

NAFIS AL-BANJARI

(MUHAMMAD NAF S B. IDR S AL-BANJAR)

[Indonesia; late 18th century]

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Muhammad Naf s was an 18th-century Malay Sufi from the sultanate of Banjar in southeast Borneo. He is the author of the once widely read Malay Sufi work *al-Durr al-naf s*, that has frequently been condemned by other `ulam as heterodox because of its unmitigated *wahdat al-wujûd* metaphysics.

Little is known of Muhammad Naf s' life. He completed *al-Durr al-naf s* in Mecca in or around the year 1200/1785-6, which means that he was a younger contemporary of his fellow Banjarese, the better known scholar Muhammad Arshad, and of the famous `Abd al-Samad al-F limb n . From his work it is clear that he studied with some of the same teachers in Mecca and Madina. He claims affiliation with the Q diriyya, Shatt riyya, Naqshbandiyya, Khalwatiyya and Samm niyya *туруq*, of which the last (which incorporated elements of the others) seems to have been the dominant one. He mentions as one of his teachers Sidd q b. `Umar Kh n, the Sufi from whom `Abd al-Samad al-F limb n received his first initiation into the Samm niyya. Sidd q was (one of) the chief *khulaf* of the founder of the order, Muhammad b. `Abd al-Kar m al-Samm n (d. 1775 in Madina). Unlike `Abd al-Samad, Naf s did not seek a second initiation from the master himself, which suggests that he arrived in the Hij z after al-Samm n's death.

In *al-Durr al-naf s* [*f bay n wahdat al-af` l wa-l-asm wa-l-sif t wa-l-dh t*] he quotes a wide range of Sufi authors, among whom al-Samm n and his circle take a prominent place. Besides al-Samm n himself and his *khal fa* Sidd q b. `Umar Kh n, Naf s quotes al-Samm n's teacher Mustaf` al-Bakr and the prominent Sufi `Abdall h b. Ibr h m al-Mahj b al-Mirghan , who also was in contact with al-Samm n. Al-Mirghan was still alive (and living in T`rif, the cool summer resort near Mecca) when Muhammad Naf s composed the *Durr*; he died in 1792. Naf s does not call him his teacher but refers to him with a certain familiarity, which suggests that he at least met him.

Muhammad Naf s may also have spent some time in Egypt, for the other teachers whom he mentions were active in Cairo: `Abdall h b. Hij z al-Sharq w (d. 1812), Muhammad b. Ahmad al-Jawhar (d. 1800), and an unidentifiable Y suf Ab Dharr(?) al-Misr . (Once or

twice, however, he refers to discourses given by them in the Holy Mosque of Mecca, presumably on the occasion of their pilgrimages). Sharq w , who is quoted most frequently, was the shaykh of al-Azhar from 1793 until his death in 1812. He was also affiliated with the Khalwatiyya order; his teacher Mahm d al-Kurd had received initiations from the same masters as al-Samm n (cf. Martin 1972:302).

The dominant influence in *al-Durr al-naf s*, however, is that of Ibn al-`Arab and his later popularisers `Abd al-Kar m al-J l , `Abd al-Wahh b al-Sha`r n and Muhammad b. Fadl All h al-Burh np r . Muhammad Naf s propounds Ibn al-`Arab 's system in the form that has been popular in the Archipelago, since Shams al-D n of Pasai, as *martabat tujuh*, the 'seven grades of being' (instead of Ibn `Arab 's own five stages of emanation). This elaboration was probably first formulated by Burh np r in his *al-Tuhfat al-mursala il r h al-nab* ; Naf s refers to what appears to be a brief summary of this text ("*Mukhlas [mulakhkhas?] mukhtasar tuhfat al-mursala*") by the said `Abdall h b. Ibr h m al-Mirghan . (This may be a misattribution: no such work is found among the extant writings of al-Mirghan ; `Abd al-Samad al-F limb n , who was more widely read than Naf s, mentions various commentaries on *al-Tuhfat al-mursala*, but none of these can be associated with al-Mirghan).

Al-Durr al-Naf s was first printed in Mecca in 1313/1895-6 and was reprinted many times, in Mecca, Egypt, Malaysia and Indonesia. Abdullah (1989) mentions another work by Naf s that never appeared in print, and manuscripts of which are extremely rare: *Majm ` al-asr r li ahl All h al-a•y r*. At least two later Malay Sufi texts are heavily influenced by the *Durr*: the brief *`Amal ma`rifa* by `Abd al-Rahman Sidd q al-Banjar (written in Indragiri, East Sumatra in 1332/1914) and Muhammad S lih b. `Abdall h al-M[in]angkab w 's *Kashf al-asr r* (completed in 1344/1925-6).

According to Abdullah (1989), Muhammad Naf s visited, after his return from Arabia, the islands of Bali and Sumbawa, in both of which he had devoted followers, and finally settled in the district of Pulau Laut in southeast Borneo. (Another Indonesian khalifa of Sidd q b. `Umar Kh n, the South Sumatran Idr s b. `Uthm n, is known to have settled in Sumbawa too and to have played a part in the ultimate propagation of the Samm niyya to South Sulawesi). The date of Naf s' death is unknown; three villages in the Pulau Laut district, Kelua, Kusan and Sigam, claim the distinction of his having died there. I was shown his simple grave in the village of Sampit near Kelua, a place of pilgrimage for people from both South and East Borneo. There is no engraved tombstone, nor could the local population give any further biographical information, if even of a legendary kind.

Bibliography:

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