

THE BOOK OF *BUSTAN AL-SALATIN* BY NUR AL-DIN AL-RANIRI AS HISTORICAL TEXT: THE STRUCTURE AND PURPOSE OF WRITING

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Abstract

The arrival of Islam in the Malay World has resulted in the beginning of intellectualism and rationalism among Malays especially in the 17th century Aceh (1511-1650). One of the prominent scholars of Aceh is Nuruddin Muhammad bin 'Ali bin Hasanji bin Muhammad Hamid al-Raniri al-Quraisyi al-Shafi'i, known as Nuruddin al-Raniri (d. 1658). Al-Raniri was an 'ulama, sufi, jurist and man of letters as well as a historian during the rule of Sultan Iskandar Thani (1636-1641). As a historian, al-Raniri contributes greatly to the development of a new form of Malay historical writing through his concept of universal history and the concept of Islamic history that are manifested in his work on history entitled Bustan al-Salatin fi Dhikr al-Awwalin wa al-Akhirin (The Garden of the Kings on the Recollection of the Past and Present). Therefore, this article attempts to accentuate Bustan al-Salatin as a book of Islamic history through the discussion about the structure of Bustan al-Salatin and al-Raniri's purpose of writing Bustan.

Keywords: Nur Al-Din Al-Raniri, *Bustan Al-Salatin*, Structure, Purpose of writing

Introduction

The importance of history in Islam is revealed inside the Qur'an in a considerable verses, for instances in *surah al-Imran* (3):164, *Sura surah Yusuf* (12):111 and *surah al-Rum* (30):9.¹ The significance of history for the mankind lies in the fact that about two third or 1000 verses in the Qur'an deal with history.² The Qur'an relates the stories of the creation of the universe, the history of the prophets and the people of the past with the purpose of conveying the warnings as lessons of history and of bringing the mankind to the truth. In other words, the main purpose of history in Islam is to bring mankind to the final destination, that is, to return to Allah, the Creator. With that purpose, historical writings generally contain *adab* (Islamic etiquette) in the form of didactic as didactic is the principle of understanding Islamic history.

The wide spread of Islam from Arabia to many parts of the world, including the Malay World has triggered the intellectual development among the Malays especially in the 17th century Aceh. Considerable masterpieces were produced by scholars in various fields of Islam including history that will be the main discussion of this article. There are many prominent works on history produced in

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¹ "Indeed in their stories, there is a lesson for men of understanding. It (the Qur'an) is not a forged statement but a confirmation of (Allah's existing Books) which were before it (i.e. Taurat (Torah), the Injeel (Gospel) and other Scriptures of Allah) and a detailed explanation of everything and a guide and a mercy for the people who believe." (*Surah Yusuf* (12): 111); "Do they not travel in the land, and see what was the end of those before them? They were superior to them in strength, and they tilled the earth and populated it in greater numbers than these (pagans) had done; and there came to them their Messengers with clear proofs. Surely, Allah wronged them not, but they used to wrong themselves." (*Surah al-Rum* (30):9).

² Mohd. Nasir Omar, *Tamadun Islam Dan Ideologi-Ideologi Masa Kini* (Selangor: Alam Makmur Sdn, Bhd., 1986), 40.

the 17th century Malay Archipelago, for instances, *Hikayat Aceh* (The History of Aceh)³, *Sejarah Melayu* (Malay Annals)⁴ and *Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa* (Kedah Annals)⁵ including two historical books written in the genre of “mirror for princes”: *Taj al-Salatin* (The Crown of Kings) and *Bustan al-Salatin fi Dhikr al-Awwalin wa al-Akhirin* (The Garden of the Kings on the Recollection of the Past and Present/ The Garden of Kings).⁶

Bustan al-Salatin was a very important historical work written by Nur al-Din al-Raniri (d. 1068 A.H.) in the seventeenth century Aceh.⁷ It was written in 1638 by the order of Sultan Iskandar Thani of Aceh (1636-1641).⁸ However, many scholars such as Grinter (1979), Mohd. Yusoff Hashim (1992), Harun Mat Piah (1993), Braginsky (1993), Jelani (2008) and Zawiyah Yahya (2010) claimed that *Bustan* belonged to the genre of ‘*ketatanegaraan*’ (Mirror for Princes/Mirror for Rulers).⁹ In fact, the concept

³ The exact date of *Hikayat Aceh* is unknown but this text was composed between the years 1606 - 1636 during the era of Sultan Iskandar Muda. Refer to Denisova, Tatiana A., *Refleksi Historiografi Alam Melayu* (Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit Universiti Malaya, 2011), 9. It contains a tale concerning the Sultanate of Aceh Darussalam specifically about Sultan Iskandar Muda, one of the prominent kings of Aceh.

⁴ *Sejarah Melayu* is the most well-known Malay work on the history of Malacca from the 15th -16th century. *Sejarah Melayu* is considered as the 17th century Malay historical work as it was rewritten in 1612-1613 (Hussain Othman, *Malay Historical Thought* (Johor: Penerbit UHTM, 2009), 108). Besides that, according to Winstedt, “Until recently it (*Sejarah Melayu*) was known only from a version purporting to have begun at Pasai on Sunday 13 May 1612.” (Winstedt, R.O., *A History of Classical Malay Literature* (Kuala Lumpur: M.B.R.A.S., 1963), 111). According to Muhammad Yusoff Hashim, *Sejarah Melayu* was compiled in 1612 (Muhammad Yusoff Hashim, *The Malay Sultanate of Malacca*, trans. ‘D.J. Muzaffar Tate (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1992), xxi). Based on Shellabear’s edition of *Sejarah Melayu* published in 1909 (Hussain Othman, *Malay Historical Thought*, 88) and the statement contained in *Bustan al-Salatin*, the author of *Sejarah Melayu* was Tun Seri Lanang (Raffles Malay 8 (*Bustan al-Salatin*), 221).

⁵ *Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa* narrates the story of the genealogy of Kedah rulers that originated from *Merong Mahawangsa* (a dignitary of the royal family of Rome (Harun Mat Piah, et.al, *Kesusasteraan Melayu Tradisional* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 2006), 334). According to the text, it was written during 1409-1520 but the content of the text reached the year 1640’s. Therefore, Hasrom Harun believes that the earliest text of the *Hikayat* was written during 1650’s (Hussain Othman, *Malay Historical Thought*, 108). Thus, this *Hikayat* can be considered as the historical work of the 17th century Aceh.

⁶ *Taj al-Salatin* (The Crown of Kings) written by Bukhari al-Jauhari in 1603 had preceded *Bustan* as a book of history in the genre of ‘mirror for princes’. See Winstedt, R.O., “The Genealogy of Malacca’s Kings from a Copy of the Bustan’s-Salatin,” *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 81, (1920a), 39-47; Winstedt, R.O., “*Bustan’s-Salatin*: Its Date and Author,” *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 82 (1920b), 151-152. *Taj al-Salatin* was written on the behest of Sultan Alauddin Riayat Syah (1586-1604) (Jelani Harun, “Manuskrip Melayu dalam Bidang Ketatanegaraan” (Article, Seminar Antarabangsa Manuskrip Melayu, Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia, 10-11 Julai 2006).

⁷ Nur al-Din al-Raniri’s full name is Nuruddin Muhammad bin Ali bin Hasanji bin Muhammad Hamid ar-Raniri al-Quraisyi al-Syaffi’iy. According to Riddell, al-Raniri was born into a diaspora *Hadhrami* family of Hamid clan in Ranir in Gujerat (Riddell, P.G., 2001, *Islam and the Malay-Indonesian World Transmissions and Responses* (Singapore: Horizon Books, 2001), 16). Majority scholars agreed that al-Raniri’s father was of Quraisy origin while some of them believed that his mother was Malay (Al-Attas, Syed Muhammad Naquib, *Raniri and the Wujudiyah of 17th Century Aceh* (Singapore: Malaysia Printers, 1966), 12: Voorhoeve, P., “Van en over Nuruddin ar-Raniri,” *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde (BKI)*, 107(4) (1951), 356 & T. Iskandar, “Three Malay Historical Writings in the First Half of the 17th Century,” *Journal of the Malayan Branch Royal Asiatic Society*, 40(2) (1967), 43). In 1637, al-Raniri arrived in Aceh during the rule of Sultan Iskandar Thani and later was appointed as *Syakh al-Islam*. In 1638, he was ordered by the Sultan to write a book on history that is later known as *Bustan al-Salatin* (Voorhoeve, Van, 356; T. Ito, “Why did Nuruddin leave Aceh?,” *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde (BKI)*, 134(4) (1978), 489; Amirul Hadi, *Islam and State in Sumatra* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers), 153 & 155; Manuscript Raffles Malay 42 (*Bustan al-Salatin*), 3-4 & Winstedt, R.O., *Bustan’s-Salatin*: Its Date and Author, 151).

⁸ Manuscript Raffles Malay 8 (*Bustan al-Salatin*), 5; Manuscript Raffles Malay 42 (*Bustan al-Salatin*), 3-5 & Manuscript UM 41 (*Bustan al-Salatin*) 4-5; Raden Hoesein Djajadiningrat, “Critisch Overzicht van de in Maleische Werken Vervatte Gegevens over de Geschiedenis van het Soeltanaat van Atjeh I,” *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde (BKI)*, 65(1) (1911), 136; C.A. Grinter, “Book IV of the *Bustan us-Salatin* by Nuruddin Ar-Raniri: A Study from the Manuscripts of a 17th Century Malay Work Written in North Sumatra” (Doctoral thesis, University of London, United Kingdom, 1979), 10.

⁹ Grinter, C.A., Book IV of the *Bustan Us-Salatin*, 10; Muhammad Yusoff Hashim, *Pensejarahan Melayu: Kajian Tentang Tradisi Melayu Nusantara* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1992), 233; Harun Mat Piah, *Kesusasteraan Melayu Tradisional*, 16 & 557; Braginsky, *The System of Classical Malay Literature* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1993), 55; Jelani Harun, *Manuskrip Melayu dalam Bidang Ketatanegaraan*, 323; Jelani Harun, *Bustan al-Salatin*

of history in *Bustan* has never been studied profoundly that caused *Bustan* to be recognized as a work of *ketatanegaraan* rather than history. Therefore, the objective of this article is to prove that based on the structure and the analysis of al-Raniri's purpose of writing *Bustan*, *Bustan* should be treated as a work of history specifically Islamic history.

Bustan consists of seven books with the total of 60 chapters. The books are the creation of heaven and earth (Book I (30 chapters)), Prophets and rulers (Book II (13 chapters)), Just king and wise ministers (Book III (6 chapters)), Ascetic rulers and pious saints (Book IV (2 chapters)), Unjust rulers and oppressive ministers (Book V (2 chapters)), noble, generous persons and brave men (Book VI (2 chapters)) and Intellect, medicine, physiognomy, women, etc. (Book VII (5 chapters)).¹⁰ *Bustan* is not only the largest work of al-Raniri but also the longest text written in the history of traditional Malay literature (consisting of seven books with 1250 pages).¹¹ Nevertheless, due to the large contents of *Bustan*, this article will only concentrate on Book I-Book IV.

Bustan as a historical work is clearly seen in the structure of *Bustan* (Book I-Book IV). These books contain 50 chapters and at least 40 chapters (about 80 percent from the whole text) related to history while the balance of 10 chapters contain historical element. The chapters related to history concerned with the creation of the universe and the history of the prophets and rulers of the past. Thus, the structure of *Bustan* proves that the text is history. Besides that, it reveals that history is the basic teaching of al-Raniri and consequently, *Bustan* proved to be a work of history.

The significance of *Bustan* as a book of history in the seventeenth century Aceh lies in the fact that al-Raniri was the pioneer of the concept of universal history in Malay historiography. With the new concept, al-Raniri had initiated a new form of Malay historical writing.¹² According to al-Attas, al-Raniri broke the tradition of Malay history writing as *Bustan* differed from the previous works on history in the aspects of content and writing technique.¹³ In *Bustan*, al-Raniri succeeded to narrate chronologically the universal history starting from the creation of the universe, the stories of the prophets and the former kings, the Islamic caliphate and ending with the Malay Kings in Pahang and Aceh. It is interesting to note that al-Raniri intentionally aimed to include the history of the Malay kings mentioned above as part of the universal history and this effort is the first of its kind in the seventeenth century Malay Archipelago. Another significance of *Bustan* is that al-Raniri wrote the concept of universal history with didactic element in the framework of Islam that history is the manifestation of a Divine plan as been discussed by Jelani.¹⁴ This point elucidates the significance of *Bustan* as a book of history particularly Islamic history of the seventeenth century Aceh.

The content of Book I-Book IV of *Bustan* can be divided into two elements: history and didactic. The historical element consists of Book I and Book II with the total of 264 pages while the didactic element covers Book III and Book IV with 360 pages. The number of pages indicate that the didactic content dominates the Book of *Bustan* that caused it to be considered as the book of the 'mirror for

(*Bab Ketiga*) *Kisah Raja-Raja Yang Adil* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 2008), ix & Zawiyah Yahya, *Reading Approaches in Malay Literature* (Bangi, Selangor: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 2010), 36.

¹⁰ Jelani Harun, *Bustan al-Salatin: A Malay Mirror for Rulers* (Pulau Pinang: Penerbit Universiti Sains Malaysia, 2009), 26-27; Jones, Russell, *Nuru'd-din ar-Raniri Bustanu's Salatin Bab IV Fasal 1* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1974), 2.

¹¹ Siti Hawa Haji Salleh (ed.), *Bustan al-Salatin* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1992), xiv & Jelani Harun, "Nuruddin al-Raniri's *Bustan al-Salatin*: A Universal History and Adab Work from Seventeenth Century Aceh" (doctoral thesis, University of London, United Kingdom, 1999), 13.

¹² Azyumardi Azra, *The Origins of Islamic Reformism in Southeast Asia* (Australia: Allen & Unwin, 2004), 68.

¹³ Muhammad Yusoff Hashim, *Pensejarahan Melayu*, 234.

¹⁴ Al-Attas, *Islam dalam Sejarah dan Kebudayaan Melayu* (Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 1972), 47 & Jelani Harun, *Bustan al-Salatin*, 92-97.

princes'. Nevertheless, the researcher believes that *Bustan* is a very important work of history despite its numerous amount of didactic element. The reason is that the element of didactic cannot be separated from the writing of Islamic history as didactic is the principle in the understanding of Islamic history. It begins with history and ends with some advices to the reader. In other words, in Islam didactic becomes part of history because history in Islam is the manifestation of the divine plan beginning with the creation of Adam until the day after the resurrection. The didactic element in Islamic history parallels the purpose of history in Islam as mentioned above, that is, to give warnings and to bring people to Allah.

The Structure of *Bustan al-Salatin*

The introductory part of Book I of *Bustan* as the following clearly indicates the structure of *Bustan*:

“...bahawa membahasakan suatu kitab dengan antara jawi padahal mengandung perkataan segala yang mendiami tujuh petala langit dan tujuh petala bumi. Wa siratu'l-salatani'l-awwalinawa'l-akhirin. Dan menyatakan kelakuan segala raja-raja yang dahulu dan yang kemudian.”

(To write a book in Jawi concerning the deeds of the denizens of the seven layers of the earth... To relate the deeds of kings of former times and later)

The above quotation shows that al-Raniri divided his writing into two elements, history and didactic. The first contains the concept of the universal history (Book I-Book II) and the second is the didactic (Book III-Book IV) as shown in the following diagram:

Diagram 1: The Structure of Book I-Book IV of *Bustan al-Salatin*

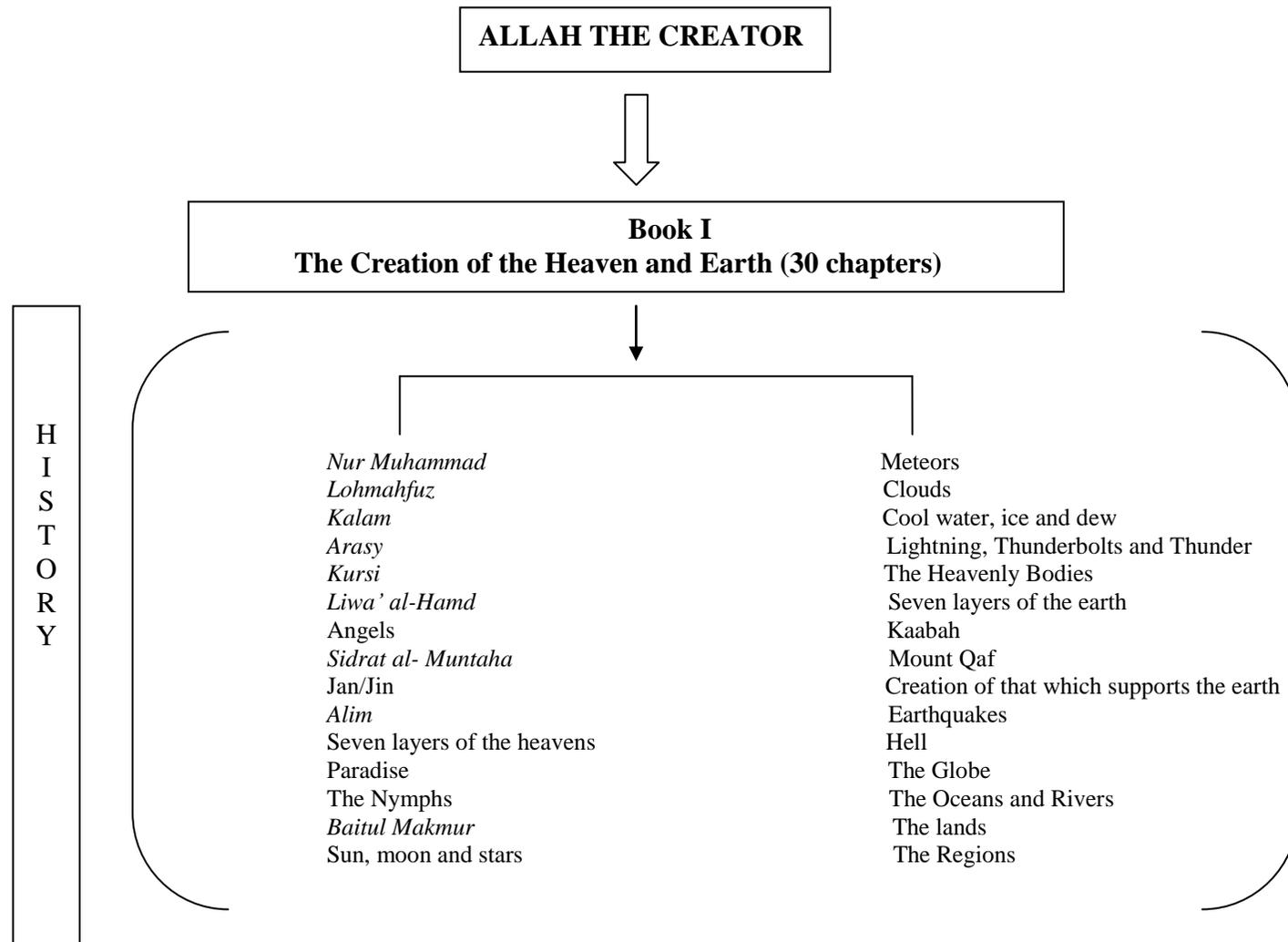


Diagram 1. Continuation

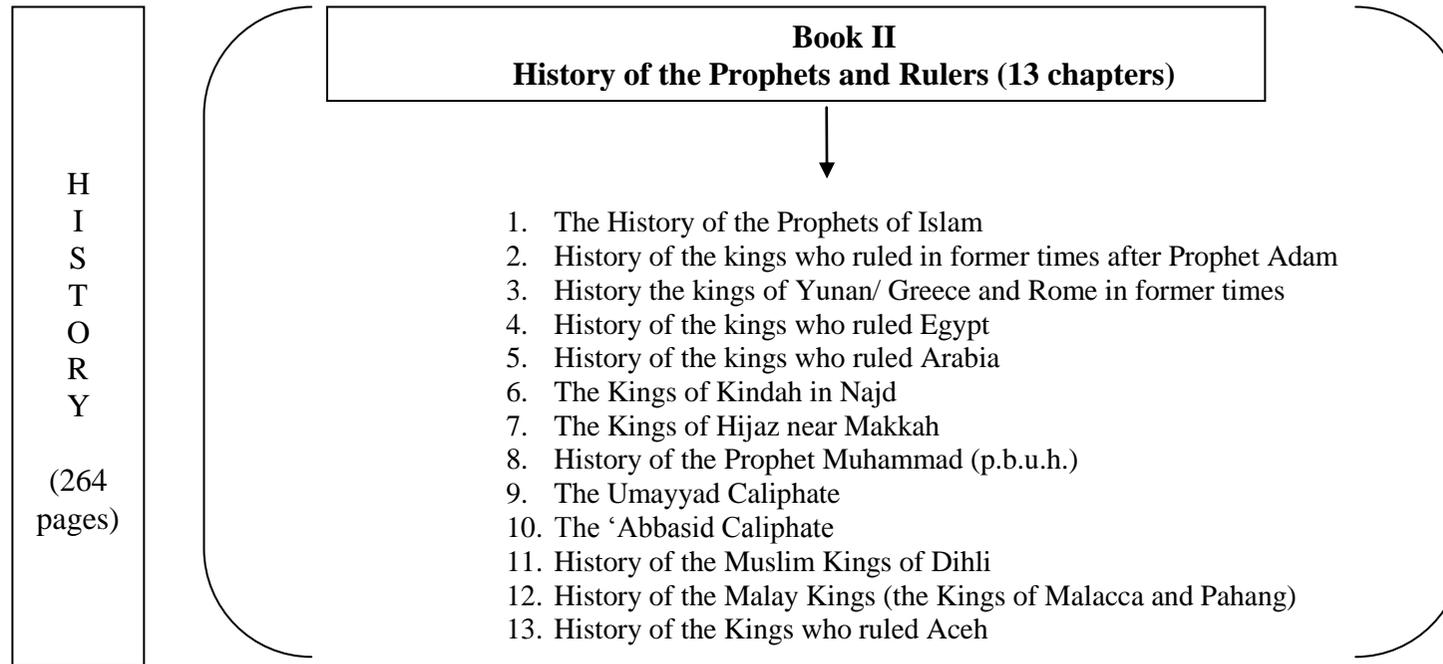
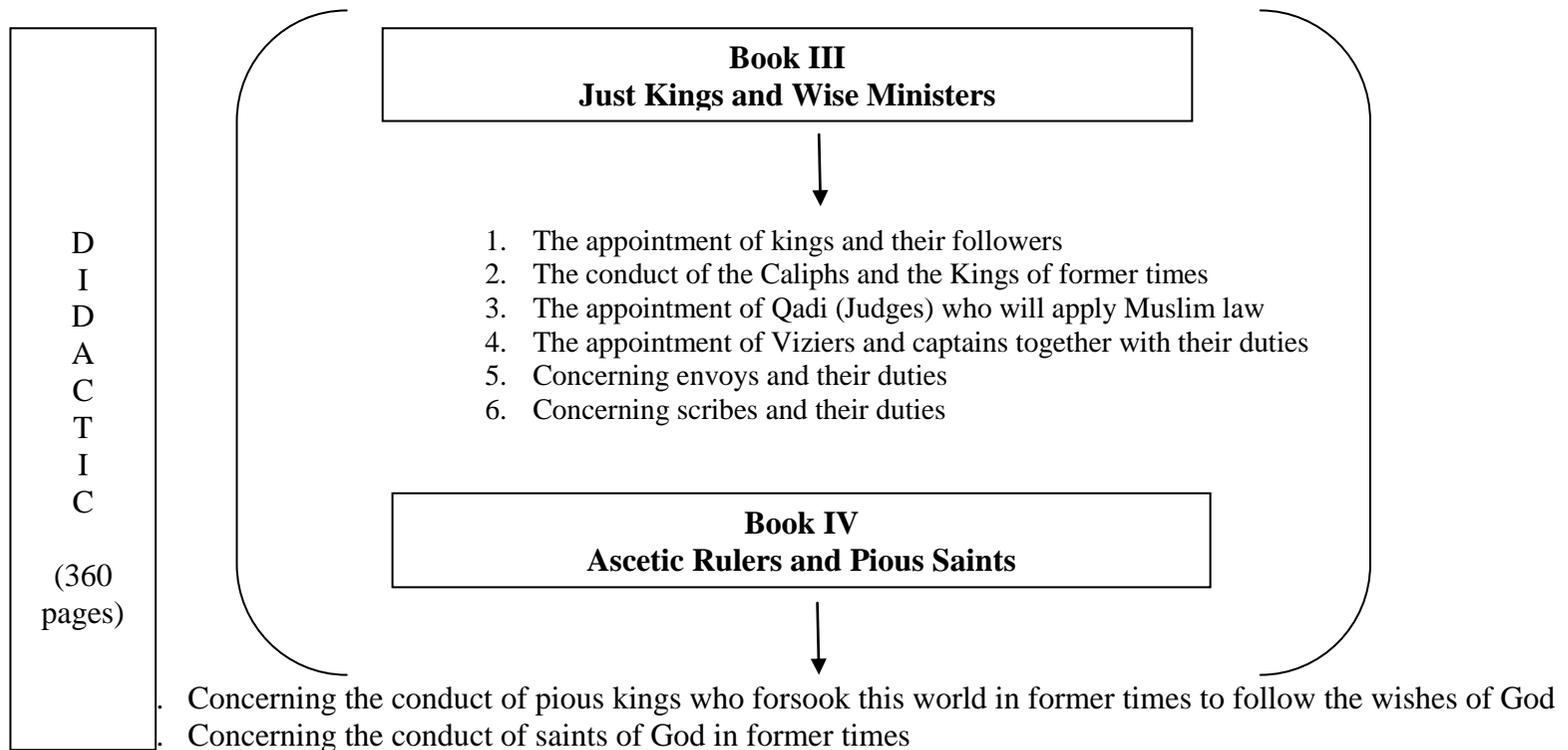


Diagram 1. Continuation



Source: Jelani Harun, *Bustan al-Salatin*, 2009.

Diagram 1 clearly shows the structure of *Bustan* (Book I - Book IV) which is divided into two elements - history and didactic. Book I and Book II (the creation of the universe & the history of the Prophets and Rulers) represent the historical element while Book III - Book IV (Just Kings and Wise Ministers & Ascetic Rulers and Pious Saints) represent the didactic element. The historical element demonstrates the process of Islamic universal history that begins with the creation of the universe, the creation of Adam, the first human being and stories of the Prophets of Islam (Idris, Nuh, Hud, Saleh, Ibrahim, Luth, Isma'il, Ishaq, Ya'kub, Yusuf, Ayyub, Musa, 'Isa, etc.), followed by the history of the ancient kings of Persian and Arabs, the stories of the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h) followed by the history of the Islamic caliphate (the Umayyads and the 'Abbasids), the history of the caliphate of Islam in India and last but not least, the history of the Malay Kings (the Kings of Pahang and Aceh). It is not surprising for al-Raniri to purposely include the Malay Kings as part of the universal history since *Bustan* was written on the request of his patron, Sultan Iskandar Thani. Therefore, it is the responsibility of al-Raniri to glorify the mentioned king and the Sultanate of Aceh.

Book I contains 30 chapters (112 pages) concerning the creation of the universe starting with the creation of *Nur Muhammad* (chapter 1) and ends with the chapter concerning the *Aqlim* (regions). In the opinion of the author, the structure of Book 1 can be divided into two categories: the first is the creations related to the heaven, and the second, the earth. The first category describes fourteen chapters regarding the creations related to Allah (the creation of *Nur Muhammad*, *Lohmahfuz*, *Kalam*, *arasy*, *Kursi*, *Liwa'al-Hamd*, angels, *Sidrat al-Muntaha*, the Jan, the wise, the paradise, the nymphs, *Baitul makmur*, the hell and the creation of that which supports the earth). On the other hand, the second category relates sixteen chapters concerning the creation of earth and its content (the creation of the seven layers of the heavens, the seven layers of the earth, the sun, the moon and stars, the meteors, the clouds, cool water, ice and dew, lightning, thunderbolts and thunder, the heavenly bodies, the seven layers of the earth, the Kaabah, the Mount Qaf, the earthquakes, the globe, the oceans and rivers, the lands and the regions).

From all the creations mentioned, the creation of *Nur Muhammad*, the angels, the seven layers of the heavens, the paradise, the nymphs, the sun, moon and stars, the seven layers of the earth, the Kaabah and the *Aqlim* (the regions) gained the great attention from the three texts and this directly indicates the importance of these events to al-Raniri. The creation of *Nur Muhammad* takes the largest contents and narrations amongst all creations (Raffles 8 (10 pages), Raffles 42 (11 pages) and UM 41 (14 pages)) due to the idea that *Nur Muhammad* is the first creation of Allah and it is the source of the creation of the universe and its contents.

Besides the chapter of *Nur Muhammad*, the chapter concerning the creation of the seven layers of the heavens too captured al-Raniri's interest. From the author's point of view, al-Raniri purposely described in depth the stories of the creation of the seven layers of the heavens and the earth not only to reveal the greatness of Allah who had created them in six days (Sunday to Friday) as mentioned in *surah al-Hadid* (57): 4 and *surah Fussilat* (41): 11-12, but it is also to reveal that both creations (the heaven and earth) were created by Allah for human being in order for the latter to perform their roles as the caliphs of Allah on earth and at the end return to Allah by his will. This purpose is clearly mentioned in the Qur'an and the way al-Raniri structured his *Bustan* reflects his concept of Islamic history that is based on the Qur'an.

Al-Raniri's writing concerning the creation of the universe parallels the creation of the universe mentioned in considerable verses inside the Qur'an. For instances, *surah al-Baqara* (2): 22, 29 & 164 (concerning the creation of the heavens and earth), *surah al-Ra'd* (13):3, *surah al-Nahl* (16): 14-15 and *surah al-Furqan* (25):53 (concerning the creation of oceans and rivers), *surah al-Rahman* (55): 46 and *surah al-Hadid* (57): 21 (the creation of paradise) and *Sura surah al-Shaffat* (37): 5, *surah al-Nahl* (16): 16 and *surah al-Anbiya* (21): 33 (the creation of the sun, moon and stars). Therefore, it clearly indicates that al-Raniri took the idea of the creation of the universe from the Qur'an as he inserted a considerable number of Qur'anic verses in Book I.

As the universe is created for mankind, al-Raniri built the connection between the Book I and Book II by narrating the life of human being on earth starting from the history of Prophets until the history of the Kings of Aceh that consists of 13 chapters (the total of 190 pages). The longest chapters in this book are chapter 1 (the history of the Prophets), chapter 2 (the history of the kings who ruled in former time), chapter 8 (the history of the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) and his genealogy), chapter 9 (the history of the Umayyads kings), chapter 10 (the history of the ‘Abbasid Kings) and chapter 13 (the history of the Kings of Aceh). The researcher has the opinion that these chapters had been emphasized by al-Raniri due to the idea that the history of mankind begins with the Prophet Adam followed by other Prophets of Islam as been narrated in the Qur’an. The narration of chapter 1 is inclusive of the Prophet Idris, Nuh, Musa, Ibrahim, Lut, ‘Isa, including the story of the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.). The stories of the Prophets are narrated in the Qur’an, for instances *surah* Yunus (the Prophet Yunus), *surah* Yusuf (the Prophet Yusuf), *surah* Hud (the Prophet Hud), *surah* Muhammad (the Prophet Muhammad) and others.

Continuing the history of the Prophets is the kings of former time from the descendants of the Prophet Adam. The history of the King of Yunan became one of the significant chapters of Book II due to the characterization of Iskandar Zulkarnain who was one of the Kings of Greece and a great figure in history. He was described as a great conqueror and a pious king and that his stories were mentioned in the Qur’an in *Surah al-Kahf* (18): 83-98. Therefore, the excellent character of Iskandar had attracted the Muslim historians to portray their kings or rulers as the descendant of Iskandar Zulkarnain. For example, al-Raniri described Sultan Iskandar Thani as originated from the lineage of Iskandar Zulkarnain with the main purpose to depict the greatness of the latter.

Meanwhile, as a Muslim scholar, al-Raniri surely described the history of the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) and his genealogy (chapter 8) as it is a vital subject in Islamic history. In addition, the importance of chapter 9 and 10 (history of the Kings of the Umayyad and the ‘Abbasids) lies in the fact that both chapters are the chronological content in Islamic history after the history of the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) and these periods especially the ‘Abbasid were the golden age of the Islamic civilization. Furthermore, the prophetic narratives and the history of the early Islamic caliphate were also narrated in the early sources of Islamic history such as *Tarikh al-Rusul wa al-Muluk* by Abi Ja’far Muhammad b. Jarir al-Tabari, *al-Kamil Fi Tarikh* by ‘Izz al-Din ibn Athir, *Tarikh al-Khulafa’* by Jalal al-Din ‘Abd Rahman b. Abi Bakr al-Suyuti, and others. Last but not least, al-Raniri’s emphasis on the history of the Kings of Aceh (chapter 13) is obvious as he included the chapter as part of the universal history by the reason that *Bustan* was indeed written for Sultan Iskandar Thani that was described before.

The second structure of *Bustan* is the didactic element that is placed in Book III and Book IV (the total of 360 pages). These books (Book III and Book IV) are related to Book I and Book II in which al-Raniri systematically arranged the events in chronology, starting from Allah as the Creator, created the universe (Book I) and this is followed by the creation of mankind and their history (Book II). These creations were subject to the *shariat* and *adab* of Islam (Book III and Book IV) to ensure that human being lived in the path of Allah. Qur’an does not only describe the creation of the world and the history of the Prophets and rulers (Book I-Book II of *Bustan*) but it also contains the element of didactic by describing stories of individuals either with good or bad characters (in *Bustan* refers to the Just King and Wise Minister and Ascetic Rulers and Pious Saints (Book III-Book IV). For example, the stories of the Prophet Musa and the Prophet ‘Isa, Sheikh Bilalu’l-Khawasi and Sheikh ‘Abdul Rahman. The purpose of the stories concerning didacticism in Qur’an is to teach or educate mankind on *adab* so that they would take lessons from the past history and live in accordance to the Islamic teaching. This is clearly stated in *surah al-Rum*, verse 9 that carries the meaning: “Have they not travelled in the land and seen the nature of the consequence for those who were before them? They

were stronger than these in power, and they dug the earth and built upon it more than these have built. Messengers of their own came unto them with clear proofs (of Allah's sovereignty). Surely Allah wronged them not, but they did wrong themselves." and *surah Yusuf*, verse 3, "We narrate unto thee (Muhammad) the best of narratives in that We have inspired in thee this Qur'an, though aforetime thou wast of the heedless".

Al-Raniri was inspired by the didactic element in stories in the Qur'an that he wrote special chapters on didactic (Book III and Book IV) to teach mankind the way to Allah (the right path) and humans were given the chance to repent and return to Allah. In other words, Islam offers forgiveness to those who repent and return to the obedience to Allah.¹⁵ *Bustan* relates stories of the wrong-doers and gives them chances to return to the right path. Al-Raniri too took the idea of pious people from the Qur'an when he narrated the story of an ascetic saint named Ibrahim b. Adham who was before the King of Balkh, but later renounced his luxurious life and throne to devout himself to Allah.¹⁶ The idea was from the stories of Luqman al-Hakim (*surah Luqman* (31)): 13-19, Iskandar Zulkarnain (*surah al-Kahf* (18)): 84-98 and the *Ashabul Kahf* (the people of the cave/The seven sleepers) in *surah al-Kahf* (15): 9-26. The story of *Luqman al-Hakim* is a well-known story in the Muslim tradition regarding a wise man who guided his son on the concept of *tauhid* in Islam. Meanwhile, the *Ashabul Kahf* is the story of seven young men who had fled to a cave to avoid their disbelieving folk and they slept for more than 300 years by the will of Allah. Based on the above explanation, it proves that didactic is part of the process of history and in the context of this article, Islamic history that consequently proved *Bustan* as a work on Islamic history.

In summary, the structure of *Bustan* described above proves that *Bustan* is a historical work. Besides the fact that it contains historical and didactic elements, *Bustan* also follows the format of history as it begins with the mentioning of the purpose of writing *Bustan* in the introductory part of the text, followed by the chronology of historical events beginning from the history of the creation of the universe, continued with the history of the Prophets and Rulers and it ends with several chapters containing history with a didactic element. Thus, the structure of *Bustan* reveals the importance of history to al-Raniri and that history is the basis of al-Raniri's thought.

The Purpose of Writing of *Bustan Al-Salatin* by Nur Al-Din Al-Raniri

The writing of *Bustan* began in 1638 and its completion is yet unknown but it is said to be completed between 1640- 1642 while some scholars believed it was not completed.¹⁷ The history of the writing of *Bustan* begins after the coming of al-Raniri to Aceh precisely on 6th Muharram 1047 A.H. (31 May 1637) as he consequently being appointed *Shaykh al-Islam*, one of the highest posts in the Sultanate of Aceh by Sultan Iskandar Thani, the newly appointed king.¹⁸ He was subsequently ordered by Sultan Iskandar Thani to compose a historical text on 17th Shawwal 107 A.H. (4 March 1638).¹⁹ The instruction of the Sultan could be seen in the introductory part of Book I of *Bustan al-Salatin* as the following:

Wa ba'du dhalika, fi sab'ata 'sharra min Syahir Syawwal. Dan kemudian dari itu pada tujuh hari bulan Syawal, maka dititahkan yang Maha Mulia fakir dengan titah yang tiada dapat

¹⁵ Mazheruddin Siddiqi. *The Qur'anic Concept of History*. (Delhi: Adam Publishers & Distributors, 1994), 14 and 24.

¹⁶ Jones, Russell, *Nuru'd-din ar-Raniri Bustanu's Salatin Bab IV Fasal 1*, 1974, 10.

¹⁷ Winstedt, R.O., *Bustan's-Salatin*, 151-152; Voorhoeve, P., "Lijst der geschriften van Raniri en apparatus criticus bij de tekst van twee verhandenligen. (Zie nr. 1294)," *Bidragen tot de Taal-, Land- en volkenkunde (BKI)*, 111(2), (1955), 152-161; Jelani Harun, *Bustan al-Salatin: Bab Pertama dan Kedua Karangan Nuruddin Ar-Raniri* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 2004), 28.

¹⁸P. Voorhoeve, Van en over Nuruddin ar-Raniri, 8; Ahmad Daudy, *Syeikh Nuruddin Ar-Raniry: Sejarah, Karya dan Sanggahan terhadap Wujudiyah di Aceh* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1978), 9; Azra, *The Origins of Islamic Reformism*, 59.

¹⁹ Djajadiningrat, *Critisch Overzicht*, 136; Winstedt, R.O., *Bustan's-Salatin*, 151; Grinter, C.A., Book IV of the *Bustan us-Salatin*, 10.

tiada menjunjung dia sultan mu'azam yang hafan lagi murah, yang pertama besar martabat izzatnya,iaitu Sultan Iskandar Thani Alauddin Mughayah Syah Johan Berdaulat zillu'l-Lahi fi'l-'alami, lazdana daulatuhu ayyaman masudan wa tala zilluhu fi'l-afaqi mamduda. Sentiasa beroleh bahagiannya dan lanjut naungannya pada segala pihak negerinya, bahawa membahasakan suatu kitab dengan antara jawi padahal mengandung perkataan segala yang mendiami tujuh petala langit dan tujuh petala bumi. Wa siratu'l-salatani'l-awwalinawa'l-akhirin. Dan menyatakan kelakuan segala raja-raja yang dahulu dan yang kemudian. Maka dijunjung fakir titah yang Maha Mulia serta singkat pengetahuannya lagi kurang fahamnya pada basa jawi, padahal berpegang ia kepada Tuhan yang menjadikan seru sekalian alam...Dan dinamai fakir kitab ini Bustan al-Salatin, ertinya Kebun Segala Raja-Raja, dan menyatakan permulaan segala kejadian dan kesudahannya. Dan dijadikan fakir kitab ini tujuh babnya.

(UM 41 (*Bustan al-Salatin*))

(Nur al-Din was ordered by Sultan Iskandar Thani to compose a book (*kitab*) in the Malay language concerning the deeds of the denizens of the seven layers of the earth...To relate the deeds of kings of former times and later. Although my knowledge is limited and I have not much understanding of Malay, I obeyed his highness' command and I rely on the Lord who created the universe).²⁰

Based on the quotation, it is apparent that the purpose of writing *Bustan* was to obey the order of Sultan Iskandar Thani and this fact is accepted by most scholars such as Winstedt, Ronkel, Voorhoeve and the like. There is no doubt about the mentioned fact but the writer has the opinion that, simultaneously, al-Raniri had his own aim at writing *Bustan* which will be discussed in the following. The order of the Sultan to compose a book of history is clearly seen in the two words in the above quotation. The first is '*permulaan segala kejadian*' (beginning of all creations) and the second is '*kesudahannya*' (the ending). These words refer to history since the process of history starts with the beginning of the universe and later reaches its end.

In a larger point of view, the researcher believes that the main purpose of al-Raniri in writing *Bustan* was not only to fulfill the request of Sultan Iskandar Thani but specifically to also write a book on Islamic history with didactic element. The intention to write a book on Islamic history could be seen in the introductory part of *Bustan* as the following:

*“Maka dijunjung fakir titah yang Maha Mulia serta singkat pengetahuannya lagi kurang fahamnya pada basa jawi, padahal berpegang ia kepada **Tuhan yang menjadikan seru sekalian alam**...”*

Basically, this quotation means that al-Raniri obeyed Sultan Iskandar Thani's command to write a book on history regardless of his limited knowledge and understanding of the *Jawi* language and he surrendered himself to God, the creator of the universe (***Tuhan yang menjadikan seru sekalian alam***). The word '*Tuhan*' (God) according to al-Raniri refers to '*Allah*' as he stated in the following quotation:

“Subhana'l-ladhi tafarraba bi'-uluhiyyata wa la tuzil lahu, wa yufni'l-khalqa ba'da khalqihii thumma yu iduhu. Maha Suci Allah Yang Maha Tinggi/ ketuhanan-Nya dan tiada sekutu bagi-Nya, dan lagi akan difanankan-Nya segala makhluk, kemudian dijadikan-Nya, maka dikembalikannya pula. Asyhadu an la ilaha illa 'l-Lahu wahdahu la sharika lahu, wa asyhadu

²⁰ C.A Grinter, Book IV of the *Bustan us-Salatin*,10.

anna Muhammadan 'abdahu wa rasuluh. Saksi aku bahawasanya tiada tuhan melainkan Allah, esa Ia, tiada sekutu bagi-Nya. Dan saksi aku bahawasanya Nabi Muhammad itu hamba-Nya lagi pesuruh-Nya

(Raffles Malay 8, Raffles Malay 42 & UM41)

The sentence “*Asyhadu an la ilaha illa 'l-Lahu wahdahu la sharika lahu, wa asyhadu anna Muhammadan 'abdahu wa rasuluh. Saksi aku bahawasanya tiada tuhan melainkan Allah, esa Ia, tiada sekutu bagi-Nya. Dan saksi aku bahawasanya Nabi Muhammad itu hamba-Nya lagi pesuruh-Nya*” means “There is no God except Allah and Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah” which is known as *kalimat al-shahadah*. This *kalimah* refers to the concept of *tawhid* (the Oneness of God) in Islam and this indirectly indicates that al-Raniri aimed at writing history based on the concept of *tawhid*, that is, Islamic history. This statement is an evidence of the historical content of *Bustan* (Book I-Book II) which is generally Islamic history in nature. It begins with the creation of the universe, the history of the Prophets, the history of the ancient kings who ruled in former times after Prophet Adam until the kings of Aceh. These subjects parallel the contents of the Qur'an that describe the creation of the earth and heaven, the hell, the angels, etc. that will be discussed later. An example of the Qur'anic verse concerning the creation of the earth is, “*He it is Who created for you all that is on earth. Then he rose over (Istawa) towards the heaven and made them seven heavens and He is the All-Knower of everything.*” (Sura al-Baqara (2): 29). In addition, the Qur'an also narrates the story of the Prophets from Adam to the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h).

In addition, the didactic element in *Bustan* was placed by al-Raniri in Book III and Book IV with the total amount of 360 pages as mentioned in the earlier part of this article. He narrated the stories of the kings of ancient times as well as the history of the Islamic caliphates (the Pious Caliphate, the Umayyads and the 'Abbasids) that ended with didactic element. Below are a few examples of the didactic element in Book III:

First Example

“Kata sahibul hikayat, sekali sepertua, Amirulmukminin Umar radiallahuanhu, tatkala dalam khalifah, adalah ia berjalan pada segala jurang Madinah pada tiap-tiap malam. Tiba-tiba didengarnya suara, demikian bunyinya [...], ertinya: Karam bagi Umar, selama ia jadi khalifah tiadalah kami sedap tidur dan matilah kami dalam keluh-kesah dengan kelaparan, dan ada ia sekarang jadi khalifah atas segala Islam. Maka Amirulmukminin Umar pun pergi ke pintu rumah orang itu serta ditepuknya pintunya. Maka kata orang dalam rumah itu, “Siapa di luar pintu itu?” Maka sahut Amirulmukminin, “Akulah, yang berbuat taqdir pada segala hak rakyat.” Maka keluarlah dari dalam rumah itu seorang perempuan tua hingga berdiri ia di pintu. Maka sabda Amirulmukminin, “Hai saudaraku, apa kepapaanmu?” Maka bahawasanya aku tiada mengetahui barang hal ehwal isi rumah segala manusia ngapa maka engkau tidak mengadakan halmu kepada aku?” ... Maka sahut perempuan tua itu, “Ya Amirulmukminin, bahawasanya hamba dan segala anak hamba kelaparan.” Maka Amirulmukminin kembali ke rumahnya serta dibawanya suatu bakul berisi tepung gandum pada bahu kanannya dan suatu bakul pada bahunya kiri, lalu diberinya makan perempuan tua itu serta ia meminta maaf...”

(Once caliph 'Umar was walking inside Madinah and he heard a voice condemning him of being caliph as he caused them to live in hunger and poverty. Thus, Umar searched for the voice until he reached a house and found a woman and her children were suffering from hunger. 'Umar then returned home and brought two baskets of flour to the woman's house and sought her apology of his negligence).

Nasihat: Seyogia bagi segala raja-raja mengerjakan insaf dan manfaat akan rakyatnya yang fakir miskin supaya diperolehnya bahagia dalam dunia dan dalam akhirat, ialah yang beroleh perangai daripada Amirulmukminin ‘Umar radiallahuanhu...

(Jelani, 2009, 309)

(Advice: The kings should take care of the poor and needy as performed by caliph ‘Umar).

Second Example

“Kata sahibulhikayat, sekali persetua, pada suatu hari, anak Raja berdatang sembah kepada ayahnya, serta dengan dukacitanya, “Ya Tuanku Syah Alam, bahawasanya anak wazir polan menyumpah ibu yang diperhamba.”

Maka sabda Raja Harun al-Rasyid kepada menterinya, “Hai menteriku, apa jua patut akan berbuat demikian itu?” Maka yang pertama berdatang sembah, “Ya Tuanku Syah Alam, bahawa seharusnya dikerat lidahnya.” Maka berdatang sembah pula menteri yang ketiga iaitu, “Ya Tuanku Syah Alam, seharusnya akan dia disuruh berperang dengan segala seteru.”...

Setelah itu maka sabda Raja Harun al-Rasyid, “Hai anakku, tanda kemuliaan dan kebesaran itu, kau maafkanlah dosanya, maka jika tiada mahu engkau maaf akan dia, maka balas akan dia dengan menyumpah ibunya dan jangan engkau lebih daripada sumpahnya, maka jadi engkau aniaya.”

(Once the son of caliph Harun al-Rasyid complained to his father that a son of a vizier had cursed his mother. Caliph Harun then sought the advices of his ministers concerning the matter. Some of them suggested that the person should be punished by cutting his tongue or sending him against the enemies. However, Harun al-Rasyid asked his son to forgive that person as forgiveness is the symbol of dignity).

Nasihat: Seyogianya bagi segala hamba Allah yang berpenguasaan memerangkaikan seperti perangai Harun al-Rasyid pada memaafkan kesalahan segala manusia supaya ia berbahagia dengan bahagia dunia dan akhirat.

(Jelani, 2009, 415-416)

(Advice: A ruler should follow the behaviour of Harun al-Rasyid to forgive the mistakes of all human so that he will obtain happiness in this world and the hereafter).

The purpose of inserting the above excerpts is to prove the existence of the didactic element in *Bustan*. Al-Raniri’s purposely inserted some advices to the caliphs in order to guide the readers to the way they should behave according to the teaching of Islam and that they would be able to apply lessons from history and this style of didactic writing was repeated in many parts of *Bustan*. The didactic element parallels the purpose of history in Islam as well as al-Raniri’s intention to write a book on Islamic history based on the concept of *tauhid*. Therefore, the didactic element is one of the characteristics in Islamic history with the purpose to guide the kings (in the context of *Bustan*) to the right way to perform their duties) and in general as a guide to the people the way they should perform based on the teaching of Islam.

In conclusion, the researcher is certain that al-Raniri's purpose of writing *Bustan* is not only to compose a book on history as commanded by his patron, but also to write a book on Islamic history with the didactic elements. Through this element, al-Raniri was trying to warn the people of the consequences of disobeying Allah as well as to show the way to apply the lessons from history. In other words, al-Raniri through *Bustan* wanted to bring people to Allah, which is the last stage of the concept of Islamic universal history.

Conclusion

Bustan al-Salatin is essentially a work of history specifically Islamic history as shown by the structure and based on the analysis of the purpose of writing. The structure of *Bustan* shows that this text is history as it describes the history of the creation of the universe and the history of the prophets and the people of the past as well as stories in a didactic form supported by significant verses of the Qur'an. Besides that, the didactic element in *Bustan* consists of the stories of the caliphs in Islamic history and the pious saints of Allah. The stories are in fact history and therefore indicate the existence of history in the didactic element of *Bustan*. In addition, the didactic element in *Bustan* parallels the purpose of history in Islam that is to bring mankind to Allah. Moreover, history is the common structure of *Bustan* as it takes at least 80% from the whole content. It can be concluded that al-Raniri's text structure and the purpose of writing *Bustan* prove that history is the basic teaching of al-Raniri and therefore, the Book I-Book IV of *Bustan* are a distinguished work of Islamic history in the 17th century Aceh.

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