

THE TITLE *KHALĪFAT ALLĀH* IN 17TH CENTURY ACEH: Concept and Meanings

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Abstract: This article attempts to study the use of the title '*khalīfat Allāh*' in seventeenth century Aceh. The main bulk of this inquiry revolves around the concept and meanings of the title, which was adopted from the mainland of Islam. This study is historical in nature and it is done by employing the 'descriptive analytical' method. The description of the use of the title *khalīfat Allāh* and its relations with the Acehnese political structures will be investigated. This step is then followed by the 'analytical' part, in which the exploration of the Acehnese conception and the meanings of the title will be given. As a sultanate, Aceh was seen as a *khilāfah* in its own right in which God's religion is to be implemented. As Such, the ruler's task was not only to pursue the prosperity for the country and its people but also to foster God's religion. Based on this tenet, the head of the state was to hold the title '*khalīfat Allāh*', which simply meant the 'deputy of God.' By this very title a ruler was to possess both political and religious authority.

Abstrak: Artikel ini mengkaji penggunaan gelar 'khalīfat Allāh' di kerajaan Aceh pada abad ke-17. Fokus utama dari penelitian ini berkisar tentang konsep dan makna yang terkandung dalam gelar dimaksud, yang diadopsi dari kawasan utama dunia Islam. Kajian ini berbentuk historis, dan ia dilakukan dengan menggunakan metode 'deskriptif analitis'. Deskripsi mengenai penggunaan gelar khalīfat Allāh dan hubungannya dengan struktur politik di Aceh ketika itu akan diinvestigasi. Langkah ini kemudian diikuti oleh bagian 'analisis', di mana eksplorasi mengenai konsep dan makna dari gelar ini akan dipaparkan. Sebagai sebuah kesultanan, Aceh dilihat sebagai sebuah khilāfah yang berdaulat di mana agama Allah diimplementasikan. Dengan demikian, tugas seorang penguasa tidak hanya mewujudkan kemajuan kerajaan dan kesejahteraan rakyatnya tetapi juga meliputi penegakan agama Allah. Atas dasar ajaran ini, kepala negara menyanggah gelar 'khalīfat Allāh', yang bermakna 'wakil Allah'. Gelar ini memberikan makna bahwa seorang penguasa memiliki otoritas politik dan agama.

Keywords: Aceh, sultanate, *khalīfat Allāh*, authority, politics, religion

Introduction

One of the main characteristics of being an Islamic kingdom (sultanate) is the adoption of Islamic symbols in its political structures and institutions. This is absolutely true of the Islamic kingdoms in Southeast Asia. Once the religion of Islam was adopted by a kingdom, efforts were made to adopt this religion and translate it into the Southeast Asian context. This suggests the ‘active role’ played by the indigenous people in this matter by, among others, actively engaging in religious discourses. Therefore, they were to be regarded as “members of communities participating in the commonwealth of Islam in their own right.”¹

Southeast Asia has also been known as a region where the integration of Islam in society varies from one place to another, depending on how strong pre-Islamic beliefs and traditions played their roles in society. In the meantime, Aceh has been known as an area where Islam has penetrated deeply into the lives of its society, and therefore it has been regarded as “the homeland of Indonesian Islamic societies,” in the sense that “Muslim teachings did not remain an isolated phenomenon but became part of Achehnese identity.”² In the course of history, mainly prior to the colonial era, Aceh emerged as a strong Islamic sultanate, known as Aceh *Dâr al-Salâm*, which was to become the ‘champion of Islam’ in the Southeast Asia region. Yet, we should not push this argument too far, since Aceh was not only a member of the Islamic world, but also an integral part of the Southeast Asian realm, with its distinctive cultures and traditions. What I am trying to insist here is that no matter how much Aceh had adopted and adapted Islam into its political cultures, structures and institutions, some elements of pre-Islamic practices and traditions were still apparent, even during the 17th century, a period when this sultanate reached its golden age. An example can be provided here very briefly.

Like other kingdoms in the region, Aceh of the 17th century, for instance, still held the belief of the power of water as the place for purification, cooling and healing. Indeed, all countries ‘below the wind’ were rich in water. The *Hikayat Aceh* speaks of the Aceh River as wonderfully sweet and healthful, and therefore it could function as a treatment for sick people either by drinking it or bathing in it.³ Based on this conviction, Iskandar Muda built the Dalam (royal court) at the confluence of two rivers, the Krueng Aceh and the Krueng Daroy (*Dâr al-Ishq*). In 1613 a branch of Krueng Daroy was deflected through it, indicating the importance of the river for the royal court. Water feasts became established royal traditions.⁴

¹ A. H. Johns, “Sufism in Southeast Asia: Reflections and New Directions,” *Indonesia* 19 (1975), p. 170.

² Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Muslim Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 474-475.

³ *De Hikayat Aceh*, ed. by T. Iskandar (‘s-Gravenhage: N.V. de Nederlandsche Boek-en Steendrukkerij, V.H. H.I. Smits, 1959), p. 165.

⁴ For information about royal bath rituals held to honor royal guests, see W. S. Unger, ed., *De oudste reizen van de zeeuwen naar Oost-Indie, 1598-1604* (‘s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff,

When he visited Aceh in July 1599, Frederick de Houtman was invited by the Acehnese Sultan, al-Mukammil, to join him in a royal water feast.⁵ Iskandar Muda also used to invite the British Thomas Best to join him in the same royal feast on 2 May 1613.⁶ Even the Queen Syafiyat al-Dîn also performed the royal bath ritual in which foreign envoys were also invited to join her.⁷ State officials were also ordered to participate in the royal water feast in which state banquets were served and royal entertainments were performed. The question which should be raised here: What was Islamic about the ritual?; Where did this tradition originate from?

It is not easy to gauge whether or not this ritual came from Islamic traditions and cultures, for we can hardly find this ritual in the Islamic creed as well as Muslim traditions in the mainland of the Islamic world. This being the case, we have to find this tradition from other sources, which are within the local tradition itself. On this issue, we can rely on Robert Wessing's study in which he discovered that water and the associated lotus constitutes "a Hindu symbol for renewal and enlightenment."⁸ The royal feast taking bath in the river can be viewed in line with this belief. How could this pre-Islamic ritual still exist in Aceh at the time? This very fact, I believe, should be seen from the ongoing process of Islamization in the region.

The Acehnese state is claimed to have succeeded in establishing its statecraft based on Islamic doctrines; and for this very reason it has eventually been perceived as the 'champion of Islam' in the region. I will not discuss this issue in this article, for this subject has already been discussed at some length in my work.⁹ Yet, what I would like to focus in this article is to examine the use of the Islamic title '*khalīfat Allāh*' by its ruler. In other words, the main bulk of the inquiry revolves around the question of what the conception of the term '*khalīfat Allāh*' held by the Acehnese rulers at the time was. There were several royal titles and epithets borne by Acehnese rulers, and the most important was that of the '*khalīfat Allāh*', originating from the Islamic conception of sovereignty. While this title was adopted from the Islamic political cultures in the mainland, was it also perceived in the same way as their counterparts did in other parts of the Muslim political centers? This is the main concern of this inquiry.

1948), pp. 71-72. Thomas Best, *The Voyage of Thomas Best to the East Indies, 1612-1614*, ed. by Sir W. Foster (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1934), pp. 35, 210. K.A. 1051, "Dagregister of Peter Sourij," f. 567. See also, Anthony Reid, "Elephants and Water in the Feasting in Seventeenth Century Aceh," *JMBRAS* 62, 2 (1989), pp. 39-41.

⁵ Unger, *De Oudste reizen*, pp. 71-72.

⁶ Best, *The Voyage*, pp. 35, 210.

⁷ K.A. 1051, "Dagregister of Peter Sourij," f. 567. See also, Reid, "Elephants and Water," 39-41.

⁸ Robert Wessing, "The *Gunongan* in Banda Aceh, Indonesia: Agni's Fire in Allah's Paradise?," *Archipel* 35 (1988), p. 173.

⁹ For further discussion on this issue, see Amirul Hadi, *Islam and State in Sumatra: A Study of Seventeenth-Century Aceh* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2004).

Methodology

This study is historical in nature. It attempts to reconstruct the Acehnese history of the 17th century *vis a vis* the use of the title of '*khalīfat Allāh*' by its rulers. This is to be done by referring to historical sources available at our disposal which are considered *primary*. The chief sources consulted are those indigenous in nature, containing not only the 'actual events' but also the 'worldview' of the people under inquiry. Among those references are the seventeenth century work of the *Hikayat Aceh*, written during the reign of Sultan Iskandar Muda (r. 1607-1636).¹⁰ The significance of this work for our purposes lies mainly in its depiction of the Acehnese perceptions of their state and rulers. The next fundamental primary source is *Bustān al-Salāthīn*. This is a voluminous work written by Nūr al-Dīn al-Rānīrī in 1638 at the order of Sultan Iskandar Thānī (r. 1636-1641). Consisting of seven books, this work is considered to be "the biggest book of its kind in Malay classical literature."¹¹ Yet only chapter 13 of the second book, concerning the history of Aceh, that is relevant for our purposes.¹² The third primary indigenous source is the *Adat Aceh*. This work is in fact a collection of tracts from the royal library of the Aceh sultanate; and it is essential for our inquiry as it reveals 'inner configuration' of the sultanate as an Islamic and indigenous political entity. The next indigenous traditional source is the *Tāj al-Salāthīn*. Written in Aceh in 1603 by Bukhārī al-Jawharī, this work is considered as the Southeast Asian variant of the 'Mirror for Princes' genre. It is fundamental for this study as it is rich in information on topics relevant to our inquiry, ranging from the worldview of the people under study to the social, political, religious and intellectual currents of Aceh of the seventeenth century. Another important source for our study is a work by 'Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Singkilī, a prominent 'ālim of Aceh, entitled *Mir'at al-Thullāb fi Tashīl Ma'rifat al-Ahkām al-Syar'īyah li al-Mālik al-Wahhāb*. This work actually concerns with topics of Islamic law, yet it also touches upon some issues related to the Acehnese politics. Another type of primary sources is the works by European travelers to the region. These works are important for our study as they provide some accurate information about some events in the region, but not very much on the worldview of the Acehnese and conceptions of their own state and rulers. *Secondary* sources are also helpful for our study as they might help us in enriching our analysis and understanding of our inquiry. These sources include all contemporary studies on the 17th century Aceh which are relevant to our inquiry.

As this study concerns the nature of the title *khalīfat Allāh* held by the Acehnese

¹⁰ T. Iskandar, "Three Malay Historical Writings in the First Half of the 17th Century," *JMBRAS* 40, 2 (1967), p. 62. This text was studied by an authoritative scholar on Acehnese history, T. Iskandar, entitled *De Hikajat Atjeh* ('s-Gravenhage: N.V. de Nederlandsche Boek-en Steerukkerij V.H. H.I. Smits, 1959).

¹¹ Iskandar, "Three Malay," p. 52.

¹² *Bustān al-Salāthīn*, Bab 2, Fasal 3, ed. by T. Iskandar (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia, 1966).

rulers in the 17th century, a 'historical investigation' is to be conducted. As a matter of fact, all the titles and honorific epithets used by rulers were inherently connected to political cultures, structures and institutions. Hence, the discourse on the title *khalīfat Allāh* will directly lead us to the investigation of the political life of the Acehnese state; and indeed it is historical in nature. The inherent connection of the title *khalīfat Allāh* with other political structures and institutions is evident as the title itself has its powerful impacts upon the political realities in the state. For this very reason the method of investigation employed in this inquiry is 'descriptive analysis.' In this mode, the description of the use of the title *khalīfat Allāh* will be provided and its relations with the Acehnese political structures will be investigated. This step is to be followed by 'analytical' part, in which the concept and the meanings perceived by the Acehnese themselves of their rulers and the title *khalīfat Allāh* will be explored. It is through this way that the coherence of the workings of the politics in the sultanate will be achieved.

Results and Discussion

The Title Khalīfat Allāh: A Brief Survey

The discourse on the title *khalīfat Allāh* has attracted academic debates among the scholars on Islam for more than a century now, revolving mainly around the concept and the meanings of this very term. Even more intense discussion on this issue involves the relationship between early Caliphs and the class of Muslim scholars (*'ulama'*).¹³ Indeed, the discourse on the subject touches upon both the theoretical (concept) and historical (empirical) stances of the title. While the former circulates around the definition and the meanings embedded in the term *khalīfat Allāh*, the latter, on the other hand, concerns more on the historical uses of it, which is more contextual and empirical in nature.¹⁴ These two differences in approaching

¹³ Abdulhadi Alajmi, "Ulama and Caliphs New Understanding of the 'God's Caliph' Term," *Journal of Islamic Law and Culture*, 13, 1 (2011), p. 102.

¹⁴ Among important works on the term *khalīfat Allah* are Ignaz Goldziher, *Muhammedanische Studies*, Vol. 2 (M. Niemeyer, Halle, 1889-90), pp. 52-66.; D.S. Margoliouth, "The Sense of the Title Khalifa," in E.T. Arnold and R.A. Nicholson, eds., *A Volume of Oriental Studies Presented to E.G. Brown* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922).; W. Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Political Thoughts* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1968).; W. Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Political Thoughts* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1968).; W. Montgomery Watt, "God's Caliph: Qur'anic Interpretation and Umayyad Claims," in C.E. Bosworth, ed., *Iran and Islam, In Memory of the Late Vladimir Minorsky* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1971).; W. Montgomery Watt, "God's Caliph: Qur'anic Interpretation and Umayyad Claims," in C.E. Bosworth, ed., *Iran and Islam, In Memory of the Late Vladimir Minorsky* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1971).; H.A.R. Gibb, "The Heritage of Islam in the Modern World (I)," *IJMES*, 1 (1970); Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds, *God's Caliph* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).; Wadād al-Qādī, "The Term 'Khalifa' in Early Exegetical Literature," *Die Welt des Islams*, 28 (1988): 392-411.; Uri Rubin, "Prophets and Caliphs: The Biblical Foundations of the Umayyad Authority," in Herbert Berg, ed., *Method and Theory in the Study of Islamic Origins* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 73-99.

the subject constitutes the main rationale behind the disagreements among scholars in understanding the meaning of the term *khalîfat Allâh*.

It has been not easy for scholars to define the meanings of the term '*khalîfat Allâh*'. The word *khalafa* could mean 'to succeed', 'to replace', 'to inhabit,' and even 'to rule' or 'to govern.'¹⁵ Therefore, it seems also to mean "viceroy or lieutenant acting for sovereign."¹⁶ The term occurs twice in the Qur'ân: the first refers to Adam (Q.S. al-Baqarah/2: 30), and the second relates to David (Dâwûd). The first verse reads: "And when thy Lord said to the angels, "I am placing a vicegerent upon the earth," they said, "Wilt Thou place therein one who will work corruption therein, and shed blood, while we hymn Thy praise and call Thee Holy?" He said, "Truly I know what you know not."¹⁷ In this context— and as in other places such as 6:165¹⁸—the term *khalîfah* "appears to denote a universal human inheritance and responsibility, since all human beings are in their inner reality the *khalîfah* of God."¹⁹ In other place (Q.S. Shad/38: 26), the term *khalîfah* refers to 'sovereignty.' The verse reads: "O David! Truly We have appointed thee as a vicegerent upon the earth; so judge among the people with truth and follow not caprice, lest it lead thee astray from the way of God. Truly those who stray from the way of God, theirs shall be a severe punishment for having forgotten the Day of Reckoning."²⁰ In this verse, it is clearly stated that David, who held the status of being both Prophet and King, was appointed as a *khalîfah fî al-ardh* (a vicegerent upon the earth), and therefore he should rule with justice and truth (*al-haqq*). In this context the term *khalîfah* denotes the combination of both 'religious' and 'political' authority. It is worth following here Wadâd al-Qâdhî's inquiry of its meanings in the early exegetical works.

In her thorough article al-Qâdhî explores the meanings of the term '*khalîfah*' as understood in the earliest history of Islam, particularly until the era of the Umayyad Caliphate, not beyond that. The study is intended to answer the question: How did the early exegetes, living under the Umayyads, interpret the term *khalîfah* in the Qur'an; and to what extent did their interpretation of the term has any relations with the title *khalîfat Allâh* claimed by the Umayyad dynasty? Based her inquiry on early exegetical works, including the *Tafsîr* of Muqâtil ibn Sulaymân (d. 150/767), *Tafsîr al-Mujâhid* (d. 103/721), and *Tafsîr Sufyân al-Tsawrî* (161/777), the author employs the 'exegetically historical' methods.

¹⁵ See, Bernard Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 43-44.; al- Qâdlî, "The Term 'Khalîfa' in Early", pp. 398-404.

¹⁶ Lewis, *The Political*, p. 44.

¹⁷ This translation is adopted from Seyyed Hossein Nasr, et al., eds., *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary* (New York: HarperOne, 2015), p. 125.

¹⁸ This verse reads: "He it is Who appointed you vicegerents upon the earth and raised some of you by degrees above others, that He may try you in that which He has given you. Truly thy Lord is Swift in retribution, and truly He is Forgiving, Merciful. (*The Study Quran*, p. 867).

¹⁹ *The Study Quran*, p. 125.

²⁰ *The Study Quran*, p. 2466.

In her study al-Qâdhî discovers five meanings of the term '*khalīfah*' in the Qur'ân. The *first* was 'to succeed', which was suggested by Ibn 'Abbâs, especially in his interpretation of the Q.S. al-Zukhrûf/43: 60, which reads: "Had We willed, We would have appointed angels among you, succeeding (*yukhlafûn*) one another upon the earth."²¹ The *second* was 'to replace', as understood by Muqâtil ibn Sulaymân and other exegetes. The *third* meaning was 'to substitute'. This third meaning has a strong connection with the first two mentioned earlier, as it is in fact the combination of those two meanings, which can be articulated as: "to substitute, to replace, to take the place of another, but normally after this other is gone (destroyed, dead, etc.), thereby succeeding him."²² The *fourth* meaning of the term, according to al-Qâdhî, was 'to inhabit' or 'to cultivate,' referring more specifically to Q.S. Ibrâhîm/14: 13-14 and Q.S. al-Rûm/30: 9, which reads: "...We shall surely destroy the wrongdoers. And We shall surely make you to dwell the land after them..."²³ The term in these verses means 'to inhabit.' Based on the interpretation provided by al-Mujâhid, al-Qâdhî further to asserts that the term '*mustakhlafîn*' in the Qur'an (Q.S. al-Hadîd/57: 7) is to mean: 'to cultivate.' The verse reads: "Believe in God and His Messenger and spend from that over which He has appointed you as *trustees* (*mustakhlafîn*). For those of you who believe and spend, theirs shall be a great reward."²⁴ The word *mustakhlafîn* (trustees) derives from the same root as *khalīfah* (vicegerent); and therefore, the "command to spend of what God has entrusted is connected to the very purpose for which human beings were created (... [Q.S. al-Baqarah/2: 30; Q.S. al-An'âm/6: 165; Q.S. Fathir/35: 39])."²⁵ The *fifth* meaning of the term *khalīfah* is 'to govern, to rule, and to be king.' This political sense of the term is built upon the Q.S. Shad/38: 26 mentioned above, in which God made David King on earth (*mallakahu*). Here the term *khalīfah* means to govern with justice, in the sense that he functions as ruler or sovereign holding political power. This is in line with other verses in the Qur'an (Q.S. al-Baqarah/2: 251) which states that God gave David kingship and wisdom (*wa atâhu Allâh al-mulk wa al-hikmah*) and other verse (Q.S. Shad/38: 20) which reads: "And We strengthened his [David] sovereignty (*mulkahu*) and gave him wisdom (*al-hikmah*) and decisive speech."²⁶

In her analysis al-Qâdhî encounters some difficulties in determining the meanings of the term *khalīfah* given in the early exegetical works. "Many of the early exegetes", she writes, "were, paradoxically, either puzzled by the Qur'anic term of '*khalīfah*' in the singular and did not know how to handle it, or they took it so much for granted that they did not comment on it."²⁷ In addition to this, they also perceived different meanings of the

²¹ *The Study Quran*, p. 2660.

²² Al-Qadhi, "The Term "Khalifa" in Early", p. 400.

²³ *The Study Quran*, p. 1386.

²⁴ *The Study Quran*, p. 2973.

²⁵ *The Study Quran*, p. 2973.

²⁶ *The Study Quran*, p. 2464.

²⁷ Al-Qadhi, "The Term "Khalifa" in Early", p. 405.

root of the word *kh.l.f.*, and as such they reached different conclusions on the issue. Another serious problem confronting exegetes in determining the meaning of the term *khalîfah* is its appearance in two verses mentioned above in ‘singular’ form: the first is about David (Q.S. Shad/38: 26) and the second about Adam (Q.S. al-Baqarah/2: 30). The main question to be raised here: Whom the term *khalîfah* in this case referred to? In the David verse, the word *khalîfah* explicitly refers to David as a king; and in such a case the term *khalîfah* means ‘king.’ However, the Adam verse poses serious problems. When the word *khalîfah* is mentioned in this verse, it does not explicitly refer to Adam. The identification of Adam with the term *khalîfah* is mainly inferential; and “almost all the exegetes accepted this identification.”²⁸ Yet, it should be born in mind that Adam can mean either the person of Adam in ‘particular’ or man in ‘general’; and it is the second identification that the exegetes tended to perceive. On this matter al-Qâdhî states that “the net result of this was that another equation came about: ‘khalîfah=man’ in the Qur’an. Consequently: all men are created as *khalîfas*.”²⁹ This is in line with the Q.S. al-Baqarah/2: 30 and Q.S. al-An’am/6: 165, for instance, in which Adam was appointed as the first *khalîfah* (vicegerent), and ‘insofar as Adam represents humanity as a whole, all human beings can be understood to be God’s vicegerents on earth.’³⁰ In sum al-Qâdhî’s writes: “Within the limits of what we know of early exegetical literature, then, there was no move on the part of the exegetes to find any Qur’anic basis for Umayyad caliphs to justify their ‘rights’ as they claimed, ... When the early exegetes were not opposed to the state, they were simply, as it appears, not interested in the issue.”³¹ Indeed, there was no connection between the Qur’anic term *khalîfah* with the title *khalîfat Allâh* (God’s Caliphs) as claimed by the Umayyads, at least from the early exegetical works.

In Islamic history, the Umayyad rulers were the first to have claimed the title *khalîfat Allâh*. The title was seen to be controversial as none of the four rightly guided caliphs (*al-khulafâ’ al-râsyidûn*) had adopted the title. Abû Bakr, the first Caliph after the death of Muhammad, held the title *khalîfat rasûl Allâh* (the successor of the Prophet),³² not *khalîfat Allâh*. The claim to be the holders of title *khalîfah* (or *khalîfat Allâh*) by the Umayyads was not without reasons. We can hardly neglect the political motives behind their assertion of the very title, which was to expand into religious substance. In other words, the title *khalîfat Allâh* reveals both ‘political’ and ‘religious’ authority.³³ In this case, the Umayyads tried to claim the authority that the four rightly guided caliphs (*al-khulafâ’ al-rasyidûn*) possessed. The title *khalîfat rasûl Allâh* held by Abû Bakr meant that he was the ‘successor’

²⁸ Al-Qadhi, “The Term “Khalifa” in Early”, p. 408.

²⁹ Al-Qadhi, “The Term “Khalifa” in Early”, p. 408.

³⁰ *The Study Quran*, p. 867.

³¹ Al-Qadhi, “The Term “Khalifa” in Early”, p. 410-411.

³² G.R. Hawting, *The First Dynasty of Islam: The Umayyad Caliphate AD 661-750*, 2nd ed. (London: Rotledge, 2000), p. 1-8.; Patricia Crone & Martin Hinds, *God’s Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Century of Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 22.

³³ Crone and Hinds, *God’s Caliph*, p. 5.

of the Prophet in the sense that he held both political and religious authority, but not the prophecy of Muhammad. The status of being a Caliph is fundamental as he constitutes “a source of guidance because he is himself blessed and rightly guided.”³⁴ As both political and religious authorities were in the hand of the Prophet Muhammad, these authorities were still ‘united’ under the leadership of the four rightly guided Caliphs (*al-khulafâ’ al-râsyidûn*).³⁵ The question which should be raised here: Why did the Umayyads assume the title *khalîfat Allâh* instead of that of the *khalîfat khalîfat Rasûl Allâh* (the successor of the Prophet of God) or other similar titles?

Most scholars suggest that the title *khalîfat Allâh* as a sovereign denotes ‘deputy of God’;³⁶ and in its early use this very title was to mean that the head of state possessed both political and religious authority. In early Islam, the Caliph held these two authorities in one man; and he was also “charged with the definition of Islamic law, the very core of the religion, and without allegiance to a caliph no Muslim could achieve salvation.”³⁷ It was true of the ‘four rightly guided caliphs’ (*al-khulafâ’ al-râsyidûn*), who succeeded the Prophet Muhammad. They were responsible for both governing the Muslim community (*ummah*) and religious matters. In other words, both religious and political authorities were concentrated in the early caliphate,³⁸ the idea that was very similar to the Shî’î doctrine of the *imâmah*. With the end of the early caliphate era, religious authority passed to the Companions of the Prophet and later to the ‘learned men’. Hence, the head of the state only held political power. In the meantime, “religious authority dispersed among those people who, owing their authority entirely to their learning, came to be known as simply the ‘*ulamâ’*, the scholars.”³⁹ The center of power was seen as a secular institution. It was particularly true of the Umayyad caliphate, with the exception of Caliph Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azîz, known as Umar II d. 101/720), who was considered as a pious and religiously-minded ruler. Beginning with the rule of the Umayyad family the ‘separation’ of religion and religion emerged. The administration of religious institutions, such as the designation of the *qâdhî* and waging the *jihâd* for instance, was in the domain of the Caliph, while the ‘*ulamâ’* kept the religious creed under their realm.⁴⁰ This did not necessarily mean that the latter tended to resist the Umayyad regime. Their defiance was shown by their criticisms to the ruling family. It was in this particular context that the Umayyads assumed the title *khalîfat Allâh*, in the sense that they received the authority (both political and religious) directly from God, not from the community. This accordingly

³⁴ Crone and Hinds, *God’s Caliph*, p. 36.

³⁵ Crone and Hinds, *God’s Caliph*, p. 2.

³⁶ See, Watt, “God’s Caliph”, pp. 566-571.; Watt, *The Formative Period*, p. 84.; Lewis, *Political Language*,.”; Crone and Hinds, *God’s Caliph*, p. 1-5.

³⁷ Crone and Hinds, *God’s Caliph*, p. 1.

³⁸ Crone and Hinds, *God’s Caliph*, p. 1.

³⁹ Crone and Hinds, *God’s Caliph*, p. 2.

⁴⁰ Crone and Hinds, *God’s Caliph*, p. 44-57.; Bosworth, *The First Dynasty*, pp. 2-3.; Lapidus, *A History*, p. 98-99.

brings us the question: Why were the Umayyads too ambitious to claim that they held both political and religious authority by, among others, adopting the title *khalīfat Allāh*?

Crone and Hinds have discussed this issue in some details in his work entitled *God's Caliph: religious authority in the first centuries of Islam*. The title *khalīfat Allāh* borne by the Umayyads was to mean that they held both political and religious authority given by God. To support this thesis, these two scholars provided attestations of those who claimed to be the 'deputy of God' from the Umayyad ruling family. Mu'awiyah ibn Abî Sufyân is said to have insisted that "The earth belongs to God and I am the deputy of God." The same title was also adopted by Yazîd I, who was called as "*Imâm al-muslimîn wa khalīfat Rabb al-'alamîn*." 'Abd al-Mâlik (r. 65/678-86/705) was the first to create Islamic coinage (*dînâr* and *dirham*) on which his title as *khalīfat Allāh* and pious formula were printed. As a whole, all the Umayyads assumed this title, which are delineated in some length in al-Wâlid II's letter regarding the appointment of his successors and the letter of Yazîd III to the people of Iraq in which their thoughts on the holders God's Caliphs are delineated.⁴¹

Following the Umayyad era, this title became popular through the Muslim world that most Muslim rulers also adopted it. The 'Abbasids assumed the same title, as the case with the Umayyad dynasty of Spain in which their rulers also assumed the Caliphal title as *khalīfat Allāh*. The title was also adopted by the rulers of the Seljûqs, the Fâthimids, the Mamlûks of Egypt, the Ottomans, even some Islamic kingdoms in Southeast Asia and Africa. Even, the President Numayri of Sudan in May 1984 planned to turn his country to be an Islamic state in which he was to become the *khalīfat Allāh fî al-ardh* (Allah's representative on earth).⁴² On this issue Crone and Hinds state that "..., from 'Uthmân to Numayrî, or in other words from about 644 to about 1984, Muslims of the most diverse political, religious, geographical and ethnic backgrounds have taken the title of *khalīfa* to stand for *khalīfat Allāh*, 'deputy of God.' It thus seems natural to infer that this is what the title always meant."⁴³

As mentioned above there was a great possibility that the Umayyad's claim of the title *khalīfat Allāh* was driven mainly by 'political' motive. The rise of the Umayyad to the pinnacle of the power as the head of Muslim state was not without controversy. After the murder of 'Alî by a kharijite in 40/661, as the last of the *al-khulafâ' al-rashidûn*, the control of the state was immediately taken by Mu'âwiyah ibn Abû Sufyân, the governor of Syria and the rival of 'Alî. He was in fact the "undoubted strongman of the Muslim community."⁴⁴ The seizure of power, by declaring himself as the head of state, was arbitrary and therefore contradictory with the existing tradition of 'consultation' (*syûrâ*). This controversial maneuver by Mu'âwiyah was to have its lasting impacts upon the political atmosphere of the Muslim

⁴¹ See Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph*, p. 6-11. and Chapter 3. See also Appendix 1 and 2.

⁴² Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph*, p. 16-18.

⁴³ Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph*, p. 19.

⁴⁴ Hugh Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphate*, 2nd edition (Harlow, England: Pearson, 2004), p. 82. See also, Hawting, *The First Dynasty of Islam*, p. 30.

community, and especially to the Umayyad dynasty itself. Nevertheless, at the time when the unity of the Muslim communities (*ummah*) had extremely been undermined by a series of civil conflicts, especially between 656 (when ‘Uthmān was assassinated) and 661 (the year of ‘Alī was murdered), the rise of Mu‘āwiyah as the strongman seemed inevitable. Syria was his main political base, in which he received allegiance (*bay‘ah*) from its people. Yet, the acceptance of his status as a new Caliph was certainly not unanimous for, in spite of the fact that there were no military oppositions emerged during his reign (r. 661-680), this new ruler lacked political supports from outside of Syria. The immediate impacts of the *fitnah* were still apparent in which the communities were still shocked and divided. G.R. Hawting insists that as a matter of fact “Mu‘awiyah’s victory did not solve the problems which had led to the *fitna*, and he was now faced with ruling an empire which perhaps accepted him for lack of alternative rather than out of conviction.”⁴⁵

Mu‘āwiyah was known as a great politician who was successful in ruling the Islamic state with graceful and prudent. Arabic sources portrayed him as a leader who possessed the quality of being *hilm*: “shrewdness, moderation, and self-control that the situation demanded.”⁴⁶ His policies seemed to be sympathetic by making agreements with those who held power in the provinces, asserting the continuation of native traditions, and maintaining local rulers (governors) in their positions. At this point, Mu‘āwiyah ruled the Muslim state like a ‘confederation’, acknowledging local autonomy. The government was ‘decentralized’ politically and administratively. In return, Mu‘āwiyah demanded loyalty from the provincial rulers, keeping orders in their own territories and, in some cases, sending revenues to Damascus.⁴⁷ However, the well-ordered leadership of this first Caliph of the Umayyads was undermined by his controversial political decision of installing his son, Yazīd, as his successor. As such the era of monarchy (*mulk*) began, and resentments toward the Umayyads arose, leading to civil conflicts.

A segment of the Prophet’s family (*ahl al-bayt*), headed by ‘Alī’s son, H{usayn, refused to accept Yazīd as a Caliph, which eventually triggered the first civil war. Yazīd’s army met H{usayn’s followers at Karbala, which was depicted in Arabic sources to be a brutal one. H{usayn and his followers were all killed; and “seventy heads, including that of H{usayn, are said to have been displayed in Kūfah afterwards, and H{usayn’s was then forwarded to Damascus where Yazīd had put it up for show.”⁴⁸ This tragic event took place in 10 Muharram 61 of Muslim calendar (10 October 680) and was indeed to have its profound and lasting impacts upon Muslims in general, especially on those of the Shi‘ites. This tragedy, Hawting writes, “has attained a mythic quality in Muslim, especially Shi‘ite, tradition. For the Shi‘a Karbala is the supreme example of the pattern of suffering and martyrdom which have

⁴⁵ Hawting, *The First Dynasty of Islam*, p. 31.

⁴⁶ Kennedy, *The Prophet*, p. 83.

⁴⁷ Kennedy, *The Prophet*, p. 82-88.

⁴⁸ Hawting, *The First Dynasty of Islam*, p. 49.

afflicted their imams and the whole of the Shi'ite community."⁴⁹ Even, Sunni Muslims themselves were moved by the fate of the Prophet's grandson, as depicted, among others, in many Sunni literatures and historical works.⁵⁰

Another opposition to the Umayyad power came from 'Abd Allâh ibn Zubayr, who refused to accept Yazîd's appointment as a Caliph and proclaimed himself as a Caliph based in Makkah and Madinah. It was only in 692 that Ibn Zubayr's movement was crushed by al-Hajjâj, Abd al-Mâlik's general. Ibn Zubayr was killed; and Makkah was bombarded. One year earlier, in 691, al-Hajjâj already defeated and killed Ibn Zubayr's governor of Iraq, Mus'ab (who was himself the brother of Ibn al-Zubayr).⁵¹ Earlier, Yazîd directed his military power to crush the opposition of the Madinah's people, who rejected the former's authority as a Caliph. The war took place in Summer 683 at Harrâ' and Madînah was eventually occupied by Yazîd's army. Indeed, the attack on the town of the Prophet, which was regarded as the home of the *Sunna*, "is one of the major crimes charged against the Umayyads in tradition."⁵² The next revolt against the Umayyad's rule came from a movement led by Mukhtâr (al-Thaqaffi) who claimed that the right to the office of the caliphate belonged to Muḥammad ibn Ḥanafīyyah, son of 'Alî by a wife from the Banû Ḥanîfah. Centered in Kûfah, this revolt was active between 685 and 687 and supported by the *mawâlî* element. What was interesting about this movement was its 'religious' segment which proclaimed that Muḥammad ibn Ḥanafīyyah was a *mahdî*, a messianic figure. As such, he was regarded as "a divinely guided savior, a messiah, who would, with God's support, establish justice for all Muslims."⁵³ Even though it was later crushed by the governor of Ibn Zubayr in Iraq in 687, this movement was to have its lasting impacts in shaping the future 'Abbasid movement in overthrowing the Umayyads.⁵⁴

There were also some other issues that would damage the power of the Umayyads and lead the collapse of the dynasty. There pro-'Alîd movements were still active in the state, especially in Iraq. In the first half of the eight century there was a rising in favor of the Alîd family, while in al-Jazîrah (Iraq) the Kharijî under al-Dhahhâk ibn Qays rebelled against the Umayyad authority.⁵⁵ From the reign of 'Abd al-Mâlik (r. 685-705) onwards, the Umayyad's rule was effectively meant Syrian government, which affected not only the narrowness of the Umayyad power but also the decrease of its economy. These were besides other heated issues concerning the relations of the Arabs versus the *mawâlî*. The

⁴⁹ Hawting, *The First Dynasty of Islam*, p. 49.

⁵⁰ It is interesting to find that in his work, *Bustan al-Salathin, al-Rariri* provides two third of his treatment on the history of the Umayyads on this tragedy, implying the important of the event in the Muslims' mind.

⁵¹ Hawting, *The First Dynasty of Islam*, p. 46-47.

⁵² Hawting, *The First Dynasty of Islam*, p. 46-47.

⁵³ Kennedy, *The Prophet*, p. 95.

⁵⁴ Hawting, *The First Dynasty of Islam*, p. 49-51.

⁵⁵ Kennedy, *The Prophet*, p. 114.

strong Arab character of the Umayyads, especially after the issuance of the Arabization policy by ‘Abd al-Mâlik, indeed upset the non-Arabic speaking Muslims; and even estranged the Damascus from the rest of the Islamic world. Khurâsân was very much upset with this very fact that it not only resisted to the Damascus power but also emerged as a strong base in the east to overthrow the Umayyad government.

In sum, the Umayyads were in fact struggling very hard to gain the *ummah*’s acceptance of their power as Caliphs, the recognition that they could hardly win. Indeed, they held ‘power’ as the heads of the Islamic empire; yet they failed to gain full authority. Authority was certainly necessary in order the dynasty could rule effectively. Jacques Maritain defines authority as “the *right* to direct and command, to be listened to or obeyed by others.”⁵⁶ Both the power and the authority are interdependent; and as such, “the authority requests power. Power without authority is tyranny.”⁵⁷ In the case of the Islamic state, the authority held by its ruler should consist of both ‘political’ and ‘religious’. In the Umayyad’s case a fundamental question should be raised here: Did the Umayyad dynasty basically possess both authorities? A simple answer can be provided here. As a matter of fact, the dynasty only held power, yet lacked political authority, not to mention ‘religious’ authority. Resistances to their rule were massive and lasting; and these constituted among the main reasons behind their collapse, after only around 90 years in power. It was from this backdrop that the claim of the Umayyads as the holders of the title ‘*khalīfat Allāh*’ should be understood. This very title was claimed to have come directly from God, neither from the *ummah* nor even from the Four Rightly-Guided Caliphs (*al-khulafâ’ al-râsyidûn*). By assuming this title, the Umayyads expected allegiance and loyalty from the *ummah*, which was not the fact.

The Title Khalīfat Allāh di Aceh

Once political power was viewed as precondition for the Islamic teachings to be implemented, the unity of both political and religious authority become necessary and hence it constitutes a religious duty. This is what Ibn Taymiyyah insists that “the exercise of authority for the people’s benefit constitutes one of the greatest religious duties, without which neither religion nor a well-ordered world can be established.”⁵⁸ This is in fact the ‘core’ of Islamic political norms which views Muhammad as both a Prophet and a statesman. This latter dimension of his mission entailed the establishment of an Islamic community (*ummah*), and became necessary vehicle for the implementation of God’s teachings in society. In short, the Prophet Muhammad’s mission was both ‘religious’ and ‘political.’ Based

⁵⁶ Jacques Maritain, *Man and the State* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951), p. 126.

⁵⁷ Maritain, *Man and the State*, p. 126.

⁵⁸ Ibn Taymiyyah, *al-Siyasah al-Shar‘iyyah fi Ishlah al-Ra‘i wa al-Ra‘iyyah* (Cairo: Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi, 1955), p.161. See also Mehdi Mozaffari, *Authority in Islam* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1987), pp. 19-28.

on this belief the establishment of the office of the caliph was mandatory, beginning with the Four Rightly-Guided Caliphs (*al-khulafâ' al-râsyidûn*) and was then followed by the Umayyads, the 'Abbasids, and all Muslim polities around the world. Indeed, this notion has become one of the central issues in the history the Islamic political thought.

In general, there are three main lines of the necessity of the caliphate in the history of the Islamic political thought. The *first* is the conception grounded in 'reason', which maintain that it is the nature of human beings to have a leader in order to foster the just social order in community, an idea that was advocated by the Mu'tazilites.⁵⁹ The *second* was the theory which was based on *shar'î* (scriptural) rationale or revelation which underlines the need for a leader to oversee the implementation of God's religion. This idea was advocated by the proponents of the Ash'arite school, which was later adopted by one of the leading scholars of Islamic political thought, al-Mâwardî (d. 1058).⁶⁰ The *third* line of the theory was advocated by both Imâm al-Ghazzâlî (d. 1111) and Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 1328), who went further arguing that the need for a leader was basically grounded on both 'reason' and 'revelation.'⁶¹ In her study on this matter A.K.S. Lambton asserts that:

On the one hand the well-being of men could not be achieved except in society because of their mutual need of each other, and when they lived in society they inevitably required a leader. On the other hand, the exercise of the authority (*wilâya*) was one of the most important duties of religion and without it religion could not be maintained, and God imposed upon men when they came together in community the duty of enjoying the good and forbidding evil, which could only be accomplished through power (*quwwa*) and leadership (*imâra*).⁶²

There is no doubt that the theories advocated by the classical jurists reflected the historical development of the Islamic polity.⁶³ In his *al-Ahkâm al-Sulthâniyyah*, al-Mâwardî delineated his thoughts on the Islamic politics based on his contemporary political realities, especially during the later Buyid period, in which the power in the Islamic world was in the hand of local rulers. Therefore, the existence of the Islamic polity in other regions of the Islamic world should be viewed as the extension of that polity. In other words, the Muslim

⁵⁹ W. Madelung, "Imâma," *EI2*; Lambton, A.K.S. *State and Government in Medieval Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 21-42.

⁶⁰ H.A.R. Gibb, *Studies on the Civilization of Islam*, ed. by Stanford J. Shaw and William R. Polk (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952), p. 155.; A.K.S. Lambton, "Islamic Political Thought," in Joseph Shacht and C.E. Bosworth, eds., *The Legacy of Islam*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon and Press, 1974), pp. 411.; Lambton, *State and Government*, pp. 107-129, 143-151.

⁶¹ Lambton, *State and Government*, pp. 83-102.

⁶² Lambton, *State and Government*, pp. 147.

⁶³ H.A.R. Gibb, "Constitutional Organization," in Majid Khadduri and Herbert J. Liebesny, eds., *Law in the Middle East* (Washington: The Middle East Institute, 1955), p. 4; See also Gibb, *Studies in on the Civilization of Islam*, pp. 141-150.

⁶⁴ Hadi, *Islam and State*, pp. 45-46.

communities around the world were facing the fact that they were under diverse political shapes of local (regional) leadership. As such, “it became necessary to...justify the rise of local rulers alongside the caliphs, as a compromise between the ideal caliphate and the pragmatic need to secure social order—a precondition for the implementation of Islamic teachings.”⁶⁴ Hence, “by the time Aceh emerged as a sultanate in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, autonomous sultanates had long been the accepted model of government in Islam.”⁶⁵ That being the case, it was reasonable that Aceh as a sultanate created and developed its own model of the Islamic polity, which adopted and adapted the Islamic political culture from the mainland of Islam. The adoption of the title *khalīfat Allāh* is to be comprehended from this perspective, yet with some elements of the Acehnese worldview and cultures embedded in it.

To begin with, it is important to follow the *Tâj al-Salâthîn*'s conception of the political dimension of the Acehnese state at the early seventeenth century. The text insists that there are two fundamental yet difficult duties that have to be undertaken in this world: the *first* being the *nubuwwah* (prophecy) and *second* being the *hukûmah* (government). This text further insists that the *hukûmah* constitutes “the most difficult of the messenger’s tasks, [because] he is required to take care of his flock, love all poor, command his people, lead them to good deeds, and treat them with justice; such is the task of the government.”⁶⁶ This, as mentioned above, constitutes the ‘core’ of the Islamic political ethos in which the Prophet Muhammad was regarded as both the Prophet and the statesman. These two missions of Muhammad have historically extended across the Muslim lands under various titles, among the most popular was that of the *khalīfat Allāh*.

The importance of the *hukûmah* (government) is therefore reiterated by the *Tâj al-Salâthîn*. When referring to a ruler (*raja* or *sulthân*) the text emphasizes on the Qur’anic verse (4: 59) which reads: “O ye who believe, obey Allāh and obey the messenger and those of you who are in authority...” When pertaining to a ruler (*raja* or *sulthân*), the text provides a special emphasis on the words: “those of you who are in authority...”. Names of those who were in authority in history are provided, including those of the Prophets, such as Yûsuf, Dâwûd, Sulaymân, Mûsâ, and Muhammad, and the Caliphs, such as the Four Rightly-Guided Caliphs (*al-khulafâ’ al-râsyidîn*) and ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azîz (‘Umar II).⁶⁷ The *Tâj al-*

⁶⁵ Hadi, *Islam and State*, pp. 46.

⁶⁶ Bukhari al-Jawhari, *Taj al-Salathin* (De kroon aller koningen), P.P. Roorda van Eijsinga, ed. (Batavia: Lands Drukkerij, 1827), p. 4.; Bukhari al-Jawhari, *Taj us-salatin*, Khalid Hussin, ed. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Kemetrian Pelajaran Malaysia), pp. 4-49.; Bukhari al-Jawhari, *Taju’ssalatin*, Jumasri Jusuf, ed. Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, Proyek Penerbitan Buku Bacaan dan Sastra Indonesia dan Daerah, 1979), p. 29.

⁶⁷ The mention of ‘Umar II is not surprising, for, in Muslim traditional sources, he was the only Ummayyad Caliph, for his religious leanings, to be respected as a *khalifat Allah*, while the rest were regarded as Kings (secular rulers). The *Taj al-Salathin* seems to have followed this line of historical narrative.

Salâthîn then insists that those good rulers (*raja-raja*) who pursue the path of the friends of God (*segala walî Allâh*) deserve to be called *khalîfat al-Rahmân* (the deputy [ies] of the Merciful) and *zhill Allâh fî al-‘âlam* or *ardh* (the shadow of God on earth).⁶⁸ These titles were to symbolize the religious meanings in which to obey the ruler constitutes the religious duty itself and it stands next to obeying God and His Prophet.

It was this religious meaning of the status of the Acehnese sovereign that was emphasized in our sources. The quality of being rulers—whose jobs were to ensure the prosperity of Muslim community and the implementation of God’s religion in the region—made them entitled to hold various exalting titles and epithets. The *Bustân* insists that Sulthân Iskandar Muda (d. 1636) bore the title *sayyidunâ wa mawlânâ paduka seri sulthân Iskandar Muda johan berdaulat zhill Allâh fî al-‘âlam*. While his successor, Iskandar Tsânî (d. 1641), held the similar title, namely *paduka seri sult}ân Iskandar Thânî ‘Alâ’ al-Dîn Mughâyat Shâh berdaulat zhill Allâh fî al-‘âlam*. Sulthânah Shafiyyat al-Dîn (d. 1675) also bore the same titles, as did the other three sulthânât (queens).⁶⁹ Al-Rânîrî provides specific mention on Shafiyyat al-Dîn. She indeed was blessed by God with long reign as His *khalîfah*.⁷⁰ Referring to the title *khalîfah* borne by this ruler means al-Rânîrî perceived that Aceh was a *khilâfah* in its own right, and therefore its ruler was to hold the title *khalîfat Allâh*, as indicated by the *Tâj al-Salâthîn* above. We should go further to explore the use of the title *khalîfat Allâh* in this sultanate by following the thought of another Acehnese ‘âlim (religious scholar), namely ‘Abd al-Ra’ûf al-Singkilî.

In his *Mir’at al-Thullâb fî Tashîl Ma’rifat al-Ahkâm al-Shar’iyyah li al-Mâlik al-Wahhâb* (The Mirror for the Seekers in Facilitating the Cognition of God’s Law), ‘Abd al-Ra’ûf al-Singkilî (d. 1693) believes that the sultanate of Aceh was a *khilâfah* in its own right. Its ruler was to assume the title *khalîfat Allâh* (deputy of God), whose duties were, among others, to pursue the prosperity for his/her country and to execute God’s religion. Al-Singkilî writes: “*Thumma ja’ala fî al-ardh khalîfahtakhlufuh fî tanfidh ahkâmih*,” which in Malay rendering he writes: “*Maka Ia menjadikan di bumi khalîfah-Nya yang menggantikan Dia pada melakukan segala hukum-Nya*.”⁷¹ Al-Singkilî further asserts that the title *khalîfat Allâh* was in fact the continuation of the title which was held for the first time by the Prophet Adam and went down to the Prophet Muhammad. With the death of this last Prophet, the title *khalîfat Allâh* was adopted by the Four Rightly-Guided Caliphs (*al-khulafâ’ al-râsyidûn*), and, after their reigns, the title was delegated to leaders throughout Muslim lands, whom he calls *al-umarâ’ al-mu’ahzhâmûn* or *segala raja-raja yang besar*.⁷² Aceh, for al-Singkilî, was among those Muslim lands (kingdoms) which held this title.

⁶⁸ *Taj al-Salathin* (Eijsinga), pp. 49-60.; (Jusuf), pp. 29-36.; (Hussain), pp. 50-60.

⁶⁹ *Bustan*, pp. 36, 44, 58, 60, 72-74.

⁷⁰ *Bustan*, pp. 73.

⁷¹ See his *Mir’at al-Thullab fî Tashil Ma’rifat al-Ahkam al-Shar’iyyah li al-Malik al-Wahhab*, MS (Banda Aceh: Universitas Syiah Kuala, 1971), p. 2.

⁷² *Mir’at al-Thullab*, p. 2.

Al-Singkili seems to be realistic in this matter, seeing that Muslim *umamah* were scattered across a vast area and governed by various political entities. For this very reason, the emergence of local (and independent) *khilâfahs* was therefore reasonable and justifiable. The Acehese state was one of those *khilâfât* and therefore its sovereign has every right to hold the title *khalîfat Allâh*. Based on this rationale, to him, the Queen S{afiyyat al-Dîn was a *khalîfah* herself, acting as the ‘deputy of God’ in fostering the Islamic religion in the blessed (*mubâarak*) country of Aceh Dâr al-Salâm. Al-Singkili insists that S{afiyyat al-Dîn was “*al-khalîfahfî tanfîdh aḥkâm mawlâtinâ fî al-ard*” *al-Mubâarak al-Jâwiyyah al-Ashîyyah*” or “*khalîfahpada melakukan segala hukum Tuhan dalam tanah Jâwî yang dibangsakan kepada negeri Aceh Dâr al-Salâm yang mubâarak.*”⁷³ This statement of the prominent ‘âlim in Aceh at the time suggests that by assuming the title *khalîfat Allâh* a ruler of the sultanate of Aceh held both ‘political’ and ‘religious’ authority. The questions which should be raised here are: What kind of religious authority did the Acehese ruler hold?; and to what extent were the ‘*ulamâ*’ capable of executing their expertise in religion?

In order to be able to define the meanings of religious authority in Aceh at the time, we need to comprehend the nature of the rulers-‘*ulamâ*’ relationships. Basically, the relationship between the sovereigns and the ‘*ulamâ*’ was in fact ‘symbiotic.’ In other words, there was interdependence between the rulers and the ‘*ulama*’. As the head on an Islamic state, the sovereign would not be able govern his/her country without the help of the religious scholars (‘*ulamâ*’). On the other, the ‘*ulamâ*’ class were also unable to exercise their roles in the state without the consent of the sovereign. They had different roles to play in the state: the rulers were responsible for governing the state, while the ‘*ulamâ*’ were responsible for the religious matters. Two examples can be provided here to support this point. The *Hikayat Malem Dagang*, the seventeenth century’s work on the Acehese *jihâd* against the Portuguese in Melaka, narrates about Iskandar Muda’s expedition to Melaka. On his way, this Acehese celebrated ruler arrived in Meureudu and found no one to welcome him with his troops. Knowing that the Sulthân, along with his troops, had arrived, the people of Meureudu were so afraid that they were not brave enough to see the sovereign and pay tribute to him. Therefore, they asked Ja Pakeh, an ‘âlim, to accompany them for the purpose. Ja Pakeh ensured that there was no reason to be afraid of, insisting that he himself would argue with the Sulthân, should he were mad. This ‘âlim then asserted that the Sulthân was no superior to him; the former was master only in the matters of governing and *adat* (tradition), while he himself was master in religious subjects.⁷⁴ Another example can be quoted here. When a religious debate took place between al-Rânîrî and Sayf al-Rijâl on the issue of the heterodox Wujûdiyah doctrines in the royal court in 1644 with the presence

⁷³ See, *Mir’at al-Thullab*, p. 3.

⁷⁴ *De Hikajat Malem Dagang: Atjehsche heldendicht tekst, en toelichting*. H.K.J. Cowan, ed. (s-Gramenhage: KITLV, 1937), lines: 520-53.; *Hikayat Meukuta Alam*, Imran Teuku Abdullah, ed. (Jakarta: Intermassa, 1991), Text I, lines: 540-558.

of the Queen (Shafiyat al-Dîn), the female ruler finally declined to get involved in it and left the judgment to be taken by the state officials (*uleebalangs*), for she had no knowledge of religious matters.⁷⁵

The above mentioned statement by Ja Pakeh was straight forward, and therefore clearly indicates the separation between the political authority of the ruler and the religious authority of the '*ulamâ*'. The decision taken by Shafiyat al-Dîn to leave the religious debate and delegated the judgment to the state officials reveals that the ruler had no knowledge of religion. This scene clearly suggests the boundaries between the political authority held by the sovereign and that of the religious one assumed by the '*ulamâ*'. Yet, we cannot push this idea too far, for our sources insist the unity of both authorities (political and religious) in the hands of the rulers, an idea which was also supported by historical realities. There seem to be some flexibility between these two authorities. The roles of the '*ulama*' were not limited to the matters of religion only. There were many cases in history which proved their significant roles beyond the religious domain. Similar cases can also be claimed of the roles of the rulers. In many cases, they also intervened in the matters of religion.

Mutual needs and respects between the rulers and the '*ulamâ*' were the keys to state's successes to become a powerful Islamic sultanate in the region, especially during the course of the 16th and 17th centuries. The ruler's need for the '*ulamâ*' was inevitable. Both the *Adat Aceh* and the *Tâj al-Salâthîn* strongly suggest that the ruler should respect and consult the '*ulamâ*' on religious matters.⁷⁶ This is based on the notion that the sovereign was to hold responsible for the implementation of God's religion in the country; and the '*ulamâ*' were the sources and references for religious knowledge and morality. The involvement of the '*ulamâ*' class in the affairs of state was not peculiar to Aceh, for other Islamic states in many places had also provided rooms for them to play their roles in religious matters and even in the social and political spheres. Yet, what was distinctive about Aceh during the 17th century was it placed the '*ulamâ*' class in the high ranks of state's structures, from those which were religious in nature, such as the *shaykh al-Islâm*, *qâdhî*, and *faqîh*, to political ones, including the advisor to the sulthân, a chief councilor of the state, and the deputy of the ruler in many occasions.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, the fortune of the '*ulamâ*' was very much depended upon the ruler's mercy and whim. The existence of the heterodox Wujûdiyyah doctrine in Aceh was supported by the Acehnese ruler, especially Iskandar Muda. He was not only the follower of the sect but also the student of Shams al-Dîn al-Sumatranî, the

⁷⁵ For the discussion on this issue, see Takeshi Ito, "Why Did Nuruddin Ar-Raniry Leave Aceh in 1054 A.H.?", *BKI* 143, 4 (1978): 489-491.

⁷⁶ *Adat Atjeh*, Reproduced in facsimile from a manuscript in India Office Library, G.W.J. Drewes and P. Voorhoeve, eds. ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1958), p. 13.; *Taj al-Salathin* (Eijsinga), pp. 73-74.; (Jusuf), pp. 42-43.; (Hussain), pp. 75-76.

⁷⁷ For further details, see Hadi, *Islam and State*, pp. 147-166.

proponent of the doctrine and the student of Ḥamzah al-Fanshûrî. In another case, al-Rânîri had to leave Aceh in 1644 because he had lost the queen's patronage.⁷⁸

Being the holder of the title *khalîfat Allâh*, who possessed both political and religious authority, one would expect that the ruler was himself/herself acted as the interpreter of the Islamic law; or at least the ruler claimed to have the rights to do so. Yet, it was not the case at all. It was the '*ulamâ*' who emerged as the authoritative interpreters of the Islamic law in the country within the hierarchy of the '*ulamâ*', from that of the *shaykh al-Islam* at the pinnacle of the hierarchy down to *muftîs*, *qâdîs*, and *faqîhs*. Islamic law was indeed in practice in the state, yet *adat* law was also in effect. The Islamic penal law was implemented in the state, including *qishâsh* for committing homicide, *hudûd* punishment for the crimes of *zînâ* (unlawful sexual intercourse), *khamr* (drinking alcohol), *sariqah* (theft) and *qath' ath-tharîq* (highway robbery), and *ta'zîr* (reprimand, chastisement).⁷⁹ Yet, *adat* law was also in practice. The co-existence of both Islamic law and the *adat*/traditional law was shown in the Sarakata of Sulthân Shams al-Âlam issued in 1726 in which the Qâdhî Malik al-Âdil, Orang Kaya Sri Paduka Tuan, Orang Kaya Raja Bandhara, and all *faqîhs* were ordered to apply Islamic law in certain areas, instead of *adat* law.⁸⁰ In addition to the laws mentioned above, there was another type of law which was in effect, known as the 'traditional royal punishment'. This type of penalties were decreed by the ruler at his/her own whim and directed to crimes outside of Islamic jurisdiction, involving offences against royal regulations, including the violation of etiquette, royal commands and other. Yet, since no written regulations have come down to us, the exact laws on such issues are unknown. Augustin de Beaulieu speaks of a case when a former Acehnese ambassador to the Netherlands, who had long been away from his home, was unaware of the royal rules. One of those rules was that touching or cutting leaves or branches of any plant before the palace was considered a crime, and therefore those who violated the rule would be harshly punished. It was this kind of rule that the ambassador broke. He was found tampering with the reeds in the court complex that he was finally sentenced to death.⁸¹ Imposing harsh and arbitrary punishments were attributed not only under the

⁷⁸ For more discussion on this matter, see Hadi, *Islam and State*, pp. 157.

⁷⁹ Hadi, *Islam and State*, pp. 167-180.

⁸⁰ K.F.H. van Langen, "De inrichting van het Atjhesche staatbestuur onder het Sultanat." *BKI* 34 (1888), pp. 440-441.; Tuanku Abdul Jalil, *Adat Meukuta Alam* (Banda Aceh: Pusat Dokumentasi dan Informasi Aceh, 1991), pp. 20-21.

⁸¹ Augustin de Baeulieu, "The Expedition of Commodore Beaulieu to the East Indies," in John Harris, ed., *Navigatum atque Itinerantium Bibliotheca, or A Complete Collection of Voyages*, Vol. 1 (London, 1764), pp. 734, 744.; see also William Marsden, *The History of Sumatra*, a reprint of the 3rd ed. and introd. by John Bastin (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 446.

rule of Sulthân Iskandar Muda, but also under the administration of al-Mukammil (d. 1604)⁸² and Iskandar Thâni (d. 1641).⁸³

In short, the laws which were in practice in Aceh at the time were basically ‘composite,’ consisting of two main elements. The *first* being the Islam law, which was widely enforced in the country under the jurisdiction of both the *qâdhî* in the religious court and *orang kaya* in the criminal court. The *second* was the *adat* law. In the seventeenth century, *adat* law meant both ‘traditional judicial practice’ and the ‘royal *adat*,’ which can be either in written form, known as *sarakata*, or unwritten. In many cases *sarakata* also retained certain Islamic legal quality. This being the case, “the boundaries between Islamic law as prescribed in the *fiqh* texts and the *adat* law became blurred.”⁸⁴ Being composite in nature the law in Aceh at the time explicitly derives from both Islam and the traditional *adat* law. This is indeed the nature of the Southeast Asian realm, in which the Islamic law goes hand in hand with *adat* law. While the former was under the auspices of the ‘*ulamâ*’, the latter was under the sovereign’s domain. This very reality suggests the harmonious relation between the Islamic law and the traditional type of law (*adat*). What does this fact has to say about the sovereign as ‘*khalîfat Allâh*’?

Above, discussion on the use of the title ‘*khalîfat Allâh*’ in the seventeenth century Aceh has been concisely provided. By this very title, the ruler claimed to have held both political and religious authority. While the sovereign indeed had the power in his/her hand, did he/she also had religious quality (knowledge), as the ‘*ulamâ*’ did, in his/her personality? In the Acehnese political culture of the seventeenth century the ruler’s claim of political and religious authority meant that both were united within the very term ‘*khalîfat Allâh*’ (the deputy of God). Both were inherently connected. The political authority constituted precondition through which the Islamic teachings could be fully implemented and just social ordered would be realized. This did not necessarily mean that the ruler had to master the religious knowledge as the ‘*ulamâ*’ did. This very concept is to be comprehended from the perspective of the Islamic theory of state which is based on the both ‘revelation’ and ‘reason’ mentioned earlier. It is interesting to follow here how the *Tâj al-Salathîn* portrays the position of a ruler being comparable to that of the Prophet. There are two aspects that matter to a ruler: the first being his/her relationship with God (*habl min Allâh*) and his/her relationship with his people (*habl min al-nâs*). In the first aspect, “the ruler is to be responsible in carrying out God’s teachings revealed through the Prophet Muhammad;

⁸² See John Davis, *The Voyages and Works of John Davis, the Navigator*, A.H. Markham, ed. (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1880) , p. 150.; James Lancaster, *The Voyages of Sir Lancaster to Brazil and the East Indies, 1591-1603*, Introd. and notes by Sir William Foster (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, 1940), p. 135.

⁸³ See, for instance, Peter Mundy, *The Travels of Peter Mundy in Europe and Asia, 1608-1667*, R.C. Temple, ed., Vol. 3, Pt. 1 (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1919) , p. 135.

⁸⁴ Hadi, *Islam and State*, pp. 183.

while in the second he is to treat his subjects with justice and full realization, and lead them to the implementation of God's religion. It is in this context that he is to be regarded as 'the real *khalîfat*'.⁸⁵ From this perspective the religious authority inherent in the title '*khalîfat Allâh*' can be best stated as a 'religiously sanctioned authority.' It can be ascertained at this point that the most important thing in this context was not divine learning itself, but "the aura of divinely sanctioned authority."⁸⁶

Conclusion

Perhaps, Aceh was not the only Islamic state which adopted the title '*khalîfat Allâh*'. As early as the fifteenth century the rulers of the Sultanate of Melaka adopted Islamic titles, including those of the '*khalîfat Allâh*' (the deputy of God) and '*zhill Allâh fî al-ardh*' (the shadow of God on earth).⁸⁷ The celebrated ruler of Mataram, Sulthân Agung (d. 1646) did not assume the title '*khalîfat Allâh*.' In the kingdom of Mataram it was Amangkurat IV (d. 1724) who first held the this title. This new title, according to Denys Lombard, had transformed the Javanese conception of their ruler from the traditional belief in magico-religious nature, which sees ruler as 'divine incarnation', to the 'deputy of God on earth'.⁸⁸ Aceh, as an Islamic kingdom and the champion of Islam in the Southeast Asian realm, adopted the title '*khalîfat Allâh*' in the seventeenth century.

The title '*khalîfat Allâh*' borne by the Aceh's rulers was similar to the one that was claimed by the Umayyads. Yet, there are several fundamental differences in the nature of the title itself and its underlying concept. In the first place the sultanate of Aceh, as al-Singkilî insists, was a *khilâfah* in its own right. The emergence of this regional (local) political entity was necessary as Muslims (*ummah*) scattered across vast areas; and the emergence of various Islamic political entities in the form of *khilâfah* was therefore justifiable. The *khilâfah* was intended as a vehicle through which God's religion can be implemented and a just social order prevails. From this perspective, the political entity was religious in nature. This sense of religiousness of the state was also shown by the title borne by its rulers, namely '*khalîfat Allâh*', meaning: 'the deputy of God.' This title was by nature universal, since it has been assumed by all the Prophets, from Adam to Muhammad. It was the missions of the Prophet Muhammad that were followed by the Muslims in this region: *political* and *religious*. Both are united under the person of Muhammad as the religious leader (religious authority) and a statesman (political authority).

⁸⁵ *Taj al-Salathin* (Eijsinga), pp. 66.; (Justuf), pp. 38-39; (Hussain), pp. 65-66.

⁸⁶ Hadi, *Islam and State*, pp. 64-65.

⁸⁷ *Sedjarah Melayu*, ed. by T.D. Situmorang and A. Teeuw (Djakarta: Djambatan, 1952), pp. 170, 204, 208, 268, 274.. *Sejarah Melayu or Malay Annals*, ed. and trans. C.C. Brown (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 1, 111, 148.

⁸⁸ Denys Lombard, *Nusa Jawa Silang Budaya*, vol. 3 (Jakarta: Gramedia, 2008), p. 65.

While the political authority of the ruler is clearly defined, the religious authority claimed by the sovereign needs to be viewed from the perspective of the ruler as being the executor of God's religion in his/her jurisdiction. Neither was the ruler to become the interpreter of the Islamic law nor was he/she an expert in religious matters. It was the 'ulamâ' who were the real interpreters of Islam in the state. That being the fact, the rulers need these scholars of Islam and gave them respect. Yet, the fate of the 'ulamâ' was under ruler's whim and mercy. Nevertheless, the harmonious relationship between the sovereign and the 'ulamâ' class was apparent in Aceh at the time. For the political authority was also religious in nature, the religious authority held by the ruler can best be depicted as 'a religiously sanctioned authority.'

Yet, it should be also borne in mind that the sultanate of Aceh was a political entity under the realm of the Southeast Asian world. The ruler was seen as the state's central figure, around whom all state's activities were concentrated and from whom all power originated. From a judicial perspective, he was the law-maker and the supreme judge. As a law-maker, for instance, the ruler imposed the *adat* law; and in many cases he/she even intervened in court verdicts. Yet, this does not necessarily suggest that the laws of the country were entirely subject to the ruler's discretion. Both Islam and non-royal *adat* were also the sources of laws in the country.

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