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A TAQRĪZ FOR A NINETEENTH CENTURY INDONESIAN MANUSCRIPT

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Abstract

In medieval Arabic literature a taqrīz is a written endorsement of a certain text, which a prestigious scholar provides at the request of another scholar to support the latter’s new writing. In this sense it can be compared to the contemporary “blurb”, to advertise a new book. The taqrīz is important because it connects and offers insights into active networks of like-minded scholars. Unfortunately this topic is still insufficiently studied and the present paper aims to make a contribution to this subject. The research examines an original taqrīz from the nineteenth century which a scholar in Batavia obtained from his former teacher in Mecca. The paper shows that the taqrīz is also in existence in more modern times and even beyond the Arab world.

Keywords: taqrīz, manuscript, text, blurb, author
Abstrak

Dalam literatur Arab pada abad pertengahan, taqriz adalah sebuah dukungan tertulis terhadap sebuah teks tertentu, dimana seorang sarjana menyediakannya untuk permitaan sarjana yang lain guna mendukung tulisannya yang baru. Dalam hal ini, taqriz dapat dibandingkan dengan iklan pada masanya untuk memperkenalkan buku baru. Taqriz adalah penting karena ia dapat menghubungkan dan menawarkan wawasan ke dalam jaringan yang aktif bagi sarjana yang mau berfikir. Namun sangat disayangkan, topik ini masih sangat sedikit yang mengkaji dan paper ini bertujuan memberikan kontribusi terhadap subjek ini. penelitian ini mengkaji sebuah taqriz yang asli yang ditulis pada abad ke-19M oleh sarjana dari Betawi yang diperolehnya dari gurunya dari Mekkah. Tulisan ini menunjukkan bahwa taqriz juga ada pada waktu modern dan bahkan di luar dunia Arab sekalipun.

Kata Kunci: taqriz, naskah kuno, teks, iklan, pengarang

Introduction

An interesting feature in the circulation of texts in the medieval Arab world is the so-called taqriz. A taqriz is a written approval of a certain text, which praises and recommends the new writing. The appraisal is requested by the author of the text from well-known contemporaries with a high scholarly standing, so that their approval endorses the text and ultimately its author. The taqriz may differ in length and is often written in rhymed prose.

In the study of Arabic manuscripts the occurrence of the taqriz is well-known, but has received relatively little scholarly attention. The first Western scholar who recognized it as a separate genre was the German orientalist Wilhelm Ahlwardt (1828-1909) who included the category of Lobschriften (laudatory writings) in his famous 10 volume catalogue of Arabic manuscripts that were kept in what was then called the Royal Libraries in Berlin (1887-1899). (Rosenthal, 1981:178). After this initial observation it would take until 1981 when the famous scholar of Arabic and Islam Franz Rosenthal (1914-2003) published a pioneering article on the taqriz. In his article Rosenthal stated that the taqriz can be compared to a review in the sense that it gives an appreciation of the text, but he holds the opinion that the term “blurb” comes closest to the intended meaning, because the taqriz is usually rather short. Next, Rosenthal dealt with a collection of taqariz which was published in Egypt in 795/1393, praising the work of a certain Ibn
al-Damāmīnī. Among the writers were Ibn Khaldūn (1332-1406) and Ibn ḥājar al-ʿAsqalānī (1372-1446). In the appendix to his article Rosenthal translated the taqārīz of these two scholars, which displayed a rather formalized and artificial style in rhymed prose. Rosenthal ended his article with a call to do more research in the genre, because it sheds light on the social embedment of literary life. (Rosenthal, 1981:177-196). Since the publication of this article the importance of the topic has been acknowledged, as notice appears from a separate entry in 2004 in the supplement to the second edition of the Encyclopaedia of Islam (2004:781) and its inclusion in Adam Gacek’s 2009 handbook for the study of Arabic manuscripts. (Gace, 2009:99). However, still little work has been done on the issue.²

Although the sparse available literature suggests that the taqārīz is a thing of the Middle Ages, this is certainly not true, as the present paper will show. In this contribution I wish to draw attention to a much more modern taqrīz, which was produced in spite of a great physical distance between the author of the text and the author of the taqrīz.

2. The manuscript and its Author

The manuscript I would like to deal with here is an Arabic text, entitled Simṭ al-ṣuḍūr wa- l-jawḥār fī ḥall taqīyād al-nuḍūr li-l-ṣāda al-aṭāḥir, ‘The necklace with the golden beads and gems dealing with the solution of the [issue about the] designation of the votive offerings to the pure sayyids’.³ In the colophon to the work it is mentioned that the “end of its writing took place at the beginning of the month of Rajab, the “Pouring”, in the year 1294” (wa-kāna al-farāḡ min tabyī’ihī fī awā’il ṣahr Rajab al-aṣabb, sanat 1294) (fol. 4b), which corresponds to July 1877. The author of the text was the well-known scholar from Batavia Sayyid ʿUṣmān ibn Yaḥyā (1822-1914).⁵ This person was born in Batavia, studied from 1841-1862 in various places on the Arabian Peninsula. Amongst others, ʿUṣmān ibn Yaḥyā also studied with the famous Meccan scholar Ahmad Daḥlān, about whom I will write more in the next section. After his return to the Netherlands East Indies in 1862, Sayyid ʿUṣmān became one of the most important scholars of Islam in the country due to his incessant preaching and his numerous writings. He printed his writings on his own lithographic press, which he used from 1869 onwards. Due to his involvement in the colonial administration beginning in 1889, his reputation further increased,
especially when he was appointed officially as “Honorary Advisor for Arab Affairs” in 1891, a position he himself regarded as similar to Mufti of the Netherlands Indies. He was appointed to the position by the famous Dutch scholar and government advisor Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje (1857-1936), who worked in the Netherlands East Indies from 1889-1906. Sayyid ʿUṣmān and Snouck Hurgronje cooperated closely in monitoring Islam and giving shape to Islamic policies in the Indies.

As the title of the manuscript indicated, the *Simṭ al-ṣudūr* dealt with the concept of *naẓr*, “votive offering”, and more in particular with the issue of who is entitled to such gifts since they were given to the descendants of the Prophet, the *sayyids*. In this treatise Sayyid ʿUṣmān concluded that these offerings should be given to the *sayyids* and not to others. The book is of a theoretical nature and does not refer to the circumstances which led Sayyid ʿUṣmān to write it. These circumstances will become clear below in section 4, but first I will deal with the *taqrīz* on the manuscript.

3. The Blurb and the Blurber [INCLUDE ILLUSTRATION 1 HERE]

On the top of the title page of the manuscript, just below the actual title of the work, there is a handwritten *taqrīz*, which I translated as follows:

Praise be to God alone and may He bless and grant peace to our Lord Muḥammad and to his family, Companions and the followers of their path after him. This handwritten treatise (*risāla*) devoted to the votive offering (*naẓr*) - which is divided into a general and a specific one - is until the end of what its author has explained and made clear, trustworthy and unequivocal and the reasons to accept it are abundant. May God reward its author in This World with His everlasting decision and honour, and in the Hereafter with an abundant reward in the House of Peace. And may God bless and grant peace to our LordMuḥammad and his pure Family and his outstanding Companions. The one who ordered this to be written down is the seeker of forgiveness from his Lord, Aḥmad ibn Zaynī Daḥlān, the Mufti of the Shafiʿites in the protected city of Mecca. May God forgive him, his parents, his teachers, his loved ones and all Muslims.
The authenticity of this *taqrız* was confirmed by the impression of the personal seal of the signer, which is almost similar to the signature under the just translated document, and which reads: “The one who seeks forgiveness from his Lord, al-Sayyid Aḥmad ibn Zaynī Daḥlān, the Mufti of the Shafi`ites in the protected city of Mecca 1282”. It is noteworthy that we thus have here an original *taqrız* and not a later copy, as is mostly the case. For this reason we might rightly characterize this specimen as unique.

As mentioned in both the *taqrız* and on the seal, the “blurber” Aḥmad ibn Zaynī Daḥlān (1817-1886) was the Shafi`ite Mufti of Mecca. He was born in Mecca and started teaching there in 1848, shortly after Sayyid `Uṣmān’s arrival in the Holy City. The Ottoman authorities in the Hejaz appointed him to the rank of Mufti of the Shafi`i School of Law and the seal indicated that this took place in the *hijrî* year 1282 (1865). In addition, he also held the position of supervisor of all scholars (*syaykh al-`ulamāʾ*) in the Holy City and in this capacity he was one of the most prestigious scholars in the Muslim world of his day. Although Daḥlān never left his homeland, he received pilgrims from all over the globe and he was held in high esteem in many parts of the world. He was very popular in Indonesia, and he was often asked for fatwas from this country, and also from other parts of the world, like India. In the framework of the present paper it is noteworthy that the already mentioned C. Snouck Hurgronje knew Daḥlān well. After Snouck had converted to Islam in Jeddah and had entered Mecca at the beginning of 1885, he developed a personal bond with Daḥlān. As mentioned, Sayyid `Uṣmān had been a student of Daḥlān in Mecca and he was clearly on good terms with him, for it is known that he functioned for some time as assistant during the lectures of his master. This good relationship continued to exist after Sayyid `Uṣmān’s return to Batavia in 1862 and is demonstrated by the *taqrız* translated here, other approvals of his work by Daḥlān have been preserved. (Kaptein, 2014: 61, 93).

I think it is interesting to imagine how this *taqrız* actually came into existence, since Sayyid `Uṣmān in Batavia and Daḥlān in Mecca were separated by a long distance. First, Sayyid `Uṣmān sent the manuscript of his work to Mecca by ship. We may assume that in 1877 the trip no longer took place by sailing-ship, but by steamship, which in the 1870s
had become the more common means of transport by sea. The steamship was not only much safer, but also much faster than the sailing ship, but nevertheless the journey from Batavia to Jeddah, the closest harbour to Mecca, took at least three weeks; after disembarking in Jeddah the manuscript was taken over land by camel to the Holy City, which also lasted for a few days. Next in Mecca, Dahlan had to study the manuscript and to blurb it, and after this the manuscript had to make the return journey to Batavia. All in all, it would have taken at least three months before the manuscript finally was returned to Sayyid ‘Usman in Batavia with the desired taqrij on it. The very fact that this was possible shows that there were intensive contacts between Southeast Asia and the Holy City, which at that time in Indonesia was regarded as the locus of the supreme religious authority in Islam. (Kaptein, 1997:6-16).

A final issue related to the blurb translated here is whether the taqrij was written by Dahlan himself or not. In his handlist of the Arabic manuscripts in Leiden University Library, P. Voorhoeve wrote that the taqrij (or affidavit as he called it) was an autograph. (voorhoeve, 1957:339). I think this is not the case, since the taqrij mentions that “he [sc. Dahlan] ordered to write it down” (amara bi-raqmihii) and this formulation clearly demonstrated the use of a scribe. Moreover, Dahlan’s handwriting was different from the handwriting of the taqrij, as a sample of this illustrates. This sample is a brief note in Arabic, to which in Dutch is added (in the handwriting of Snouck Hurgronje): “Geschreven voor mij door Sejjid Ahmed Dahlan Maart 1885” (written for me by Ahmad Dahlan in March 1885). A comparison of Dahlan’s handwriting with that of the present taqrij, shows that the personal handwriting of Dahlan was different from the one shown here. Although this is a minor issue, it shows that in the process of giving taqariz important scholars, like Dahlan, scribes might also have been employed.

When we compare this taqrij with the ones presented by Rosenthal, we notice a formal similarity, since in all cases we have a preface (khutba), the appraisal of the text and a conclusion with a signature, but the present taqrij is not in rhymed prose, it is shorter, and much more straightforward and business-like.
4. After the Blurb

After Sayyid ‘Usmān got his “blurbed” manuscript of the Simṭ al-ṣuṭūr back from Mecca, he published a printed version of the Simṭ al-ṣuṭūr on his lithographic press. The printed edition was virtually similar to the manuscript edition and a comparison between the two shows only few minor differences. In the first place, we notice that Sayyid ‘Usmān changed the word taqyīd in the title of the manuscript to takhsīṣ, which he might have found more precise. Next, we see that a note in the margin of the manuscript (fol. 2b) was neatly included in the printed edition without leaving any trace that in the manuscript it was not incorporated in the main text ([4]). Finally, both the manuscript and the printed edition gave precisely the same date on which the text was finished (“the beginning of the month of Rajab, the “Pouring”, in the year 1294”) but where the colophon of the manuscript used the word tabyī’ (“composing”), to specify the actual production of the text, the printed version used the word tahṣīl, which means the “copying” of a manuscript. (Gacek, 2009:282). An interesting question is whether Sayyid ‘Usmān would have published the Simṭ al-ṣuṭūr, had he not obtained the taqrīz from Daḥlān. Since he only published the Simṭ al-ṣuṭūr after he got the taqrīz, it seems as if this approval almost equals an imprimatur.

When we take another look at the title page of the manuscript we notice that the lower part of the title page contained a note in Arabic in the handwriting of Sayyid ‘Usmān himself. In the note Sayyid ‘Usmān explained that he wrote the book because he was consulted on an issue which had already started in 1870. This issue dealt with the question of who should be entitled to the votive offerings which were given to the holy shrine of ḥabīb ḥusayn ibn Abī Bakr ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-‘Aydarūs (d. 1756) in Luar Batang in the North of Batavia. Were they the sayyids, who descended from the saint or were they the state appointed authorities who administered the district where the shrine was located? In the treatise, Sayyid ‘Usmān concluded that the sayyids were the ones who were entitled to these gifts. (Kaptein, 2014: 81-82). Sayyid ‘Usmān thus wrote the book in the framework of a protracted and a vehement controversy. By invoking the support of his prestigious and famous teacher Aḥmad Daḥlān he aimed to give his opinion on this matter extra weight. Interestingly, the note also made reference to the involvement of
his teacher: [...] “Consequently I wrote this treatise after I had returned to Batavia and after it was sent to Mecca, the Mufti approved of it (sahha `alayhā)”.

The occurrence of this note can be explained as follows. From the year 1886 onwards Sayyid `U$mān exchanged letters with C. Snouck Hurgronje who after his return from Mecca in 1885 had settled in Leiden. Three of the letters from Sayyid `U$mān to Snouck have been preserved. In these letters Sayyid `U$mān provided Snouck with all kinds of information, but at the same time he was also trying to get the help of Snouck to improve his reputation among the colonial authorities in Batavia and to obtain a position within the colonial administration. For this reason, in 1887 he sent Snouck sixteen of his publications, so that Snouck, on the basis of these publications, could judge for himself what type of a person Sayyid `U$mān was. In this way the publications entered the personal library of Snouck and after his death in 1936 they were bequeathed to the Leiden University Library, and were placed in the Leiden University Library. Among the sixteen items a handwritten note was included in which Sayyid `U$mān briefly explained to Snouck what the treatise was about. Among those sixteen publications there was also the Simṭ al-ṣudūr and another handwritten note on the title page was thus directed to Snouck Hurgronje. In real terms, this meant that the manuscript again made a long travel: after the trip Batavia - Mecca - Batavia in 1877, this time in 1887 it made the long sea journey from Batavia to Europe, probably to the port city of Rotterdam, before it reached Snouck Hurgronje in Leiden.

I think the reason why Sayyid `U$mān sent the manuscript of the Simṭ al-ṣudūr and not the printed edition to Snouck Hurgronje is the following. As we just saw, Sayyid `U$mān sent his publications to Snouck to make a favourable impression on him and I think he deliberately sent the manuscript, precisely because it contained the original taqřiz of Daḥlān. Sayyid `U$mān must have known that Snouck Hurgronje was personally acquainted with Daḥlān and must have thought that by demonstrating that Daḥlān had also approved of his work, he would make an even more favourable impression on Snouck.

Although Sayyid `U$mān had given Daḥlān’s original taqřiz to Snouck, he must have kept a copy. Later in his career, when Sayyid `U$mān was involved in all kinds of polemics, he published a small
booklet with approvals of several of his works to bolster his authority, the *Fatḥ al-bāb li-taḥṣīn al-ẓann al-muthāb*. (Kaptein, 2014:158). These approvals were given by a number of well-known scholars of the era, like ḥusayn al-Jisr (1845-1909), and the successor of Daḥlān as the Mufti of the Shafīʿites in Mecca, Muḥammad Saʿīd Bābaṣīl (d. 1912). Also the *taqrīz* which has been the object of this paper is rendered in this booklet, be it without the *khuṭba* and the signature of Daḥlān, although Sayyid ʿUṣmān did mention that the original *taqrīz* was confirmed by Daḥlān’s seal (*muhr*).15

5. Conclusion

The scholarly literature which has been devoted to the *taqrīz* thus far dealt with this issue in the Medieval Arab world, but the present paper has shown that this instrument to boost the prestige of an individual scholar was also at work in colonial Indonesia in the 19th century. Like the medieval blurs, the later ones are interesting because they point to active networks of like-minded scholars. The *taqrīz* studied here has shown that these networks may cover large distances, and may even cross the Indian Ocean. I hope further research on the topic will be undertaken, and in the framework of the study of Southeast Asian manuscripts it would be interesting to learn whether languages other than Arabic were used to blurb a work.

Endnotes

1 The exact spelling is *taqrīz*, with a long z, and an emphatic z (pl. *taqārīz*). Sometimes the word is also spelled with an emphatic “ as *taqrī*”. This can be regarded as a phonetic variant without a difference in meaning, but this spelling might also indicate disapproval, see Vaselý, ‘Das *taqrīz*’, p. 380.

2 A brief article was published in 2003, see R. Vaselý, ‘Das *taqrīz* ’, who draws attention to some *taqārīz*, related to the work of the 15th century author Ibn Ḥijja.

3 Leiden University Library, Cod. Or. 7057a-4.

4 According to Gacek, *Arabic Manuscript*, p. 282 the word *tabyid* can mean composing and copying; here composing as the actual process of writing is meant.

5 See for his biography my latest book, Kaptein, *Sayyid ʿUthmān*. All biographical information on him is taken from this publication.

6 The text reads ẓāfiyyah, but this is Meccan dialect; in Classical Arabic it should read “āfiyyah. I thank my colleague Dr. A.M. Al-Jallad for pointing this out to me.
Unless otherwise stated, the following information on him is taken from Freitag, ‘Der Orientalist und der Mufti’, esp. pp. 42-44.

Kaptein, The Muhimmât al-nafâ'ís includes many of his fatwas given on Indonesian issues.

Hunter, The Indian Musalmans, pp. 163-4, mentions a fatwa of Daḥlân which states that in spite of its infidel ruler, “Hindustan” can still be regarded as “Dār al-islâm”, as long as certain Islamic observances are maintained. Similar fatwas were given by the Hanafi and Maliki Muftis of Mecca.

Freitag, ‘Der Orientalist und der Mufti’.

These are all printed copies of the original taqârîţ, now lost.

Leiden University Library, Cod. Or. 7111.

This section is based on (Kaptein, 2014:111-115).

In the end the lobby of Sayyid Ḫūṣain was successful and we saw above that he was appointed as Honorary Advisor for Arab Affairs in 1891.


References


**Caption to Illustration 1**

Title page of Simṭ al-Ṣuḍūr wa al-Jawāhir fī Ḥall Taqyīḍ al-Nudhūr li al-Sāḍa al-ʾAthāhir, Leiden University Library, Cod. Or. 7057a-4. I thank Dr. A.J.M. Vrolijk, Curator of the Oriental manuscripts and rare books at Leiden University Library for granting me permission to reproduce this page here.
A Taqrib for a Nineteenth Century Indonesian Manuscript
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5. Anonym is written: e.g. A recent article (Anon 1993) stated that.....

6. If the source is quoted from another work: e.g. Study by Smith (1960 cited in Jones 1994: 24) showed that.....(note: in the references, Jones is the main bibliography)

7. If the idea is cited, page numbers are not written.e.g. Nunan (1996) but if the idea is specific, number is required: e.g. Allwrith (1992: 56) provides an example of......

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4. To give the original works.
5. To give proper citation.
6. To mention the sources fairly and honestly including the references for the basis of the analysis.
7. To give academic criticism based on academic arguments.
8. To follow ethical standards.
9. To notify the editor immediately for any changes and inaccuracy.

**Publication Ethic and Malpractice Statement.**

Heritage of Nusantara is a peer-reviewed International Journal and is available in print and online. It is published twice in a year. The Publisher is the Board of Research of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia and thus is responsible for all the process of publication and financial matters.
**Publication Decision**

The decision by the board of the editors to select the article is based on academic consideration and responsibility to present high academic standard of International Journal.

**Fair Play**

The board of the editors will treat all the articles fairly by disregarding the race, gender, sexual orientation, religious belief, ethical origin, citizenship or political philosophy of the author.

**Confidentiality**

Any relevant information concerning the data, authors and reviewers are kept confidentially to avoid bias in the process of selecting the articles. Furthermore, all the articles for review are treated as confidential documents and are not be shown or discussed with others except as authorized by the editors.

**Disclosure and Conflict of Interest**

To keep the intellectual property of the right of the author, the editor will not use the unpublished material without the permission from the author formally in written letter.

**Duties of the Reviewers**

To give a valuable comments on the articles to make it easy for the editors to select the appropriate articles for the journal. As for the peer reviewers, they help the editors to build communication with the author.

**Time**

The time for the reviewers to collect the articles is allocated by the editors. Under special circumstances, the reviewers need more time or cannot perform the duty, and have the objection or excuse concerning the time, they should notify the editors.

**Objectivity**

The comments and critics from the reviewers on the articles should be based on academic arguments and objective not author’s personality.
الصورة في العالٍ الأمامي مأخوذة من الصورة في المقالة

A Taqríz for a Nineteenth Century Indonesian Manuscript

حيح هذا المجلة هو تزود القراء بعلومات حول خطة إندونيسية دولية في تطوير المؤلفات والتراث الديني من خلال نشر المقالات والمقایير العلمية ودراسات الكتب.

تُركّزم هتميج أوف نوسانتارا للبحث في المؤلفات الدينية سواء كانت معاصرة أو قديمة، والتراث الديني الواقع في جوب شرق آسيا، وترحب بمساهمات العلميين والعلماء المتخصصين في هذا المجال.

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