’

¹¹ This name is found in *Hidāyat al-Sālikin* (Singapore, Ahmadiyah Press, n.d) edited by Ahmād bin Muhammad Zain al-Fathānī; also in *Zahrāt al-murid*, MSS 622, Islamic Centre Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur; also found in *Zahrāt al-Murid* (Mecca: Matba’ah al-Tarāqī al-Majidiyyah al-Uthmaniyyah,1331/1912) edited by Shaykh Idris bin Hussayn al-Kelantānī; Shaghir also claims in possession of a manuscript of *Zahrāt al-Murīd* bearing the same name; *Ilmu Tasawwuf*, MS 1004, National Library Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur; also in Muhammad Yasin bin ‘Isa al-Fadānī’s books, *Iqd al-Farid min Jawāhir al-Asānid* as quoted by Shaghir, *Shamad*, 5-7 passim.

Arabic sources, where only two are known so far.¹² They refer to al-Falimbāni as Sayyid ‘Abd al-Samad bin ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Jāwi which perhaps originated from the Malay sources.¹³ Judging from the description of the activities and life of this ‘al-Jāwi’,¹⁴ there is every reason to believe that, as Azra rightly contended, ‘Al-Falimbāni of Malay sources and this ‘al-Jāwi’ of Arabic sources is the very same person.¹⁵ In his own manuscripts, al-Falimbāni never attached his father’s name to his name as has been the common practice amongst the Malays and Arabs. In most cases he would address himself as “‘Abd al-Samad al-Jāwi al-Falimbāni”.¹⁶

3.3 Family Background

According to *Salasilah*, al-Falimbāni was the son of Shaykh ‘Abd al-Jalīl ibn Shaykh ‘Abd al-Wahhab ibn Shaykh Ahmad al-Mahdani (d.1196/1782) of San‘ā’, Yemen. Al-Mahdāni was a religious teacher of Palembang before he decided to travel to Java, India, and Burma to preach Islam. On these trips he was accompanied by his loyal disciple by the name of Muhammad Jiwa (d.1213/1798),¹⁷ who later became the Sultan of Kedah. In 1122/1710, al-Mahdani

¹² *Al-Nafas* and *Hilyat*, see note 1.

¹³ It is hard to confirm the claim by Shaghir, that the Arab biographers especially al-Baytār (1253-1335/1838-1917) might have referred to the Malay sources in establishing the full name of al-Falimbāni in his biographical dictionary, Shaghir, *Shamad*, 8. Name ‘Abd al-Samad bin ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Jāwi is found to be used in facsimile of al-Falimbāni’s *Risalah Tasawwuf* in Shaghir’s *Hidāyat*, vol.2:271.

¹⁴ This adjectival patronymic form (*nisbah*) ‘al-Jāwī’ according to Hurgronje means ‘the one from Jāwā’. It was used by the Meccan Arabs in those days in reference to the *hajj* pilgrims coming from the Malay Archipelago, regardless of their more particular geographic points of origin. This region is called *Jāwah* or ‘*bilād el-jāwah*’ while the people are the ‘*jāwīs*’ (plural: *jāwāh/ jāwīyyīn*), Hurgronje, *Mekka*, 215-217; see also Feener, *Archipel 70*, 2005, 186.

¹⁵ Azra, *Networks*, 113

¹⁶ *Siyar*, front page.

¹⁷ Muhammad, *Salasilah*, 96-113 passim.

traveled to Kedah¹⁸ on the invitation of Muhammad Jiwa, and was subsequently appointed as the state mufti after Jiwa acceded to the throne in 1122/1710. Sultan Muhammad Jiwa ruled Kedah until his death in 1213/1798. A few months after being appointed as the state mufti,¹⁹ al-Mahdani was visited by his disciple from Palembang by the name of Radin Siran²⁰ persuading him to return to Palembang to meet all his disciples who were longing for him. He later decided to return to Palembang, spent only three years in Palembang²¹ and got married to Raden Ranti (or Rantai) before returning to Kedah to resume his official duty as the state mufti.²² The couple was blessed with a son, who later emerged as one of the great Malay scholars of the region named ‘Abd al-Samad al-Jāwi al-Falimbānī.²³

There are also manuscripts, which indicate that al-Falimbānī could have originally hailed from Aceh (Indonesia) or Pattānī (Southern Thailand) based on the patronymic titles given to him such as “*al-Ashī*”²⁴ (someone from Aceh) and also ‘*al-Fatānī*’²⁵ (someone from Pattānī). However, this opinion is quite

¹⁸ Muhammad, *Salasilah*, 101. Islam, according to one source, was said to have reached Kedah in 818/1400 with the first sultan who embraced Islam being Pra’ Ong Mahawangsa who later changed his name to Sultan Mudzaffar Syah, *Persejarah*, 7.

¹⁹ In Kedah, al-Mahdani married Wan Zainab, the daughter of one of the aristocrats of the court with whom he was blessed with two sons, Wan ‘Abd al-Qadir and Wan ‘Abd Allah. Muhammad, *Salasilah*, 123-124.

²⁰ “*Hatta selang tiada beberapa bulan kemudian sa-orang anak murid Tuan Shaikh Abdul Jalil dari Palembang bernama Radin Siran datang berjumpa...*” [No longer than a few months, a student of al-Mahdani from Palembang came...]. “*Lebih kurang dua bulan ia dudok di Kedah ...*” [After about two months staying in Kedah...], Muhammad, *Salasilah*, 123.

²¹ “*Sa-telah tiga tahun lama-nya Tuan Shaikh dudok di Palembang, ia pun balek ke Kedah*” [After three years staying in Palembang, al-Mahdani returned to Kedah] (Muhammad, *Salasilah*, 124).

²² Muhammad, *Salasilah*, 124.

²³ Muhammad, *Salasilah*, 124.

²⁴ This is based on a manuscript of Shaykh Muhammad Yāsin al-Fadānī entitled *al-Iqd al-Farīd min Jawāhir al-Asānid* where he calls al-Falimbānī as ‘*al-āshī al-shahīr bi al-falimbānī*’ (an Acheneese popularly known as al-Falimbānī), see Shaghīr, *Shamad*, 10.

²⁵ A manuscript of *Al-Urwat al-Wuthqā* written by al-Falimbānī which a copy is in the possession of Wan Muhammad Shaghīr uses the name ‘*al-Fatānī*’, see Wan Muhammad Shaghīr, *Al-‘Urwat al-Wuthqā Sheikh Abdus Shamad al-Falimbānī*, 9-10.

weak, and thus far no substantial or corroborated evidence has been found to verify the claim.

3.4 His Birth

The precise date when al-Falimbāni was born in Palembang is neither mentioned in any work of al-Falimbāni nor anywhere to be found in *Salasilah*. As such, Azra's claim that *Salasilah* 'has supplied the date as around 1116/1704' is unfounded.²⁶ Azra has actually copied Quzwain's miscalculated estimation who wrongly cited the accession year of Muhammad Jiwa. What one can infer on the date of al-Falimbāni's birth is only based on a few related information in *Salasilah*: first is the accession of Muhammad Jiwa as the Sultan of Kedah which took place in 1122/1710²⁷ and subsequently al-Mahdani's appointment as the *mufti*²⁸ of Kedah soon after it, and later al-Mahdani's trip to Palembang and stayed there for about three years. In that period al-Falimbāni was born.²⁹ When al-Mahdani returned to Kedah with his son, al-Falimbāni, the latter's age must have been about a year

²⁶ Azra, *Networks*, 113.

²⁷ Quzwain's logical conclusion on al-Falimbāni's birth date and subsequently the age when he died as appeared in Quzwain's work collapses completely when he wrongly quoted the accession year of Muhammad Jiwa to be 1112/1700 as his premise, instead of 1122/1710 as actually appeared in his original source i.e. *Salasilah*, a difference of ten years, see Quzwain, *Mengenal*, 5, cf. *Salasilah*, 110. Quoting Quzwain's 'finding', Azra then falls into the same wrong conclusion, see *Networks*, 113. This has been rightly rebutted by Shaghir who realised the errors made by the two Indonesian scholars, Quzwain and Azra, see Shaghir, *Shamad*, 1-22 passim.

²⁸ The word '*mufti*' is maintained here since this very term that has been clearly stated in *Salasilah*, (Muhammad, *Salasilah*, 123). Azra however 'changed' it to '*Qādi*', see his *Networks*, 113. The post of *Qādi* is succinctly mentioned in *Salasilah* given to the Sultan's friend, a person by the name of 'Hapisap' and not to al-Mahdani (*Salasilah*, 123). Worth noting here the difference between a *mufti* and a *qādi*. A *mufti* is 'someone who delivers formal and official legal opinions of Islamic Law, see Hans Wehr, s.v. "*fa-ti-ya*", while a *qādi* is a 'trial judge' in an Islamic court, see Hans Wehr, s.v. "*qa-dā*". In most Muslim countries, particularly in the Malay Archipelago, the practice is to give these posts to two different persons. This is true even now in Malaysia.

²⁹ Muhammad, *Salasilah*, 123.

or so. From this, we can logically deduce that al-Falimbāni was born between 1123/1710 and 1125/1712, and most likely in 1124/1711.³⁰

This speculation is based on the assumption that since al-Mahdani returned to Kedah in 1125/1712. However, it is hardly conceivable that al-Falimbāni was born in the same year of their travel since customarily, people would not make long distance sea journey with a baby. So, al-Falimbāni must have been around one year old or so when his father brought him back to Kedah from Palembang. Whatever the case may be, it was certain that al-Falimbāni was not born in 1115/1704 as widely quoted by Quzwain and followed by many other scholars including Azra, since al-Mahdani had his trip to Palembang only after 1710, after which al-Falimbāni was born. While the birth date of any scholar is not as important as to that of his death, nonetheless, in the context of al-Falimbāni where both dates are unknown, it is reasonable at least to establish his birth year correctly since from there we can proceed to speculate the year of his death.³¹ Incorrect estimation of his birth then may further lead to wrong approximation of his death.

3.5 His Death

The date of his death as we have mentioned above draws no less debate than of his birth. There are several opinions surrounding the death of al-Falimbāni. In *Salasilah* it is mentioned quite explicitly that al-Falimbāni died in a war

³⁰ Another scholar, Riddell, who based his estimation on Quzwain's miscalculation also believes that al-Falimbāni was born around 1704, see Peter G. Riddell (2001), 'Arab Migrants and Islamization in the Malay World During The Colonial Period' in *Indonesia and the Malay World*, vol. 29. no. 84/July 1, 2001.

³¹ *Salasilah* writes that al-Falimbāni died in a war with Siam in 1241/1826 which means that if he was born in 1123/1712, as in our approximation, then he might have been 116 years old when he died. Others believed he might have died shortly after completed writing *Siyār al-Sālikin* in 1202/1788 or 1203/1789, see *Salasilah*, 150, also *Networks*, 114.

between Kedah/Pattani-Siam which took place in 1243/1828.³² The account gives a very detailed version of the event, which runs as follows:

Maka berperanglah Tengku Muhammad Sa'at dan sekaliannya. Maka berperanglah antara kedua-dua pihak itu di Haadyai, dan ramai-lah yang mati antara kedua-dua pihak itu. Maka Tuan Shaikh Abdul Samad shahid di dalam peperangan itu.³³

Azra, however, is not convinced that this assertion in *Salasilah* is correct for two reasons: firstly, there is 'no evidence in other sources' to prove that al-Falimbānī ever returned to the archipelago and secondly, al-Falimbānī 'would have been about 124 years old – which is ridiculously too old an age for a man to fight in a battlefield'.³⁴

Those who believe that al-Falimbānī did return to the Archipelago give several justifications. One of them is that there are several pieces of supporting evidence, apart from *Salasilah* and popular folklores, pointing to the fact that al-Falimbānī did return to the Archipelago and his return is not only once but rather twice.³⁵ If the account in *Salasilah* is accepted, then al-Falimbānī's age would have been around 117 years, based on our new estimation above and not 124 years as claimed by Azra.

Shaghir admits that when al-Falimbānī died, his age must have been more than 100 years old. Even though it might sound too old for a man to be fighting in a battlefield, it is not impossible for some people to live that long

³² *Salasilah*, 149-150.

³³ *Salasilah*, 150.

³⁴ Azra, *Networks*, 114.

³⁵ Shaghir, *Shamad*, 62-63; K.H. Saifuddin Zuhri, *Sejarah Kebangkitan Islam dan Perkembangannya di Indonesia*, 405- 406; al-Banjāri, *Shajarat al-Arshadiyyah*, 6-7.

especially during those days.³⁶ This story on the martyrdom of al-Falimbāni in the battlefield has been widely accepted from generation to generation. It is hardly conceivable that these people would have lied on this issue.³⁷

A second view about his death is that al-Falimbāni did not die in battlefield but instead had mysteriously “disappeared” (*ghayb*)³⁸ while fighting with the Siamese during the said Kedah/Pattani-Siam war.³⁹ Shaghir mentions that this folklore is popular among the local people of the area⁴⁰ and also in the whole of Pattani until now. The story goes something like this:⁴¹ when al-Falimbāni came to know that war between the local Muslims and the Buddhist Siamese broke out in Pattani, he and his entourage immediately left Arabia for Pattani to assist his Muslim brethren.

Unfortunately their arrival came too late since the Pattānī Muslim *mujāhidin* (holy fighters) had been almost completely defeated. While another scholar, Dāwūd al-Fatāni retreated to the east coast of Malaya, to a place called Pulau Duyung in Terengganu, al-Falimbāni chose to go for *khalwah* (seclusion) in a

³⁶ It might be questionable on the dates of birth and death of some of the past people since only recently that proper registration of birth and death dates was in place in the Malay Peninsula. Due to that one might find that al-Falimbāni is said to have lived for more than 100 years; Muhammad Arshād al-Banjāri for 105 years and Wan Mustafā al-Fatāni for 120 years, see *Pemikiran*, 4-5. Local newspapers on 13/09/2012 cited a story of the oldest man in Malaysia by the name ‘Abdul Rahman bin Abu Bakar’ or popularly known as ‘Pak Man’ died at the age of 117 years old, see ‘Lelaki tertua di Malaysia meninggal dunia’, in *Berita Harian*, 13/09/2012.

³⁷ Drewes is of the opinion it is a mere ‘legend’ and the story was ‘relegated to the realm of fiction’ (Drewes, *A Note*, 85, n.15).

³⁸ The claim of disappearance of someone special is not strange in Malay traditions. The great Malay warrior, Hang Tuah, was also said to have disappeared after killing his best friend Hang Jebat. It does happen in the Malay legend that someone who has claimed to have “disappeared” allegedly gives dreams to living people to erect his/her tomb at such and such place, and advice those who want to communicate to him/her to go to the tomb. This tomb serves as if a symbol of his/her place on earth.

³⁹ Shaghir quotes that another writer who is a local historian by the name of Wan Shamsuddin believes that the climax of the war took place in 1838, see *Pemikiran*, p.5 cf. note 12; Shaghir, *Shamad*, 88.

⁴⁰ The village is Kampong Terap (Ban Trap) also known as Ban Hua Kuan in Pattani, Southern Thailand, see Wan Mohd. Saghir Wan Abdullah, “Peranan Ulama’ Dalam Silat”, 17.

⁴¹ Shaghir, *Shamad*, 85-86; also his *Arsyad al-Banjari Pengarang Sabial Muhtadin*, 121-122.

mosque at Legor, Pattani, now famously known as Masjid Kerisik. The local people, especially among the Sufīs believed that al-Falimbāni had then after ‘disappeared’ and was never to be seen again.

The third opinion, which is widely accepted is that al-Falimbāni probably died in 1203/1788/9, the same year or shortly after he completed his celebrated work, *Siyār al-Sālikin*.⁴²

As regards the exact site of his burial place, it remains vague as well. It is not clear whether he died in the Malay Archipelago or in the Arabian Peninsula.⁴³

The only piece of information about this is from the *Salasilah* where it categorically states al-Falimbāni died in the war against the Siamese that took place in 1243/1828. The gravestone of al-Falimbāni was purportedly situated somewhere between the villages of Sekom and Cenak in the district of Pattani. The story was relayed from generation to generation based on a will as well as words of mouth of the older generation.⁴⁴

As to his death, it was unclear when and how al-Falimbāni actually died, nonetheless, it is believed, based on the evidence especially from *Salasilah* that al-Falimbāni did return and fight against the Siam in 1243/1828 and died in the war at the age of 117 years old, and not 124 years as believed by many.

⁴² Azra, *Networks*, 114; see also K.H. Sirajuddin Abbas, *Tabaqāt al-Shafi‘iyah*, 413. Nico J. G. Kaptein writes in *EI3* that al-Falimbāni “died after 1203/1788”.

⁴³ Al-Baytār does not mention the place, however, Azra speculates that al-Falimbāni died in Arabia, (Azra, *Networks*, 114). Perhaps Azra based this on his presupposition, that al-Falimbāni never returned to the Archipelago and therefore died in the Arabia.

⁴⁴ Wan Shaghir, *Al-‘ūr wāt*, 2-3.

3.6 Educational Background

As mentioned earlier, with the arrival of Islam in the Archipelago, Islam has transformed the Malays into a nation with a new identity and cultures infused with Islamic metaphysical outlook.⁴⁵ This new identity demanded them to acquire more knowledge of it in order to live with it. Hence, after the arrival of Islam to the Archipelago, there was an influx of scholars from the Arabia and Indian sub-continent resulting in various places in the region such as Pasai, Aceh, and Pattani to emerge as centres of Islamic learning in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁴⁶

In terms of education, al-Falimbānī had undergone two phases of education in his life, the first phase took place in the Malay Archipelago itself while the final phase was in the Middle East, mainly Arabian Peninsula.

3.6.1 Education in the Archipelago

There is not much record of al-Falimbānī's life in the two places in the Archipelago where he used to spend his early life. Palembang was the place where he was born while Kedah was the state where his father used to work and most probably al-Falimbānī's early life and education began there. However, there is no record of his early education studied in Palembang and Kedah, although Palembang dan Kedah were centre of knowledge as we have mentioned in earlier chapter.

⁴⁵ Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Islam dalam Sejarah dan Kebudayaan Melayu*, 49.

⁴⁶ Engku Ibrahim Engku Ismail, *Syeikh Dawud al-Fatani: Satu Analisis Peranan dan Sumbangan Terhadap Khazanah Islam di Nusantara*, 25.

It was believed, however, that al-Falimbānī was sent for further studies under great local sheikhs in traditional religious schools known as *pondok* in Pattani,⁴⁷ perhaps after he had completed his basic studies in Kedah. Here, according to Shaghir, al-Falimbānī studied in *Pondok Pauh Bok Pattani*⁴⁸ perhaps with ‘Abd al-Rahmān bin ‘Abd al-Mubin al-Fatānī who initiated him into *Tariqah Sammāniyyah*.⁴⁹ Thereafter, when al-Falimbānī had acquired some basic Islamic knowledge in the Qur’ān, Hadīth and more importantly significant mastery of the Arabic language, he was sent to study in the Arabian Peninsula – the customs of the Muslims of the region and elsewhere in those days and even until now to some extent.⁵⁰

Even while he was still a student in Pattani, al-Falimbānī had proven to be an excellent student and was considered an ‘*ālim* (learned), and was selected to be the so-called *pondok* ‘*tutor*’ (Malay Pattani: *kepala telaah*), as it were, teaching the junior colleagues in the *pondok*.⁵¹ The education system of the *pondok* then and even now laid great stress on memorization and for that reason one could expect that al-Falimbānī might have memorised all the *matns* (pl.*mutūn*) of great books of Arabic language, Shafī’ī jurisprudence, creed of Abu al-Hasan al-

⁴⁷ Pattani, a southern border province of Thailand (formerly called Siam) was once the centre of traditional Islamic education and earned the title ‘cradle of Islam’ for the Malay Muslim world. Pattani has preserved a unique religious, cultural character and institution which later developed to become *madrasahs* and private religious schools. It is not too much to claim that the origin of *pondok* institution in the Malay peninsula is from Pattani, (*Networks*, 123). After finishing their studies in the *pondok*, bright and successful students in those days normally proceeded to further their studies abroad, mainly either Arabian Peninsula or al-Azhar. For further details on the concept and development of *pondok* in Pattani, please refer to Hasan Madmarn, *Pondok and Madrasah in Pattani*; William R.Roff, ‘Pondoks, madrasahs and the production of ‘ulamā in Malaysia’, *Studia Islamika*, vol.11, no.1 (2004), 1-21.

⁴⁸ Shaghir, *Shamad*, 39.

⁴⁹ While another source according to Shaghir says al-Falimbānī was initiated by Muhammad Aqib al-Falimbānī, and still not from al-Sammān *Shamad*, 38-39.

⁵⁰ Mohammad Redzuan Othman, ‘*The Role*’, 146.

⁵¹ Shaghir, *Shamad*, 34.

Asha‘arī or al-Maturīdī.⁵² He was sent to further his studies in the Haramayn, together with his brother, Wan Abdul Kadir, who later emerged as mufti of Kedah.⁵³

3.6.2 Education in the Arabia

Due to religious and intellectual milieu surrounding the Malay Peninsula then, al-Falimbānī was sent to the Arabian Peninsula to further his studies and deepen his knowledge. University of al-Azhar actually began to attract a significant number of Malay students only after 1920s and not earlier than that.⁵⁴ Prior to that, Hijāz had been an important destination for the Malays to advance their religious knowledge. The importance of Mecca in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as a ‘diffusion centre’ of Islamic knowledge should not be underestimated.⁵⁵ It is however, not known how old he was when he began his ‘journey of knowledge’ (*rihlat li talab al-‘ilm*). It is believed that he must be in his teens when he arrived in Mecca as the Malays customarily only send their children when they are teens to further their studies abroad.⁵⁶ In this connection, Mohammad Redzuan says the following:

It was a normal practice among the more religious parents who could afford it, particularly in the eastern and northern peninsular Malay states where religious education was most developed, to send their sons at a young age to Makka to study Islam and to do the Hajj.⁵⁷

⁵² Shaghir, Shamad, 33-34. Bruinessen has compiled a list of books used in *pondoks* or *pesantren* as part of the curriculum, see Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning*.

⁵³ Muhammad, *Salasilah*, 124.

⁵⁴ Mohammad Redzuan, ‘*The Role*’, 146-7.

⁵⁵ Trimmingham, Sufi, 147.

⁵⁶ Hurgronje, *Mekka*, 254.

⁵⁷ Mohammad Redzuan, ‘*The Role*’, 146.

The earliest record on his activities while in Mecca is found in *Shajarah al-Arshadiyyah* written by ‘Abd al-Rahmān Siddīq bin Muhammad ‘Afīf al-Banjārī.⁵⁸ Al-Banjārī mentions that al-Falimbāni had studied in Mecca for thirty years and in Medina for five years.⁵⁹ With the invention of better transportation such as steamship, more people from the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago could travel to Mecca for hajj more frequently. Some of them decided to stay on even after the *hajj* season to seek knowledge from the scholars teaching in the two Holy sanctuaries.⁶⁰ Another side effect of the increased Malay-Indonesian participation in the hajj after the invention of steamship according Martin van Bruinessen is that printed books from the Middle East began to make their presence in the Archipelago in significant number.

Interestingly, when the Shariefdom government under the Caliph Uthmaniyyah established a printing agency in Mecca in 1884, it not only printed Arabic books, but also published Malay works or popularly known as *Jāwī*. The Malay publication was placed under the supervision of one learned Malay scholar who resided in Mecca, Shaykh Ahmad bin Muhammad Zayn al-Fatānī (1272-1325/1856-1908).⁶¹ Further, according to Shaykh Ahmad, al-Falimbānī’s *Hidāyat al-Sālikīn* was the first Malay work to have been printed in Egypt.⁶²

⁵⁸ He is the descendant of Muhammad Arsyad bin Abdullah al-Banjari, a renowned local scholar.

⁵⁹ Al-Banjari, *Shajarat al-Arshadiyyah*, 6-7.

⁶⁰ In the latest development as reported in the local dailies dated September 12, 2012, some 250 Malaysians were reported to have misused the Visa for Umrah and we deported. Before found, they were believed to have decided to overstay and one of the reasons were to study in the traditional schools (*madrasahs*) in Mecca. See “Salah Guna Visa di Mekah”, in *Utusan Malaysia*, 12 September 2012.

⁶¹ Saghir, “Ensiklopedia Nusantara, Terjemahan Hidayah al-Sālikīn lebih tepat” in *Berita Harian Online*, <http://www.bharian.com.my/m/BHarian/Tuesday/Agama/20070108231517/Article/> accessed on 27 March 2010.

⁶² Ibid.

With regard to al-Falimbānī's education in the Middle East, al-Falimbānī spent most of his time in the Arabian Peninsula and visited Zabīd in Yemen.⁶³ It is also said that he stayed in Egypt for a brief period of time. Al-Falimbānī was later sent to further his studies in Mecca together with his brother, Wan 'Abd al-Qādir.⁶⁴ The Masjid al-Haram in Mecca then was the centre of Islamic learning in the Muslim world, acting like a university with scholars from all over the world teaching therein.⁶⁵

3.6.2.1 Arabian Peninsula

In the last part of Hurgronje's book entitled *Mecca*, he devotes the whole of chapter IV, called "The Jawah"⁶⁶ discussing the activities of the people from Southeast Asia region: the Javanese, the Malays, the Sumatrans or whatever ethnics that are identified on a whole as a community known as 'Jāwī' in the Arabian Peninsula in the 19th century.⁶⁷ He did mention that a century before that, there lived in Mecca a famous teacher from Palembang by the name of 'Abd al-Samad'.⁶⁸ Though Hurgronje did not elaborate further on al-Falimbānī in his work, yet we could discern from the writing on the social and intellectual milieu of Jawahs living in the two Holy Cities.

⁶³ See al-Bayṭar, *Hilyat*, 851, vol.2.

⁶⁴ Muhammad, *Salasilah*, 124.

⁶⁵ Hurgronje, *Mekka*, 173.

⁶⁶ According to Hurgronje, 'all lands populated by the Jawahs are called 'bilād al-jāwah', an individual is called Djāwah (plural: Djāwāt) also Jāwī (plural: Jāwah or Jawiyyīn)'. The geographical boundary is from Siam and Malacca to New Guinea, see Hurgronje, *Mekka In the Latter Part of the 19th Century: Daily life, customs and learning the Moslems of the East- Indian-Archipelago*, 215 note 3. It should also be mentioned here that the term 'Jāwī' (or *jawah*), though originally derived from the name 'Java', came to signify anyone from the Malay-Indonesia world (Azra, *Networks*, 3).

⁶⁷ Hurgronje, *Mekka*, 213-292.

⁶⁸ Hurgronje, *Mekka*, 289.

In his groundbreaking studies, Azyumardi Azra discusses on the networks of Malay-Indonesian and Middle Eastern ‘Ulamā’ in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, bringing to light on how important Mecca and Medina were as second homes to a cosmopolitan society of scholars from all walks of life and geographical origins.⁶⁹ All these intellectual scenarios surrounding Arabia and Yemen enable the later generations to discern more clearly on the broader trends during al-Falimbānī’s day, the rise of Islamic reformism and the growth of several centres of Islamic learning such as Zabid and Palembang as well Aceh, complementing the two holy sanctuaries, Mecca and Medina.

While in the Arabia, al-Falimbānī studied with many scholars. The most prominent one is Shakyh al-Damanhūrī who taught *Zahrat al-Murīd fi Bayān Kalimat al-Tawhīd*, a book on creed, in Maṣjīd al-Haram.⁷⁰

Since it has been the tradition in the past to record the continuous chain of transmission (*sanad*) of knowledge from one generation to another, just as in the case of the tradition (*ḥadīth*) transmission, it is therefore fortunate enough for the later generations to be able to know from whom al-Falimbānī had obtained his education while in the Arabia and what subjects he had studied. This knowledge chain has been recorded by al-Falimbānī himself in his books *Siyār al-Sālikīn* and *al-’Urwat al-Wuthqā* mentioning each teacher from whom he studied with and got such and such knowledge. The details of the chain shall not be discussed here but worth mentioning here some of the important books that he had studied while in the Arabia mentioned in his *Siyār*, such as *al-Jami’ al-Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, *kitāb al-ṣaḥīḥ al-Muslim*, *kitāb al-sunan li-imām Abī Dawūd*, *sunan al-mustafa*

⁶⁹ Azra, *Networks*, 8-31.

⁷⁰ *Pengasuh*, 507: 26.

lī-ibn al-Majāh, al-Muwatta' of Imām Mālik, musnad al-Shafi'e, musnad Ahmad, musnad al- Dārimī, sunan al-Daraqutni, kitab Arb'aun hadith, kitāb riyād al-sālihīn, kitab jami' al-Ṣāghir li-Jalal al-Suyutī, 'umdat al-ahkām lī-'Abd al-Ghani al-Maqdisi, bulugh al-maram li al-hafiz Ibn Hajar, and Muntaqa al-Akhbar of Ibn Taymiyyah.

However, al-Falimbānī's strong disposition was towards Sufism (*tasawwuf*) which had always been his greatest interest even while he was still studying back home in the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago. It is in Sufism where his expertise was at its best. It is further affirmed that when in Arabia, al-Falimbānī had gradually become attracted to the teachings of the highly charismatic Muhammad bin 'Abd al-Karim al-Sammān⁷¹ (d.1189/1775) who was the guardian of the Prophet's grave in Medina and the author of several works on Sūfī metaphysics. Al-Sammān became influential especially after he founded a new Sufī order (*tariqah*). Bruinessen notes that al-Sammān combined the practices and dhikr of the Khalwatiyyah, the Qadīriyyah and the Naqshbandiyyah orders with the North African Shadhiliyyah [in all of which he had "authorization" (*ijāzah*)]. He later developed a new ecstatic way of *dhikr* (remembrance) by composing a special *ratib*, which is a litany consisting of invocations and Qur'ānic verses. This combination became known as the Sammāniyyah order (*Tariqah Samāniyyah*).⁷² It is from al-Sammān that al-Falimbānī took the *ijāzah* and later emerged as his loyal disciple. Al-Falimbānī subsequently authored a number of important works

⁷¹ Brockelmann includes al-Sammān in his G.A.L., SII:335 in the paragraph on mysticism of the chapter Northern Arabia. Al-Sammān appears again in Chapter 8 under the heading "The Malay Archipelago" of the same work. Al-Sammān was born in Medina in 1132/1719 and died there in 1189/1775 and was buried in the Baqī', the oldest cemetery of Medina. Drewes writes quite a lengthy article on al-Sammān, see G.W.J. Drewes, "A Note on Muhammad al-Sammān, his writings, and 19th century Sammāniyya practices, chiefly in Batavia, according to written data", *Archipel* (Paris), No. 43, 73-87. Henceforth abbreviated as *A Note*.

⁷² Drewes. *A Note*, 77

in Malay as well as in Arabic in order to spread the teachings of his master. Some of his works had been written while he was still in the Arabia.

Al-Falimbāni mentions in his works, *Hidāyat* and *Siyar* that he had taken the *tariqah* directly from the founder, Shaykh al-Sammān. This makes Azra to believe that al-Sammān himself had initiated al-Falimbāni into ‘both *tariqas* of Khalwatiyyah and Sammāniyyah’.⁷³ However, there are also other sources claiming that al-Falimbāni took the order from ‘Abd al-Rahmān bin ‘Abd al-Mubin al-Fatāni of Pauh Bok while he was still a student in Pattani.⁷⁴ A more plausible explanation is that he took it while he was in Pattani and later renewed it with al-Sammān himself while Medina.⁷⁵ More importantly, al-Falimbāni was the key person who was responsible in spreading the Sammāniyyah order, not only in Palembang but also other parts of the region.⁷⁶ Al-Falimbāni spent thirty years studying in Mecca and five years in Medina. Possibly he traveled to East Africa and Egypt as well to gain education. East Africa by then was very influential with the establishment of various Ṣūfī orders such as al-Shādhilī, al-Qādirī, al-Rifā‘ī and others.⁷⁷

It is interesting to note here that in spite of the fact that al-Falimbāni and the reformist Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb (1114-1206 AH/1703-1792 CE)

⁷³ Azra, *Networks*, 116.

⁷⁴ ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Fatāni was said to be the first Malay to have been initiated into the *Tariqah Khlawatiyyah-Sammāniyyah* while he was a student of al-Sammān in Medina (al-Bārūhī, *al-Turuq*, 421). While according to another source, al-Falimbāni was initiated by Muhammad Aqib al-Falimbāni, and thus not from al-Sammān himself (Shaghir, *Shamad*, 38-39).

⁷⁵ Shaghir, *Penyebaran*, 120.

⁷⁶ Azra, *Networks*, 116. G.W.J Drewes, “A Note of Muhammad al-Sammān, his writings, and 19th century Sammaniyyah practices, chiefly in Batavia according to writte data”, *Archipel* (Paris), 43, 74.

⁷⁷ For further details on Islam in Africa, see Trimmingham, *Islam in East Africa*, 76-111.

lived in the same period of time and probably both in the Arabian Peninsula,⁷⁸ there is no evidence to show that they might have ever met each other. Neither was there any evidence to suggest the al-Wahhab had influenced al-Falimbānī's thought and turned him to adopt reformist teachings or Wahhabism.

3.6.2.2 Yemen

According to an Arabic biographical text, al-Falimbānī arrived at the Yemeni town of Zabid in 1204 AH/1791 CE.⁷⁹ Feener notes the following:

At Zabid, al-Falimbānī was fully integrated into the heart of a network of Arabophone Muslim scholars that extended across the entire range of the Indian Ocean littoral and beyond, from West Africa to China.⁸⁰

Zabid (also spelled Zebid) is located in the Tihama, in the west coastal plain of the Yemen. It was named after *Wadi Zabid* (Valley of Zabid) in Yemen. It was founded in 204/820 and was the capital of the Ziyadid Dynasty from 819–1018 and the Najahid dynasty from 1022–1158. It was regarded as a regional centre of scholarship in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁸¹ The city was again the centre of administration under the Ayyubids (1173-1229), who were responsible for its expansion and reconstruction, including building of a great number of mosques and traditional religious schools, *madrakah*.⁸² It remained the capital of Yemen from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century and a center of the

⁷⁸ Al-Falimbānī lived in Arabian Peninsula for about thirty years before he returned. He died probably in 1243/1828. If we assumed that he left the Archipelago during his early young days, then it would have been possible when he was in the Arabian Peninsula he might have heard of al-Wahhāb.

⁷⁹ Feener, *UCLA*, 5. There is slight different from al-Bayṭar in his *Hilyat* where he claimed the date was 1206/1793. See his *Hilyat*, 851, vol.2.

⁸⁰ Feener, *UCLA*, 7.

⁸¹ Feener, *UCLA*, 7.

⁸² Feener, *UCLA*, 7.

Arab and Muslim world due in large part to its famed University of Zabid and being a center of Islamic education.

During the reign of Rasulid⁸³ Sultan al-Ashraf Umar II (d. 696/1296), there were some two hundred and thirty such institutions in Zabid,⁸⁴ and it further developed into one of the reputed centres of Islamic learning in the centuries that followed.⁸⁵ Among the local people, Zabid – in spite of its nearly ruined town now – is until today proudly referred to as ‘City of the Scholars’ (*madinat al-‘ulamā*).⁸⁶

Zabid attracted not just ordinary students throughout the Muslim world, but also great scholars such as one of the greatest Sufī Shaykhs of the Southeast Asia, Shaykh Yusūf al-Maqassārī (d. 1110/1699), who spent his early years in Arabia at Zabid.⁸⁷ The influx of scholars from all over the world as mentioned in *al-Nafs al-Yamanī* highlighted the importance of Yemen, particularly Zabid, as a centre for Islamic learning and scholarship until the early nineteenth century.⁸⁸

It is for that reasons too that al-Falimbānī left the two holy sanctuaries for Zabid, after spending more than thirty years in Mecca and Medina, with the intention of furthering his studies. The impact that al-Falimbānī brought to this part of the world has been largely neglected in earlier studies apart from some

⁸³ Rasulid was a dynasty that ruled Yemen and Hadhramawt from 626/1229 to 858/1454. They assumed power from the Egyptian Ayyubid that left the southern provinces of the Arabian Peninsula.

⁸⁴ Abdullah Muhammad Hibshi, *Hayat al-‘adab al-yamāni fī ‘asr banī rasul*, quoted in Feener *UCLA*, 7.

⁸⁵ Ibn al-Dayba, *al-Fadl al-mazīd ‘ala bughyat al-mustafīd fī akhbār madinat zabid*, 47.

⁸⁶ Feener, *UCLA*, n.32, p.17.

⁸⁷ Al-Maqassārī, *al-Nafḥat al-Saylāniyyah*, Jakarta National Library, MS A 101,25 as quoted by Azra, *Networks*, 89.

⁸⁸ Azra, *Networks*, 116.

groundbreaking studies of Azra in his *Network*.⁸⁹ Al-Ahdal, mentions that al-Falimbānī arrived in the Yemeni town of Zabid in 1206/1791. He goes on saying the following:

He is known as a productive scholar (*‘ulamā’*), and one of the masters of various branches of Islamic sciences. He acquired his knowledge from a number of Two Noble Holy sanctuaries (*al-Haramayn*) scholars of his age such as the learned (*al-‘allāmah*) Shaykh Ibrāhīm al-Ra‘īs, and the learned Shaykh Muhammad Mardād, and the learned Shaykh ‘Atā al-Misrī, and the learned Shaykh Muhammad al-Jawharī and the learned Shaykh Muhammad bin Sulaymān al-Kurdī, among others [...].⁹⁰

3.6.2.3 Egypt

As we have mentioned earlier, after spending more than thirty five years in the Arabia, al-Falimbānī and his colleagues sought the permission of the then Shaykh al-Islam of Mecca, Shaykh Muhammad bin Sulaymān al-Kurdī (1194/1780) to travel to Egypt to further their knowledge of Islam. The Shaykh, however, advised them to make a return trip home to the Malay Archipelago to spread the knowledge that they had already acquired. If they insisted on visiting Egypt, then the Shaykh felt it would only frustrate them for no one in Egypt could surpass them in knowledge.⁹¹ It was reported that al-Falimbānī and his friends however did a short visit to Egypt, just in the form of educational visits to various madrasahs, educational institutions and others with the intention of

⁸⁹ A more detailed and in-depth study of al-Falimbānī’s life in Yemen appeared recently in an unpublished article by R. Michael Feener. As mentioned earlier, he based primarily on the biographical text (*tabaqāt*) of Sulayman al-Ahdal’s *al-Nafs al-Yamāni*.

⁹⁰ Al-Ahdal, *al-Nafs al-Yamāni*, 138.

⁹¹ Shaghir, *Shamad*, 63-64. The Shaykh al-Islam was reported in al-Banjārī’s *Shajarat* to have said to al-Falimbānī and his friends: “No one is more knowledgeable than I am in Egypt, and (I testify that) your knowledge is more than enough. You all should return to the Archipelago (instead of going to Egypt)...” (Al-Banjārī, *Shajarat*, 7).

adopting the Egyptian teaching style in the Malay Archipelago.⁹² This brief visit to Egypt, however, does not get any mention in other works apart from this sole statement as appeared in the *Risālah Shajarat al-Arshādiyyah wa Mā Ulhiqa bihā* of al-Banjārī.

3.7 His Teachers

Azra has listed with biographical details some most famous teachers of al-Falimbāni. Being the top most are his spiritual guide, Muhammad bin ‘Abd al-Karim al-Sammānī, followed by Muhammad bin Sulaymān al-Kurdi, ‘Abd al-Mun’im al-Damanhūri, [Abū al-Fawz] Ibrahim [bin Muhammad] al-Ra’is [al-Zamzami al-Makki] (1110-94/1698-1780), Muhammad Murad also known as, according to Azra, Muhammad Khalil bin ‘Ali bin Muhammad bin Murād al-Husayni (1173-1206/1759-91), Muhammad [bin Ahmad] al-Jawhari [al-Misri] (1132-86/1720-72) and ‘Atā’Allah [bin Ahmad] al-Azhari al-Masri al-Makki.⁹³ Al-Falimbāni also studied under a visiting Egyptian scholar who frequented the Haramayn, Ahmad bin ‘Abd al-Mun’im al-Damanhūri (d. 1151/1739).

Apart from what has been mentioned in several books about his teachers, al-Falimbāni also studied with Muhammad Zayn bin Faqih Jalaluddin of Aceh who is an author of *Bidāyat al-Hidayah*, *Talkhīs al-Falāh* and *Kashf al-Kirām*.⁹⁴ Other scholars whom al-Falimbāni acquired his knowledge from are Shaykh Muhammad

⁹² Shaghir, *Shamad*, 64.

⁹³ We do not intend to go into the biographical details of each personality. One may refer to *Networks*, 114-117 for further information. See also Al-Baytār, *Hilyat al-Bashar*, 1:33 and 2:851; ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Jabartī, *‘Ajā’ib al-āthār fī Tarājim wa al-Akhbār*, 1:560-2.

⁹⁴ Shaghir, *Shamad*, 35.

bin Sulaymān al-Kurdī who was the then Shaykh al-Islam and Imām al-Haramayn during the period, and also Sheikh ‘Ata Allah of Egypt.⁹⁵

3.8 His Contemporaries

In his life time al-Falimbāni met many people, some of whom became his teachers while others were his friends. Sources sometimes give conflicting report whether a person was his teacher or his contemporary. What we know for sure is that while in the Arabia, al-Falimbāni’s close friends were Muhammad Arshad bin ‘Abd Allah al-Banjāri⁹⁶ (1122-1227/1710-1812), and Dāwūd bin ‘Abd Allah al-Fatāni (1153-1259/1740-1843),⁹⁷ while his other contemporaries were Wahab Pangkajena Bugis, Abd al-Rahman al-Masri, Muhammad Nafis al-Banjari, and Muhammad Ali Aceh.⁹⁸ Azra further includes two more persons namely, ‘Abd al-Wahhāb Bugis, and ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Batāwi, all of whom were of Malay-Indonesian origin.⁹⁹ We will not discuss in details his other contemporaries apart from al-Banjāri and al-Fatāni as they are less important in the context of our research here.

By keeping in close contact with the Jāwi community in the Arabia, al-Falimbāni managed to keep himself abreast of the latest development of the Muslims as well as the local political milieu back home.

⁹⁵ Shaghir, *Shamad*, 38.

⁹⁶ The author of *Sabil al-Muhtadin*.

⁹⁷ Wan Mohd Shaghir Wan Abdullah, “Sheikh ‘Abd al-Samad al-Falimbāni dan Angkatannya Dalam Tamadun Keilmuan Melayu” paper presented at *Seminar Pemikiran Ulama’ Sheikh Abdus Samad al-Falimbani*, Kompleks al-Bukhary, Alor Setar, Malaysia organised by Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, on 30th December 2002; see also Azra, *Networks*, 123.

⁹⁸ Shaghir, *Shamad*, 34-35.

⁹⁹ Shaghir, *Networks*, 114.

3.9 His Works

Al-Falimbāni can be regarded as ‘al-Ghazālī of the Malays’ for his efforts in disseminating al-Ghazālī’s thought through his writings and lectures. His work, *Hidāyat al-Sālikīn fī Bayān Sulūk Maslak al-Muttaqīn* is mostly an adaptation of al-Ghazālī’s *Bidāyat al-hidayah* while his *Siyar al-Sālikīn ilā ‘Ibādat Rabb al-‘Alamin* was written as an abridgment with adaptation from al-Ghazālī’s *Ihyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Din*.¹⁰⁰

There are also other important books not directly translated from al-Ghazālī’s works but have strong similarities with al-Ghazālī’s teachings. He also authored *Zahrat al-Murīd fī Bayān Kalimat al-Tawhīd* written in 1178/1764, *Zād al-Muttaqīn fī Tawhīd Rabb al-‘Alamin*, *Ratib ‘Abd al-Samad*, and *Nasihāt al-Muslimīn wa Tazkirat al-Mu’minīn fī Fadā’il al-Jihād fī Sabillillah*. We do agree with Norhaidi as we have mentioned earlier that the work *Tuhfat al-Rāghibīn fī Bayān Haqiqat Imān al-Mu’min wa ma Yafsiduhu fī Riddat al-Murtaddīn* is not the work of al-Falimbāni but rather his contemporary Arshad al-Banjārī.¹⁰¹

The brief contents of some of his major works are as follows:

- (a) *Hidāyat al-Sālikīn fī Sulūk al-Maslak al-Muttaqīn*: It was completed by al-Falimbāni in 1192/1778¹⁰² and more than one hundred years later it was edited by Shaykh Ahmad al-Fatānī in 1298/1880. Al-Fatānī’s

¹⁰⁰ It says “being a translation of the *Lubāb Ihyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Din*” [Malay: *yang diterjemahkan daripada Kitāb Lubab Ihyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Din lil ‘Alim al-‘Allāmah Hujjat al-Islām Abi Hāmid Muhammad bin Muhammad al-Ghazālī oleh Tuan Shaykh yang sangat soleh lagi alim al-‘āllāma al-jamī’ bayna al-zāhir wa al-bātin al-‘ārif bi Allāh al-Shaykh ‘Abd al-Samad al-Falimbāni rahimah Allāh Ta’ālā wa askanahu ‘ālā jannatīhi wa nafa’nā bi ‘ulūmihi wa barakātīhi Āmin*]

¹⁰¹ See *Shamad*, vii-viii; *Silsilah*, 8:33-34. Azra and Voorhoeve believe it is the work of al-Falimbāni.

¹⁰² *Shaghir*, *Pemikiran*, 6-7.

edited version has been in wide circulation even until today.¹⁰³ This four-volume work deals mainly with matters on ritual worshipping.

(b) *Siyar al-Sālikin ilā ‘ibadat Rabb al-‘Alamīn*: The first volume of al-Falimbāni’s *Siyar al-sālikin* was completed in 1194/1780.¹⁰⁴ This work, as mentioned earlier is a translation of *Lubāb Ihyā’ ‘Ulūm al-dīn* consists of four volumes. *Siyar* together with *Hidāyat* are the two main works that have been well received by Muslims in this region from Malay Peninsula to Southern Thailand, and Indonesia. Some even claimed the works reached as far as Cambodia and the Philippines. In fact, these works are still being read today in many *pondoks* and *madrasahs* in Malaysia and Pattani. The succeeding chapters of this work will focus on the teachings from *Siyar* as well as *Hidāyat*.

(c) *Zahrat al-Murid fi Bayān Kalimat al-Tawhid*: It is basically a small treatise on Islamic creed which has been commented upon by many scholars.¹⁰⁵ In *Zahrat*, al-Falimbāni clearly explains the concept of Testification of Faith (*shahadah*). He discourages ‘the beginners’ (*mubtadi’*) from discussing the details of the Testification of Faith (*shahādah*) beyond what is necessary (*wajib*).¹⁰⁶

(d) *Al-‘Urwat Al-Wuthqā wa Silsilah al-Waliy al-Atqā*: In this work al-Falimbāni mentions the chain of transmission of knowledge that he got

¹⁰³ Shaghir, *Pemikiran*, 6.

¹⁰⁴ Shaghir, *Pemikiran*, 7.

¹⁰⁵ Shaghir, *Pemikiran*, 9.

¹⁰⁶ Shaghir, *Zahrah*, 24.

from one teacher to the other. This work also contains litanies (*awrād*) recommended by him to be read by those traveling on the path (*sālik*).

(f) *Ratib Shaykh ‘Abd al-Samad al-Falimbāni*: This work contains the litanies (*ratīb*) for those taking the *Tariqah Sammāniyyah*.¹⁰⁷

(g) *Nasihāt al-Muslimin wa Tadhkirāt al-Mu’minin fī Fadā‘il al-Jihād wa Karāmāt al-Mujāhidin fī Sabīl Allah*: Al-Falimbānī in this work reminds the Muslims on the importance of Holy War and the blessings upon those who fight for the sake of Islam. This treatise was written to encourage the Muslims to stage a revolt against the Dutch colonialism in Indonesia.

There are other works known to have been written by al-Falimbānī, some of those may no longer be in existence such as:

(a) *Risalah pada menyatakan sebab yang diharamkan bagi nikah*.

(b) *Al-Risālah fī Kayfiyāt al-Ratib Laylat al-Jum‘ah*

(c) *Dhāt al-Muttaqin fī Tawhid Rabb al-‘Alamīn*

(d) *‘Ilm al-Tasawwuf*¹⁰⁸

(e) *Mulkhis al-Tuhbāt al-Mafdhāh min al-Rahmāh al-Mahdah ‘Alayh al-Salat al-Salām*.

¹⁰⁷ Drewes and Al-Attas describe how it was performed see Drewes, *A Note*, 78-81 and al-Attas, *Some Aspects*, 78-88.

¹⁰⁸ The treatise is perhaps the one that Shaghīr also called it by other name as *Risalah Tasawwuf* and appended it at the back of his *Hidāyat*, vol. 2, 271-259. I have failed to find the title of allegedly al-Falimbānī’s *Risalah Tasawwuf* as Shaghīr’s claim, mentioned in the writings of other scholars.

(f) *Kitāb Mi'rāj*

(g) *Anis al-Muttaqin*¹⁰⁹

(h) *Puisi Kemenangan Kedah*

3.10 The Influence of Scholars on Al-Falimbānī

The approach adopted here in order to see which scholars have greatly influenced al-Falimbānī is by evaluating his works and observing whose ideas that have greatly left impact on his thought. Looking at those scholars that he mentioned most often in his works, without doubt they are these two scholars namely al-Ghazālī and al-Sammān. As to other scholars, we shall see from whose books he recommended the *sāliks* to read at various levels, as well as the ideas of these scholars al-Falimbānī brought into his own works or writings. This is so far the best way to evaluate someone's influence upon others, though certain scholars seem not agree with this approach of quoting an author and then making an inference of his influence.¹¹⁰

From the title of al-Falimbānī's most outstanding work *Siyar al-Sālikīn*, we could sense the similarities between al-Falimbānī's work with the work of another Ṣūfī master, Qasim ibn Salah al-Din al-Khānī al-Halabī (d.1109 / 1697) entitled *Siyar al-Sulūk ilā Malik al-Mulūk*. Al-Falimbānī clearly subscribes to al-Halabī's conception of seven degrees of the soul (*nafs*): *Nafs al-Ammarat bi al-Sū'*, *Nafs al-*

¹⁰⁹ This work is not mentioned elsewhere except by Shaghīr who claims the said manuscript is in his possession, *Shamad*, 97.

¹¹⁰ Drewes and Brakel, *The Poems*, 14.

*Lawwāmah, Nafs al-Mutmainnah, Nafs al-Mulhamah, Nafs al-Rādiyyah, Nafs al-Mardiyah and Nafs al-Kāmilah.*¹¹¹

This seven degrees of the *nafs* is not discussed by al-Ghazālī in any of his work but was the idea of al-Halabi who was said to be the first Sufī to articulate the seven degrees of the soul (*nafs*).¹¹² Likewise al-Falimbānī was also influenced by Muhammad ibn Fadl Allāh Burhanpurī (d. 1030/1620) who was the first to come up with the theory of Seven Grades of Being in his most popular work *al-Tuhfat al-Mursalat ilā Rūh al-Nabiy*.¹¹³ This theory was later known in the Malay world as “*Martabat Tujuh*”. Al-Burhanpurī divides being into seven grades, *ahadiyah, wahdah, wahidiyah, ‘alam arwah, ‘alam mithāl, ‘alam ajsam, and ‘alam insān* which we shall explain in details in the succeeding chapters.¹¹⁴

Al-Falimbānī was impressed by al-Burhanpurī’s book and recommended it as a reference for spiritual travellers especially those on the journey to the final station (*al-muntahi*).¹¹⁵ From this, it is apparent that al-Falimbānī is not purely Ghazālīan in his approach, but has adapted al-Ghazālī’s mystical thought, blended it with the teachings of other Sufī scholars as well.

In teaching Sufism, al-Falimbānī prefers to divide them into three levels. First is the level for the beginners (*mubtadi*’), second, the intermediate

¹¹¹ Shaghir, *Pemikiran*, 12. cf . *Siyar* 3:8

¹¹² Shaghir, *Pemikiran*, 12.

¹¹³ The book has been translated, annotated with introduction by Anthony H. Johns as *The Gift Addressed to The Spirit of the Prophet*. The best commentary of this text is written by a well-known gnostic ‘Abd al-Ghani al-Nablūsi (d.1049/1640) the author of *Hadiqat al-Nadiyyah*, and *al- Matālib al-‘āliyyah*.

¹¹⁴ It is interesting to note here that apart from the seven degrees of the soul and seven grades of being, there are also seven *latifas*, mainly in Naqshabandiyyah Order. They are *latifat al-qalb, latifat al-rūh, latifat al-sirr, latifat al-khafī, latifat al-akhfa, latifat al-nafsi* and *latifat al- qalab/kulli jasad*.

¹¹⁵ Shaghir, *Syahid*, 46.

(*mutawassit*) and last is the the highest or final level (*muntahi*). For each level, there are specific books which he recommends as sources of reference and guidance. Bruinessen has analysed each of the works and the author concerned in his *Kitab Kuning*.¹¹⁶ It is not the scope of this thesis, however, to provide the lengthy description of the works as done by Bruinessen. Suffice for us to briefly list the major books recommended by al-Falimbānī for each stage in order to better understand al-Falimbānī's grading of the Sufī works. They are as follows:

a) Books for the Beginners (*mubtadi*).

There are at least fifty six books meant for beginners of Sufims which, according to Shaghir, have been cited by al-Falimbānī. They are:¹¹⁷ *Bidāyat al-Hidāyah*, *Minhāj al-'Abidin*, *Ihyā' 'Ulum al-Din* of al-Ghazālī, *Qut al-Qulūb* of Abū Tālib al-Makki, *Risālah al-Qushairiyyah* of 'Abd al-Qāsim al-Qushayri with a commentary by Shaykh Zakariā al-Ansari, *al-Ghunyah* of 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jilāni, *'Awārif al-Ma'ārif* of Shihab al-Din 'Umar al-Suhrawardi, *Adāb al-muridin* of Muhammad al-Habib al-Suhrawardi, *Miftah al-Falāh* of Ibn 'Ataillah al-Iskandari, *al-Futūhāt al-Ilāhiyyah* of Shaykh Zakariyya al-Ansāri.

Books authored by 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sha'rāni are *Madārij al-Sālikin*, *Sharh Wasiyat Sayyidi al-Shaykh Ibrāhīm al-Matbūli*, *Risalah Anwār al-Qudsiyyah*, *Mashāriq Anwar fī Bayān 'Uhūd al-Muhammadiyyah*, *Bahr al-Mawrūd fī Mawāthiq al-'Uhūd*, *Tanbih al-Mughtarīn*, *Akhlāq al-Matbūliyyah*, *al-Falak al-Masyhūn fī Bayān al-Tasawwūf wa huwā mā 'ālayhi 'al-'Ulamā' al-āmilūn*.

¹¹⁶ Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning*, 66-87.

¹¹⁷ Shaghir, *Syahid*, 35-44.

Other books such as *al-Matn al-Kabir wa al-Saghir*, *al-Siyār al-Sulūk ilā Mulk al-Mulūk* by Qāsim al-Hilmi,¹¹⁸ *Tartib Sulūk al-Mulūk* of Muhammad bin ‘Umar, *Minhāj al-Sālik ilā Asyraf al-Masālik* of ‘Ali al-Murshāfi, *Samt al-Majīd* of Ahmad al-Qushashi, *Aiqāz al-taqarrub bi al-nawāfil* of Ibrāhim bin Hasan al-Kurāni. ‘Abd al-Qadir al-‘Aydrus’ two books namely *al-Dur al-thamin* and *Zahr al-Bāsim*; *al-Futūhāt al-Qudsiyyah, Jāmi’ al-afrād* of Taj al-Din al-Hindi al-Naqshabandi; *Mawā’izu al-nafs* and *al-Nasā’ih al-Diniyyah* of Sayyid ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Alwi al-Haddad, also his *Ittihāf al-sā’il*, *al-Fusūl al-‘Ilmiyyah wa Usūl al-Hikmiyyah*, *Risalah Mu‘āwanah wa al-Muzāharah wa Muāzarah li al-Rāghibin min al-Mu‘minin fī Tarīq al-Akhirah*, *al-Da’wat al-Tāmma wa al-Tadhkīrah al-‘Ammah*; *al-Wasiyyah al-Jalilah li al-Sālikin li al-Tariqat al-Khalwatiyyah* of Mustafā al-Bakri,¹¹⁹ also *Hidāyat al-Ahbāb fī mā li al-Khalwah min al-Shurūt wa al-Adāb*, *Risālah al-Sahabah allati Bayna fihā al-khidmah al-Mahabbah*, *Kitāb Bulugh al-Marām fī khalwah ahl al-shām*, *Kitāb Nizām al-Qilādah fī kayfiyyat Ajlās al-Murid ‘alā al-Sajādah*, *Kitāb al-Manhal al-‘Azab fī Dhikr al-Salawāt wa al-Tariqat wa awrādih*; while *Kitāb al-Nafahāt al-Ilāhiyyat fī kayfiyat al-Tariqat al-Muhammadiyyah*¹²⁰ by Muhammad bin ‘Abd al-Karim al-Sammān.

Other books by al-Sammān are: *Kitāb ‘Unwān al-Khalwah fī sha‘n al-Khalwah* and *Kitāb al-Ighāthat al-Lahfān*, *Risālah Kashf al-Asrār fī mā Yata’allaq Bihi Ism al-Qahhār*, *Kitāb li al-Futūhāt al-Ilāhiyyah fī al-Tawjihāt al-Rūhiyyah li al-Hadharat al-Muhammadiyyah*, *Risālah al-Nasihah al-Awliyya’ li*

¹¹⁸ Shaghir, *Syahid*, 37.

¹¹⁹ Al-Falimbāni says that it is advisable for the beginners initiated into al-Khalwatiyyah al-Sammāniyyah Order to read this book for it contains all the principles of the *tariqah*, Shaghir, *Syahid*, 38.

¹²⁰ Al-Falimbāni notes that *al-Nafahāt* also contains the principles of the al-Khalwatiyyah al-Sammāniyyah Order and its chain of authority of transmission, Shaghir, *Syahid*, 39; cf *Siyar* III:168.

al-Sādat al-Ahliyyah, Kitāb al-Futūhāt al-Samāniyyay fi Sulūk al-Wahdaniyyah, Kitāb al-Nafahāt al-Sammaniyyat fi al-Tariqat al-Qādiriyyah, Kitāb Tanbih al-Haq fi khayr al-Farq wa Fath al-Muta'ali fi Waqti Aghliyi, Kitāb 'Umdat al-muhtājīn fi sulūk fi maslak al-mufarridin of 'Abd al-Rauf bin 'Ali al-Jawi al-Fansūri¹²¹ and Al-Falimbāni's three important works, *Hidāyat al-Sālikin fi Sulūk al-Muttaqin*¹²², *Kitāb Siyar al-Sālikin ilā 'Ibadat Rabb al-'Alamin* and *Kitāb 'Urwat al-wuthqā wa Silsilat al-waliyy al-atqā*.

(b) Books meant for the intermediate level (*mutawassit*)

They are *Kitāb Hikām*¹²³ and *Kitāb al-Tanwir al-Asqāt al-Tadbir* of Ibn 'Ataillah al-Iskandari al-Shadhīli; *Kitāb Latā'if al-Minan*; *Kitāb Hikām* of Abū Madyan commented upon by Ahmad bin Ibrahim 'Ilān al-Naqsyabandi; *Kitāb Hikām* of Ibn Ruslan commented upon by Zakariya al-Ansāri in his work called *Fath al-Rahmān*¹²⁴, *Futūh al-Ghayb* of 'Abd al-Qadīr al-Jilāni, *Kitāb al-Kibriya al-Ahmar wa al-Akthir al-Akbar* of al-Habib 'Abd Allah bin Abū Bakr al-Aydrus; *Kitāb al-Masābir* of 'Abd Allah al-Suhrawardi; *Kitāb al-Jawāhir wa al-Yawāqit* of 'Abd al-Wahab al-Sha'rāni; *Kitāb al-kibriya al-Ahmar*; *Kitāb al-Jawāhir al-Darar*, *Risālah al-Ahkām wa al-Ashrāf ilā al-Sūfiyyat bi jami'* *al-Afāq* of Muhammad Abi al-Mawāhib al-Shādhili; *Kitāb Sharh Qasidat ibn bint al-Miyāq* of Ahmād Ibrahim bin 'Ilān al-Naqshabandi; *Kitāb Mi'rāj al-Arwāh fi*

¹²¹ The author is also the translator of one of the most authoritative Qur'ānic exegesis, *Tafsīr al-Baydhāwi* into Malay, *Syahid*, 41.

¹²² We have discussed much earlier the contents of the book and the resources upon which the teachings are derived from.

¹²³ There are several commentaries made on this magnum opus of Ibn 'Ataillah. Al-Falimbāni recommends that one should, if possible, read all the commentaries such as the one by Muhammad bin Ibrahim bin 'Ibād, Ahmād al-Marzuqī, Ahmād bin Ibrahim bin 'Ilān al-Naqsyabandi al-Makkī, Ahmad al-Qusyasyi al-Madani and others, *Syahid*, 41.

¹²⁴ Al-Falimbāni said that this is the first book that he had studied with Shaykh Muhammad al-Sammān al-Qādiri al-Madani and this book is also given commentary by Shaykh Ahmād bin 'Ilān. The book is also commented upon by the teacher of al-Sammān, 'Abd al-Ghani al-Nablūsi, (Shaghir, *Syahid*, 44)

Manhāj al-Wadah of Sayyid Abū Bakr bin Salim bin ‘Abd Allah bi ‘Abd al-Rahmān bin ‘Abd Allah bin Mawlana Sayyid ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Saqqāf; *Kitāb Jawāhir al-Khamis*¹²⁵ of Sayyid Muhammad al-Ghawth; *Kitāb al-Fasl al-Tahiyyat wa al-Nafahāt al-Rahmāniyyah* of al-Hussayn al-Faqih ‘Abd Allah; *Kitāb al-Miftāh Ma’iyah fī Tariqat al-Naqshabandiyyah* of ‘Abd al-Ghani al-Nablūsi, being the commentary of the *Risālah of Taj al-Din al-Hindi*; *Kitāb Diyā’ al-Shams ‘Alā al-Fath al-Qudsi* which is the commentary from *Fath al-Qudsi* by Mustafā al-Bakri; *Risālat Asrār al-‘Ibādāt* of al-Sammān; *Kitāb Murshid al-Tullāb ilā Sulūk Tariqat al-ahbāb of Siddiq*, written by a student of al-Sammān; *Kitāb Kashf al-Athār al-wahbiyyat ‘an Jamāl Mahyā al-‘Ayniyyah* of Siddiq.¹²⁶ Other books for intermediate levels which al-Falimbāni has also recommended are *Tawhīd al-al-Af‘al*, *Tawhid al-Sifāt* and *Tawhīd al-Dhāt* written by Mustafā al-Bakri.¹²⁷

(c) Books for the highest level (*muntahi*).

Books for the spiritual travellers (*sālik*) reaching the final station or the end of the path (*muntahi*), for al-Falimbāni are mostly those written by Andalusian Sufī master Muhyiddin Muhammad ibn ‘Alī ibn Muhammad ibn ‘Arabī or widely known as al-Shaykh al-Akbar Ibn‘Arabi (560-637 AH / 1165-1240) such as *Kitāb Fusūs al-Hikām*,¹²⁸ *Kitāb Futūhāt al-Makkiyyah* and *Kitāb Mawāqif al-Nujūm*. Other books of equal important are *Kitāb Insān al-kāmil fī ‘Ulūm al-Awākhir wa al-Awā’il* of ‘Abd al-Karim al-Jili; books by al-Ghazālī such as *Mishkāt al-Anwār*, *Kitāb al-Sirr al-Masnūn bihi ‘alā Ghayr Ahlihi*, and

¹²⁵ And its commentaries by all the respected Sufī Gnostics

¹²⁶ This is a commentary on the *Qasīdah* written by al-Sammān. Al-Falimbāni claims to have read the text (*matn*) of this work before the author, Siddiq, *Syahid*, 46.

¹²⁷ Al-Falimbāni mentions that he has read the text in front of al-Sammān who then asked Siddiq to elaborate them to him and thus his name was mentioned in it, *Syahid*, 46.

¹²⁸ There are quite a number of commentaries of this work such as the one by al-Nablūsi, ‘Alī al-Mahayimi and and Manlajāmi, *Syahid*, 46.

Kitāb al-Maqṣud al-Aqṣā fī Ma‘āni Asma‘ al-Husnā. Al-Falimbānī encourages the reading on knowledge of Reality in the selected chapters of the *Ihyā’*.

Other books are *Kitāb Tuhfat al-Mursalat ilā Rūh al-Nabiy*¹²⁹ of Muhammad bin Faḍl Allah al-Hindi al-Burhanpuri; *Kitāb Idah al-Maqṣūd min ma’nā Wahdat al- Wujūd* of Abd al-Ghani al-Nablusi, *Kitāb Lawā’ih Anwār al-Qudsiyyah* of ‘Abd al-Wahab al-Sha’rani, *Kitāb Kashf al-Hijāb wa al-Asrār ‘an Wajhi Mas‘alat al-Jān*, *Kitāb al-Nafāhāt of al-Qunāwī*, the student of Ibn ‘Arabi, *Kitāb Mir‘at al-Haqā’iq*;¹³⁰ *Kitāb al-Maslak al-Mukhtār fī Ma’rifat sādīr al-Awwal wa Ihdāth al-’ālam bi al- Ikhtiyar* of Ibrahim al-Kurdi al-Kurāni al-Madani. *Kitāb Jawāhir al-Haqā’iq* and *Kitāb Tanbih al-Tullāb fī Ma’rifat al-Mulk al-Wahhāb* of Syams al-Dīn al-Sumatrāni; *Kitāb al-Ta’bid al-Bayān Hāshiyyat li idāh al-Bayān fī Tahqiq al-Masā’il al-‘Ayan* of ‘Abd al-Raūf bin ‘Ali al-Jāwi al-Fansūri, and last but not least, is al-Falimbānī’s own book, *Zād al-Muttaqin fī Tawhid Rabb al-’Alamin*.

3.11 Conclusion

As we have said earlier, nothing much is known about al-Falimbānī’s early life. Scholars have remained uncertain about his real name, his father’s name, and the exact dates of his birth and death. The year of his death for instance, varies

¹²⁹ Ibrahim al-Kurdi has made a commentary on this work, according to al-Falimbānī, and named the book as *Tahiyah al-Mas‘alah Sharh Tuhfat al-Mursalat*, see *Syahid*, 47. ‘Abd al-Ghani al-Nablusi, the teacher of al-Sammad’s teacher, Mustafā al-Bakri has also made a commentary bearing the same title which according to al-Falimbānī is the best ever commentary he has seen of all, *Syahid*, 48.

¹³⁰ This book, according to Shaghir is commented upon by ‘Ali al-Mahāyimi al-Hindi, or Sayyid Safwat Allah who was the master of Shaykh Ahmad al-Qushāshi bearing the title *Daqā’iq fī Sharh Mir‘at al-Haqā’iq*, *Syahid*, 48.

between 1789 and 1828. But as far as his education is concerned, which includes the teachers he had studied with and the books he read and his *Tariqah* affiliation all seem to have been well recorded and documented either by al-Falimbānī himself, his contemporaries or his students. Likewise, his other works are also known to us though some have not managed to survive.

Judging from the list of scholars he studied with, it is clear to us that al-Falimbānī had gone through a comprehensive and thorough education process. He must have mastered the main sciences of Islamic studies, such as *hadīth*, *fiqh*, *tafsīr*, *kalām* and *tasawwuf*.¹³¹ We also know for sure that he adored his spiritual guide, Shaykh ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Sammān, from whom he was initiated into the *Tariqah* Khalwatiyyah-Sammāniyyah. Al-Sammān’s name was mentioned in the beginning of almost all of his works.

It has been demonstrated that al-Ghazālī is also one of those who had influenced him the most since al-Falimbānī’s framework was primarily based on al-Ghazālī’s teachings. It is without exaggeration if we mention here that the effort made by al-Falimbānī to bring al-Ghazālī’s ideas into the Malay world, where no scholars before him had done so, without doubt deserves him to be called the “Malay al-Ghazālī”.

Even though al-Falimbānī’s works are not as numerous as those of his contemporary, Dāwūd al-Fatānī, yet they had left tremendous impact upon the Malay society to this very day. Some of his works, such as *Siyar* and *Hidāyat*, are still widely read in the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago, even until today. In his works, al-Falimbānī clearly prescribes which book that suits best for a certain level

¹³¹ Azra, *Networks*, 116.

of spiritual traveler. The books are recommended according to three levels of understanding, intellectual and spiritual capacity of the readers which are the beginners, the intermediate and the advanced levels. The list of the books recommended by him also indirectly reflects the influence of the authors of those works on his thought.

Finally, despite all uncertainties in the historical accounts surrounding the death of al-Falimbānī, there is substantial evidence to believe that he did return and take part in the holy war (*jihād*) to defend Pattani from the Siamese assault in 1243/1828. We have established here quite convincingly based on the available reports the claim that al-Falimbānī was born in 1115/1704 was miscalculated by Quzwain and later scholars sloppily replicated, whereas he was actually born in 1121/1710 or 1122/1711. As to his death, we believe based on the evidence presented above, he died at the age 117 years old in a war with Siam in the year 1243/1828.