

CORRESPONDENCE

I

To the Editorial Board,

Publication of the review by Dr Yusof Talib of my *Bibliography of Malay and Arabic Periodicals* (JSEAS, V, 2) gives me an opportunity, if I may, to make addenda of my own, as well as to allude to some of the points made by Dr Talib. It may be useful, first, to record the known holdings in the United States and Canada of originals of publications listed in the *Bibliography*. They are all in the New York Public Library, and are as follow:

REAL ISLAM (No.62, p.41)

Vol.IV, Nos.3/4 (Aug./Sept. 1931), 5/6/7 (Oct./Nov./Dec. 1931), 8/9/10 (Jan./Feb./Mar. 1932), 11/12/13 (Apr./May/June 1932), 8/9/10 [*sic*] (July/Aug./Sept. 1932)

GENUINE ISLAM (No.122, p.51)

Vol.I, Nos.1-3, 5, 6/7, 8-12 (Jan.-Dec. 1936); Nos.1-6 (July-Dec. 1937); III, Nos. 3, 4/5, 6-12 (Mar.-Dec. 1938); IV, Nos.1-5, 6/7, 8-12 (Jan.-Dec. 1939); V, Nos. 1/2, 3/4, 5/6, 7/8, 9/10, 11/12 (Jan.-Dec. 1940); VI, Nos. 1-3 (June-Aug./Sept. 1941)

[Note: These supplement, substantially, the holdings listed in the *Bibliography*. There was a break in publication between December 1936 and June 1937, due to the absence in India of the first editor (not named in the *Bibliography*, Khalid Anvari, and his subsequent resignation. Vol.V, which is not extant elsewhere, was published bi-monthly instead of monthly, and there was a further (unexplained) break in publication between December 1940 and June 1941, the latter month misprinted in the *Bibliography* as January.]

VOICE OF ISLAM (No.140, pp.53-4)

Vol.I, Nos.1-4 (Oct.-Feb./Mar. 1938); II, No.1 (Jan./Feb. 1939)

PERTANDAAN ZAMAN

Vols.IX-XVIII complete, Nos.1-12, Jan.-Dec. annually, 1920-29; XIX, Nos.1-9 (Jan.-? Sept. 1930)

[Note: It is evident from the New York holdings that from XVIII, 4 (Aug. 1929) the journal was published from Bandung, when the editor (by then unnamed) moved there from Singapore. The holdings listed here are substantially more complete than those in the only other known repository, the British Museum.]

With respect to Dr Talib's review, and his energy in attempting to remedy "factual inaccuracies, lacunae and misinterpretations", I can perhaps say this. Interpretation is, of course, a matter of judgement, and where Dr Talib has understood my interpretations I tend to stand by them. Lacunae, in a bibliography of such fragmentary and ephemeral material as that with which we are dealing are, alas, inevitable, and one can only be grateful when someone is able to fill some of the gaps — even in cases where not all the information added may seem to be pertinent. Concerning the real or suggested errata, it is best for me to note the relevant instances systematically, as Dr Talib has done. Thus,

- No.5 STRAITS CHINESE HERALD The inaugural date was 1894 — a mis-transcription of my notes gave 1891.
No.21 AL-WATAN It was indeed an Arabic, not a Malay, paper, and I

- should have picked this up, even in the absence of holdings. Dr Talib's page reference to the S.S. *Government Gazette* should read 1457, not 1487.
- No.43 **KABAR KAWAT MELAYU** The inaugural date was 7 November 1924, not simply "late 1924" as I had hypothesized; and the editor was J.R. Charton. Incidentally, it seems likely that the first word in the title was spelt (it was a romanized "Baba" paper) with a *K* and not a *Kh*, as I have it.
- No.174 **AL-HUDA** There is no evidence that No. 138 was the last issue published. But that three out of the 138 extant issues have the year of publication misprinted on the front cover (1929 for 1931), though not within, is a true bibliographer's discovery.
- No.176 **AL-GISAS** My original notes do in fact have Jilani installed as editor by June 1933, not 1932, after a break in publication from mid or late February preceding. The position is, however, even more complicated than Dr Talib suggests, for the UM index catalogue used to show (and may still) the following holdings, since lost or mislaid: Vol.I, Nos.34–38, 40–53 (no dates); II, Nos.54–68, 90–102 (the last twelve seemingly dated 31 Aug.–30 Nov. 1933); III, Nos. 121–123, 125–126 (15 Oct. 1934–1 Jan. 1935). Because of their doubtfulness they were not referred to in the *Bibliography*, but the question is of interest.
- No.177 **AL-NAHDAH AL-HADRAMIYAH** The precise inaugural date in January (the 3rd) was inadvertently omitted — much the same sort of misadventure, no doubt, that has changed Dr Talib's S.S. *Government Gazette* page reference from 663 to 603.
- No.178 **AL-SHA'B AL-HADRAMI** It has been my practice throughout the *Bibliography* — and it seems a sound one of some importance — not to assert a terminal date for a journal unless the fact of termination at that date is somewhere evidenced, even though it may be tempting (as in the present case) to conclude that because the two existing runs of a journal end with the same issue, no other appeared thereafter. Dr Talib offers no evidence for supposing that No.16 was the last published issue at *al-Sha'b*.
- No.183 **AL-SALAM** Dr Talib takes me to task for saying that publication was monthly to October 1937, when in fact the October issue was some three weeks late. Apologies. More important, it seems to me, but unnoted, is my error in describing it as thrice-monthly after that date (a note made originally in relation to the limited UM holdings), when the BM holdings make clear that at least for a large part of Vol.II it was published something like fortnightly.

With reference to Nos. 184 and 188, *al-Mashhūr* and *al-Islāh*, the phrase "only known reference" (which occurs elsewhere in the *Bibliography*) denotes, of course, references known to the compiler, who is certainly not omniscient. I am grateful to Dr Talib for his additions, as others will be.

With reference to "the only known" Arabic paper not listed in the *Bibliography* (for which I am especially grateful — to the bibliographer new entries are as gold to the prospector), *al-Thamarāt*, I should perhaps give the details in full, in the format of the *Bibliography*, as Dr Talib mistakes the language of publication, the date of the first issue, and the editor's name.

AL-THAMARAT

Singapore; weekly; 23 December 1929 — [?] (Arabic and Malay)

Editor: Mahmood Bashir

Holdings:

[Note: The editor and publisher, Mahmood Bashir, is said by Yusof A. Talib (*JSEAS*, V, p.282) to have been an Egyptian who spent less than two years in

Singapore. He was assisted by Ma'roof b. Mohd. and S.B. Ahmad.]

Finally, with respect to the Arabic papers, Dr Talib is incorrect in stating that I have no knowledge of Arabic. And on one last point of "interpretation", I cannot resist a comment. It requires a narrow view of Islam, and of the role of Hadrami in Malay and Indonesian society, to be able to hold (as Dr Talib does) that the Arabic papers published from Singapore, filled as they are with the fierce and complex exchanges of the "Irshādi" dispute, are "not generally of interest to students of Islam in the region".

Columbia University, New York

William R. Roff

II

To the Editorial Board,

I thank you for showing me Prof. William R. Roff's rejoinder to my review of his *Bibliography on Arabic and Malay Periodicals 1876–1941*, OUP London 1972, which appeared in your *Journal of South East Asian Studies*, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 279–281. I have gone through it and have the following observations to make:

Lacunae and factual inaccuracies in Prof. Roff's Bibliography 'alas' are *not* 'inevitable'. The truth is that he has not consulted assiduously the Straits Settlement Government Gazette (the standard reference work on the subject) when he compiled and published his Bibliography. Had he done so, he would have easily avoided most of the lacunae and factual errors listed in my review of his work.

No. 5, Roff's rejoinder: If the error indicated here concerning the date of publication has been caused by a mistranscription of Prof. Roff's notes, how was it that he ignored the editor's name found in Straits Settlement Government Gazette, 20th April, 1884?

No. 21, Roff's rejoinder: In the introduction to his *Bibliography* (footnote 1, pg. 6), one finds "nothing at all is known of the fortnightly Al-Watan, which was probably not a 'news' paper, and may even have been in Arabic". It is interesting to note here in relation to the language of publication a "may even have been" becomes now an "indeed". Consequently, he was not aware of the name of the editor and the precise date of publication (c.f. *Bibliography*, pg. 33). The error regarding my page reference has already been pointed out (see my letter dated 4th January, 1975 to the Editor of the *Journal of South East Asian Studies*).

No. 43, Roff's rejoinder: There is no acknowledgement for my having pointed out the exact date of publication (7th Nov. 1924) as well as the name of the editor. Prof. Roff in his *Bibliography* (page 37) indicates the following: Singapore; weekly; [? late 1924]–[? 1925], Editor: _____.

No. 174, Roff's rejoinder: The corrected dates for nos. 73, 74, 75 should read 17th October 1932, 24th October 1932, 31st October 1932 respectively and not 17th October 1931, 24th October 1931 and 31st October 1931. (see my letter dated 4th Jan. 1975 to the Editor of *Journal of South East Asian Studies*).

No. 176, Roff's rejoinder: One can only review that which is published and not someone's "original notes". In any case, it appears odd that the year 1932 is repeated three times for it to have been an error. If Prof. Roff had indeed "discovered" from his "original notes" that there was a break in publication from mid February, he should have equally pointed out the duration of Faraj b. Talib's editorship and that this newspaper was semi monthly until no. 27 and only a weekly as from no. 28 onwards.

No. 177, Roff's rejoinder: This has indeed been a mistake on my part regarding my page reference and therefore I have no need to refer to my "original notes" to prove that it was a mistranscription.

No. 184, Roff's rejoinder: Here it is not only a question of reference but also one of precise information on the subject. Roff in his *Bibliography* (pp. 60) has the following: Singapore; ? frequency; [? December 1938]. As usual, no acknowledgement on his part for my having pointed this out.

No. 188, Roff's rejoinder: Here Roff (*Bibliography* pp. 60–61) is pretty uncertain. He does not know whether it was published in Singapore as well as the frequency and dates of publication. He even went further to state that it is just possible that it is an early paper "and that there is also the possibility that the latter journal is being confused with the Malay language — Al-Imam" (1906–9). Here again there is no discussion or statement on my having given more information on this paper but only calculated silence.

Roff's rejoinder: I have not mistaken the language of publication of the newspaper Al-Thamarāt as indicated by Prof. Roff. The Straits Settlement Government Gazette (10th Jan. 1930, page 49) gives Arabic and Malay as the languages of publication. However, I was informed by members of my family who knew the editor M. Bashir and have read his newspaper that it was in Arabic and not Malay. Only the existence of holdings can confirm or contradict this information. I acknowledge the mistake for having transcribed Muhammad for Mahmood as well as the month of publication and have no excuses to give for them.

No. 91, Roff's bibliography (page 62): Again no acknowledgement on my having pointed out the precise date of publication and the name of the editor as found in the Straits Settlement Government Gazette, 19th July 1895, page 743.

I will reiterate here my view that these Arabic newspapers published in Singapore are not generally of interest to students of Islam in the region since they were mainly preoccupied with communal matters.

A perusal of these newspapers will show that a large space is devoted in their columns to items dealing with the socio-economic and political realities of a migrant minority community as well as its nostalgic links with their country of origin — the Hadramawt. [These various aspects will be given a full treatment in my forthcoming article: "The Arabic Newspapers of Singapore".]

The 'Alawi-Irshādi and not just the Irshādi conflict alluded to by Prof. Roff is basically an ideological struggle for power between rival "conservative" and "progressive" factions of the Ḥaḍrami communities in Singapore and the Netherland East Indies.

Most of the quarrel centred around certain ritualistic aspects of the stratified social structure of the Ḥaḍramawt. It became later on closely identified with the intricacies of Peninsular Arab politics. [The 'Alawis were generally pro-Imam Yaḥya of the Yemen and the Irshādis were pro-King Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia.] This conflict has generated a wealth of documentation especially in Arabic and to a lesser extent in Dutch and English. It is to be found not only in the local Arabic newspapers but also in British and Dutch colonial archives, Ḥaḍrami family records, rare lithograph copies of speeches, fatwas, journals etc. Between the two wars and after a few general works reflecting views of both sides as well as a survey of the Arabic press of the Netherlands East Indies have been published. ["Schrieke 1920, S. Bakri 1935–36, R. B. Sergeant 1957, and A. S. Bujra 1967/71".]

Finally in respect to the role of the Hadramis in Malay and Indonesian societies, one must make a distinction between their potential and the real influence they exercised within these societies.