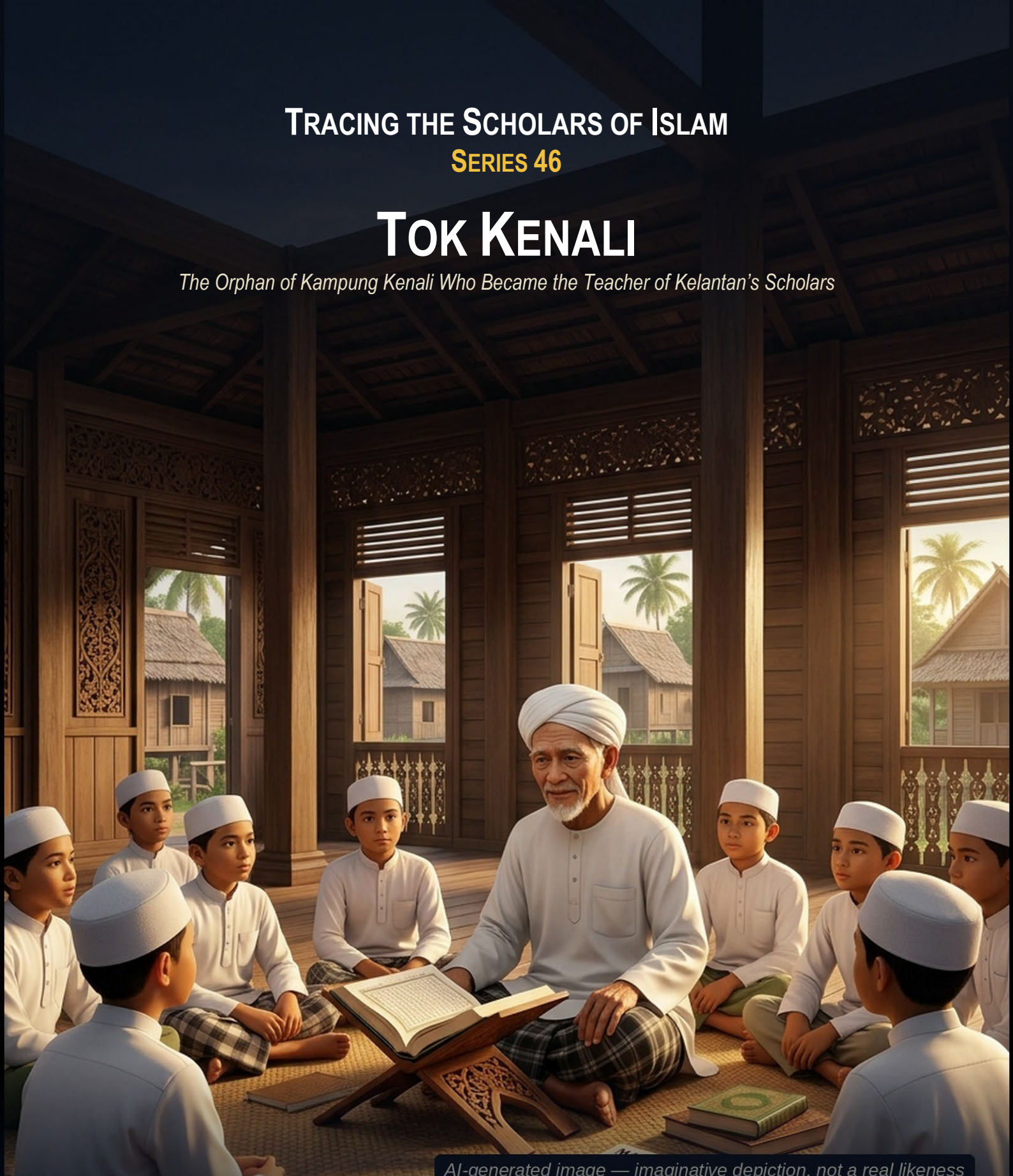
Tracing the Scholars of Islam

Series 46

Tok Kenali

The Orphan of Kampung Kenali Who Became the Teacher of Kelantan's Scholars



AI-generated image — imaginative depiction, not a real likeness

Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron
AK (Kelantan)
quranscience.my

© 2026 CE / 1448 AH Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron AK (Kelantan) • quranscience.my • @QuranDanSains
This eBook is FREE for Muslims — not for sale.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

TRACING THE SCHOLARS OF ISLAM

SERIES 46

TOK KENALI

The Orphan of Kampung Kenali Who Became the Teacher of Kelantan's Scholars

وَٱلَّذِينَ جَٰهَدُوا۟ فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا ۚ وَإِنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَمَعَ ٱلْمُحْسِنِينَ

"And those who strive for Us - We will surely guide them to Our ways. And indeed, Allah is with the doers of good."

SURAH AL-'ANKABUT 29:69

HJ CHE ALIM HJ CHE HARON

quranscience.my | @QuranDanSains

© 2026 CE / 1448 AH quranscience.my — free eBook. Not for sale.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All praise is due to Allah, who guides to His ways those who strive for Him. Blessings and peace be upon the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and upon his family and his Companions.

This eBook is specially dedicated to my beloved wife,

ZAHARAH MOHD LATIF;

my dear children,

MUHAMMAD HAFIZ, NOOR HAZWANI, ABDUL HAKIM, NOOR HIDAYAH, NOR AQILA and **NOR ATIQAH**;

and my sons- and daughters-in-law,

FAZILAH, MALEK, HANIN, FAIRIZAL and **FIRWAN**.

This forty-sixth book of Tracing the Scholars of Islam tells the story of Haji Muhammad Yusuf ibn Ahmad, known as Tok Kenali — an orphan from a Kelantan village who studied for 22 years in Mecca, then came home to open a pondok and train a generation of scholars. May his story teach us to strive in seeking knowledge even when we have little.

© 2026 CE / 1448 AH All Rights Reserved Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron — Free for Muslims

ABOUT THE COVER OF THIS EBOOK

The cover of this eBook is an **AI-generated image** — an ***imaginative depiction, not the real likeness*** of Tok Kenali. This label is also printed on the cover. An elderly teacher in a white turban, with a thin beard and a gentle face, sits cross-legged on a ***mengkuang mat***, teaching from ***a book open on a carved wooden reading stand***.

Around him sits ***a circle of pondok students*** in white shirts, white caps and checked sarongs — a symbol of ***the hundreds of students*** who came to study with him from the Peninsula, Patani, Sumatra and Cambodia.

The setting is ***a traditional timber mosque of Kelantan*** with tall pillars and carved panels, its windows open onto ***coconut palms and thatched village houses*** in the late afternoon. On the mat lie ***books and a magazine*** — a reminder of ***the Pengasuh magazine*** he led.

© 2026 CE / 1448 AH All Rights Reserved Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron — Free for Muslims

CONTENTS

TOK KENALI — *Introducing the scholar*

1. THOSE WHO STRIVE — *al-'Ankabut 29:69; al-Baqarah 2:286*

2. RECITE IN THE NAME OF YOUR LORD — *al-'Alaq 96:1–5; Sahih al-Bukhari 100*

3. BACKGROUND: KELANTAN IN THE 19TH CENTURY — *History note*

4. THE ORPHAN OF KAMPUNG KENALI — *ad-Duha 93:6–9; Sahih al-Bukhari 5304*

5. TOK LEH: HIS FIRST TEACHER — *Sahih al-Bukhari 5027*

6. WALKING IN SEARCH OF KNOWLEDGE — *Sahih Muslim 2699*

7. TO MECCA AT EIGHTEEN — *Figure: journeys*

8. TOK KENALI'S TEACHERS — *Figure: teachers*

9. TO CAIRO AND AL-AZHAR — *Sahih al-Bukhari 71*

10. RETURNING TO TEACH HIS PEOPLE — *at-Tawbah 9:122*

11. PONDOK TOK KENALI — *Sahih al-Bukhari 13*

12. TEACHING AT THE STATE MOSQUE OF KOTA BHARU — *al-Mujadilah 58:11*

13. THE ISLAMIC COUNCIL OF KELANTAN — *Al 'Imran 3:104*

14. THE PENGASUH MAGAZINE — *al-Qalam 68:1*

15. CHANGE YOURSELVES TO CHANGE A PEOPLE — *ar-Ra'd 13:11*

16. A SIMPLE LIFE — *al-Qasas 28:77; Sahih al-Bukhari 6416, 6412*

17. STUDENTS AND INSTITUTIONS — *Figure: students*

18. CONVEY AND INVITE — *an-Nahl 16:125; Sahih al-Bukhari 3461*

19. KNOWLEDGE TAKEN AWAY WITH THE SCHOLARS — *Timeline*

20. ESTABLISHED REPORTS AND POPULAR STORIES — *al-Isra' 17:36*

21. HIS DEATH AND LEGACY — *al-Baqarah 2:156; Sahih al-Bukhari 1*

22. LESSONS AND CONCLUSION — *Twelve lessons*

GLOSSARY AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

REFERENCES

SUPPORT & DONATIONS

Colour guide: green box = verses of the Qur'an; gold box = Hadith; brown box = history note (reports from the books of history and biography); blue table = comparison. Underlined blue narrator names can be clicked to open the narrator's page on sunnah.com.

© 2026 CE / 1448 AH All Rights Reserved Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron — Free for Muslims

TOK KENALI

The forty-sixth book of **Tracing the Scholars of Islam** tells the story of ***Haji Muhammad Yusuf ibn Ahmad*** (1868–1933 CE), better known as ***Tok Kenali***, after his village, ***Kampung Kenali*** in Kubang Kerian, Kelantan.

He was ***an orphan from a poor farming family*** who studied ***for 22 years in Mecca***, then came home to open ***Pondok Tok Kenali***. By the mid-1920s his pondok had ***more than 300 students***, and he served as ***honorary chief editor*** of the ***Pengasuh*** magazine.

This eBook explains ***the verses on striving and knowledge***, the background of 19th-century Kelantan, his journeys to ***Mecca and Cairo***, ***Pondok Tok Kenali***, his role in ***the Islamic Council of Kelantan*** and ***Pengasuh***, and his students and legacy.

Note: The translation of Qur'anic verses in this eBook is that of Sahih International. The grading of each Hadith is stated in the Hadith box. Information from books of history and modern research is **biographical narration (not Hadith)** *and is placed in the brown "History Note" boxes. The cover image is an AI-generated image and is marked as such. The popular stories of miracles (karamah) told about him are not treated as fact in this eBook.*

© 2026 CE / 1448 AH All Rights Reserved Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron — Free for Muslims

THOSE WHO STRIVE

SURAH AL-'ANKABUT 29:69

وَٱلَّذِينَ جَٰهَدُواْ فِينَا لَنَهۡدِيَنَّهُمۡ سُبُلَنَاۚ وَإِنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَمَعَ ٱلۡمُحۡسِنِينَ ٦٩

And those who strive for Us - We will surely guide them to Our ways. And indeed, Allah is with the doers of good.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/29:69

Allah promises: ***"And those who strive for Us - We will surely guide them to Our ways"***. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 29:69.

This verse is the ***motto*** of this eBook because Tok Kenali's life is a story of ***striving***: a poor orphan who walked to his lessons and persevered for ***22 years*** abroad until he became the teacher of a generation of scholars.

ACCORDING TO ONE'S CAPACITY

Allah says (2:286): ***"Allah does not charge a soul except [with that within] its capacity"***. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 2:286.

STRIVING	EXAMPLES FROM TOK KENALI'S LIFE
Striving despite poverty	Studying without wealth, on very little.
Striving despite distance	Walking to Kota Bharu; sailing to Mecca.
Striving over a long time	22 years of study in the Sacred Land.
Striving to teach	Hundreds of students and a generation of scholars.

© 2026 CE / 1448 AH All Rights Reserved Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron — Free for Muslims

RECITE IN THE NAME OF YOUR LORD

SURAH AL-'ALAQ 96:1–5

ٱقۡرَأۡ بِٱسۡمِ رَبِّكَ ٱلَّذِي خَلَقَ ١

Recite in the name of your Lord who created.

خَلَقَ ٱلۡإِنسَٰنَ مِنۡ عَلَقٍ ٢

Created man from a clinging substance.

ٱقۡرَأۡ وَرَبُّكَ ٱلۡأَكۡرَمُ ٣

Recite, and your Lord is the most Generous.

ٱلَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِٱلۡقَلَمِ ٤

Who taught by the pen?

عَلَّمَ ٱلۡإِنسَٰنَ مَا لَمۡ يَعۡلَمۡ ٥

Taught man that which he knew not.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/96:1-5

The first revelation begins with the command: ***"Recite in the name of your Lord who created"***. Allah is the One ***"Who taught by the pen"***. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 96:1.

Tok Kenali began by ***reciting the Qur'an*** before his grandfather, and ended as a teacher who ***wrote*** in the Pengasuh magazine. Both ***reading and writing*** are paths of knowledge taught in these verses.

© 2026 CE / 1448 AH All Rights Reserved Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron — Free for Muslims

KNOWLEDGE TAKEN AWAY WITH THE SCHOLARS

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 100 (MUTTAFAQ 'ALAIH)

حَدَّثَنَا إِسْمَاعِيلُ بْنُ أَبِي أُوَيْسٍ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنِي مَالِكٌ، عَنْ هِشَامِ بْنِ عُرْوَةَ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَمْرِو بْنِ الْعَاصِ، قَالَ سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم يَقُولُ «إِنَّ اللَّهَ لاَ يَقْبِضُ الْعِلْمَ انْتِزَاعًا، يَنْتَزِعُهُ مِنَ الْعِبَادِ، وَلَكِنْ يَقْبِضُ الْعِلْمَ بِقَبْضِ الْعُلَمَاءِ، حَتَّى إِذَا لَمْ يُبْقِ عَالِمًا، اتَّخَذَ النَّاسُ رُءُوسًا جُهَّالاً فَسُئِلُوا، فَأَفْتَوْا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ، فَضَلُّوا وَأَضَلُّوا». قَالَ الْفِرَبْرِيُّ حَدَّثَنَا عَبَّاسٌ قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا قُتَيْبَةُ حَدَّثَنَا جَرِيرٌ عَنْ هِشَامٍ نَحْوَهُ.

TRANSLATION:

'Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'As رضى الله عنهما said: I heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say: **"Allah does not take away knowledge by snatching it from His servants, but He takes away knowledge by taking away the scholars, until, when no scholar remains, people take ignorant leaders. They are asked and they give rulings without knowledge; so they go astray and lead others astray."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Isma'il ibn Abi Uways, from Imam Malik, from Hisham ibn 'Urwah, from his father, 'Urwah ibn az-Zubayr, from 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'As رضى الله عنهما.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Knowledge, Hadith No. 100. Also narrated by Muslim (No. 2673).

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:100

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

Knowledge does not vanish suddenly, but ***with the death of the scholars***. So every generation must ***raise new scholars*** — and this is what Tok Kenali did through his pondok.

© 2026 CE / 1448 AH All Rights Reserved Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron — Free for Muslims

BACKGROUND: KELANTAN IN THE 19TH CENTURY

Kelantan lies on the north-east coast of the Malay Peninsula. It has long been known for its tradition of ***pondok*** and scholars, so much so that it was called ***"the Verandah of Mecca" (Serambi Mekah)***.

HISTORY NOTE: KELANTAN IN TOK KENALI'S TIME

In the 19th century CE, Kelantan was under ***Siamese suzerainty***, like Patani (Book 44). Through ***the Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1909***, Kelantan, Terengganu, Kedah and Perlis were transferred to ***British influence***.

In this era, many sons of Kelantan studied in ***Patani and Mecca*** and came home to open pondok. The ties of learning between Kelantan, Patani and Mecca were very close.

REFERENCES:

Wikipedia, "Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1909". https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglo-Siamese_Treaty_of_1909

THE CHAIN OF JAWI SCHOLARS	IN THIS SERIES
Shaykh Daud al-Fatani	Book 44 — the Patani scholar of Mecca.
Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani	Book 45 — Master of the Scholars of the Hijaz.
Shaykh Ahmad al-Fatani	Tok Kenali's main teacher in Mecca.
Tok Kenali	Book 46 — teacher of Kelantan's scholars.

© 2026 CE / 1448 AH All Rights Reserved Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron — Free for Muslims

THE ORPHAN OF KAMPUNG KENALI

Tok Kenali was born in ***1868 CE*** in ***Kampung Kenali, Kubang Kerian***, about four miles from Kota Bharu. His father, ***Ahmad***, was a ***poor farmer*** who died when he was ***five years old***.

He was then raised by ***his maternal grandfather***, ***Che Salih*** — known as ***Tok Leh***. Source: patanistudies.com. https://patanistudies.com/ulama/muhammad-yusuf-b-ahmad-1868-1933/

SURAH AD-DUHA 93:6

أَلَمْ يَجِدْكَ يَتِيمًا فَـَٔاوَىٰ ٦

Did He not find you an orphan and give [you] refuge?

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/93:6

Allah reminds the Messenger ﷺ: ***"Did He not find you an orphan and give [you] refuge?"*** Tafsir Ibn Kathir 93:6.

© 2026 CE / 1448 AH All Rights Reserved Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron — Free for Muslims

HONOURING THE ORPHAN

Allah says (93:9): ***"So as for the orphan, do not oppress [him]"***. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 93:9.

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 5304

حَدَّثَنَا عَمْرُو بْنُ زُرَارَةَ، أَخْبَرَنَا عَبْدُ الْعَزِيزِ بْنُ أَبِي حَازِمٍ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ سَهْلٍ، قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم «أَنَا وَكَافِلُ الْيَتِيمِ فِي الْجَنَّةِ هَكَذَا». وَأَشَارَ بِالسَّبَّابَةِ وَالْوُسْطَى، وَفَرَّجَ بَيْنَهُمَا شَيْئًا.

TRANSLATION:

Sahl ibn Sa'd رضى الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: **"I and the one who cares for an orphan will be in Paradise like this"** — and he pointed with his index and middle fingers, keeping a little space between them.

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from 'Amr ibn Zurarah, from 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn Abi Hazim, from his father Abu Hazim Salamah ibn Dinar, from Sahl ibn Sa'd as-Sa'idi رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Divorce (Kitab at-Talaq), Hadith No. 5304.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:5304

Tok Leh, who raised his orphaned grandson, did a deed of great honour. Who would have thought that the orphan would one day become ***the teacher of hundreds of students***?

© 2026 CE / 1448 AH All Rights Reserved Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron — Free for Muslims

TOK LEH: HIS FIRST TEACHER

Tok Leh did not only raise Tok Kenali; he was also ***his first teacher of the Qur'an***. In his grandfather's house, he learned ***to recite the Qur'an*** before studying other sciences.

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 5027

حَدَّثَنَا حَجَّاجُ بْنُ مِنْهَالٍ، حَدَّثَنَا شُعْبَةُ، قَالَ أَخْبَرَنِي عَلْقَمَةُ بْنُ مَرْثَدٍ، سَمِعْتُ سَعْدَ بْنَ عُبَيْدَةَ، عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ السُّلَمِيِّ، عَنْ عُثْمَانَ ـ رضى الله عنه ـ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ «خَيْرُكُمْ مَنْ تَعَلَّمَ الْقُرْآنَ وَعَلَّمَهُ». قَالَ وَأَقْرَأَ أَبُو عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ فِي إِمْرَةِ عُثْمَانَ حَتَّى كَانَ الْحَجَّاجُ، قَالَ وَذَاكَ الَّذِي أَقْعَدَنِي مَقْعَدِي هَذَا.

TRANSLATION:

'Uthman رضى الله عنه reported that the Prophet ﷺ said: **"The best of you are those who learn the Qur'an and teach it."** (Sa'd ibn 'Ubaydah) said: Abu 'Abd ar-Rahman (as-Sulami) taught the Qur'an from the caliphate of 'Uthman until the time of al-Hajjaj, and he said: "That is what has kept me sitting in this seat of mine."

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Hajjaj ibn Minhal, from Shu'bah, from 'Alqamah ibn Marthad, from Sa'd ibn 'Ubaydah, from Abu 'Abd ar-Rahman as-Sulami, from 'Uthman ibn 'Affan رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of the Virtues of the Qur'an, Hadith No. 5027.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:5027

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

Those who ***teach the Qur'an*** are among the best of people. A grandfather who teaches his grandson to recite the Qur'an may be unknown to history, but ***his reward flows on*** through everyone who learns from that grandson.

© 2026 CE / 1448 AH All Rights Reserved Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron — Free for Muslims

THE HOME AS THE FIRST SCHOOL

STAGE	TEACHER AND PLACE
Childhood	Tok Leh (Che Salih), his grandfather, in Kenali.
Youth	The teachers of the Kota Bharu mosque.
Kelantan	Haji Wan Isma'il and Haji Ibrahim (Sungai Budur).
Age 18	The scholars of Mecca.

Like Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani (Book 45), Tok Kenali's education began ***at home***, with family members who loved knowledge.

© 2026 CE / 1448 AH All Rights Reserved Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron — Free for Muslims

WALKING IN SEARCH OF KNOWLEDGE

As a youth, Tok Kenali ***walked about four miles, twice a day***, to attend classes at ***the Kota Bharu mosque***. Source: patanistudies.com.

HISTORY NOTE: THE STRIVING OF A POOR STUDENT

He had no wealth and no transport. Yet ***determination*** carried him every day from Kenali to Kota Bharu to study with the teachers at the mosque.

Four miles is ***about 6.4 km***. Going and returning twice a day means he may have walked ***well over ten kilometres*** a day for the sake of knowledge — and every step was ***a path to Paradise***, as in the following Hadith.

REFERENCES:

Patani Studies, "Muhammad Yusuf b. Ahmad (1868–1933)". https://patanistudies.com/ulama/muhammad-yusuf-b-ahmad-1868-1933/

THE PATH TO PARADISE

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 2699

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ يَحْيَى التَّمِيمِيُّ، وَأَبُو بَكْرِ بْنُ أَبِي شَيْبَةَ وَمُحَمَّدُ بْنُ الْعَلاَءِ الْهَمْدَانِيُّ - وَاللَّفْظُ لِيَحْيَى - قَالَ يَحْيَى أَخْبَرَنَا وَقَالَ الآخَرَانِ، حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو مُعَاوِيَةَ، عَنِ الأَعْمَشِ، عَنْ أَبِي صَالِحٍ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم «مَنْ نَفَّسَ عَنْ مُؤْمِنٍ كُرْبَةً مِنْ كُرَبِ الدُّنْيَا نَفَّسَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ كُرْبَةً مِنْ كُرَبِ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ وَمَنْ يَسَّرَ عَلَى مُعْسِرٍ يَسَّرَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالآخِرَةِ وَمَنْ سَتَرَ مُسْلِمًا سَتَرَهُ اللَّهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالآخِرَةِ وَاللَّهُ فِي عَوْنِ الْعَبْدِ مَا كَانَ الْعَبْدُ فِي عَوْنِ أَخِيهِ وَمَنْ سَلَكَ طَرِيقًا يَلْتَمِسُ فِيهِ عِلْمًا سَهَّلَ اللَّهُ لَهُ بِهِ طَرِيقًا إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ وَمَا اجْتَمَعَ قَوْمٌ فِي بَيْتٍ مِنْ بُيُوتِ اللَّهِ يَتْلُونَ كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَيَتَدَارَسُونَهُ بَيْنَهُمْ إِلاَّ نَزَلَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّكِينَةُ وَغَشِيَتْهُمُ الرَّحْمَةُ وَحَفَّتْهُمُ الْمَلاَئِكَةُ وَذَكَرَهُمُ اللَّهُ فِيمَنْ عِنْدَهُ وَمَنْ بَطَّأَ بِهِ عَمَلُهُ لَمْ يُسْرِعْ بِهِ نَسَبُهُ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Whoever relieves a believer of one of the hardships of this world, Allah will relieve him of one of the hardships of the Day of Resurrection. Whoever makes things easy for one in difficulty, Allah will make things easy for him in this world and the Hereafter. Whoever covers the faults of a Muslim, Allah will cover his faults in this world and the Hereafter. Allah helps

© 2026 CE / 1448 AH All Rights Reserved Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron — Free for Muslims

His servant as long as the servant helps his brother. **Whoever follows a path in search of knowledge, Allah will make easy for him a path to Paradise.** No people gather in one of the houses of Allah, reciting the Book of Allah and studying it among themselves, except that tranquillity descends upon them, mercy covers them, the angels surround them, and Allah mentions them among those who are with Him. And whoever is held back by his deeds will not be hastened forward by his lineage."

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Yahya ibn Yahya at-Tamimi, Abu Bakr ibn Abi Shaybah and Muhammad ibn al-'Ala' al-Hamdani, from Abu Mu'awiyah, from al-A'mash, from Abu Salih, from Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Remembrance, Supplication, Repentance and Seeking Forgiveness, chapter on the virtue of gathering to recite the Qur'an and remember Allah, Hadith No. 2699a.

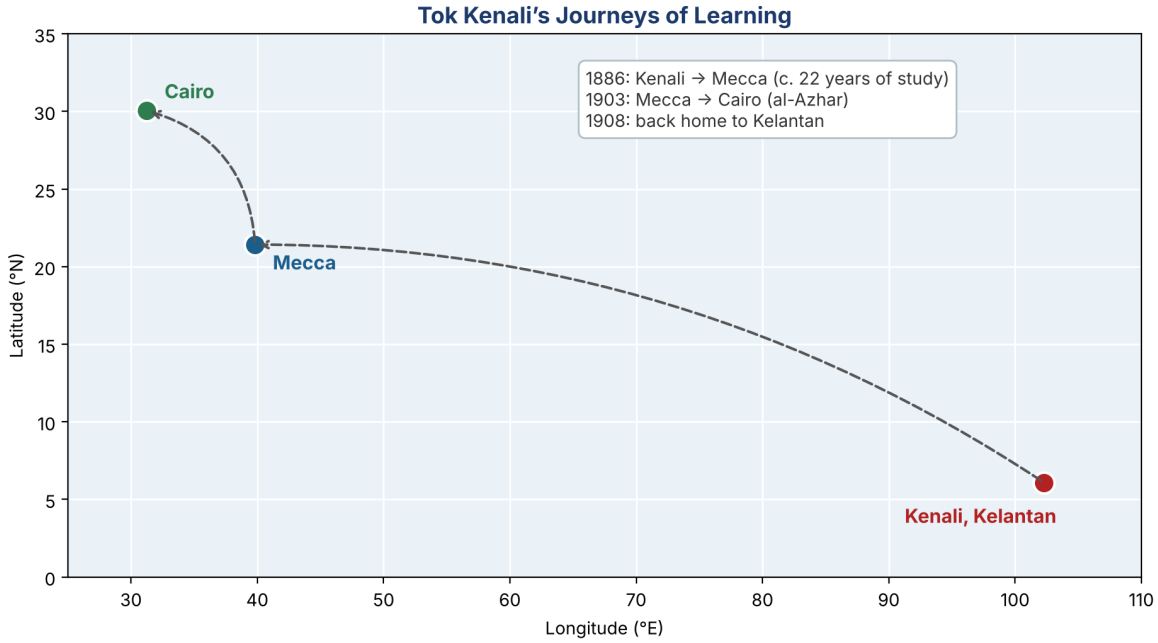
GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim, the second most authentic book of Hadith after Sahih al-Bukhari.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:2699a

© 2026 CE / 1448 AH All Rights Reserved Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron — Free for Muslims

TO MECCA AT EIGHTEEN

In ***1886 CE***, at ***the age of 18***, Tok Kenali sailed to ***Mecca***. He studied there for ***about 22 years*** — nearly half his adult life. Source: Britannica. https://www.britannica.com/biography/Tok-Kenali



Approximate positions. Straight-line distance Kenali–Mecca about 6,910 km; Mecca–Cairo about 1,290 km (calculated).

Figure 1: Tok Kenali's journeys of learning (approximate positions).

The straight-line distance from Kenali to Mecca is ***about 6,910 km***, and the qiblah direction from Kenali is ***about 291°*** from north (calculated from coordinates).

© 2026 CE / 1448 AH All Rights Reserved Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron — Free for Muslims

HISTORY NOTE: THE LIFE OF A JAWI STUDENT IN MECCA

Like other Jawi students, Tok Kenali lived ***in hardship*** in Mecca. He studied with teachers from Patani, Kelantan and Arabia, in al-Masjid al-Haram and in his teachers' homes.

He became ***the star student*** of Shaykh Ahmad ibn Muhammad Zayn al-Fatani, a famous Patani scholar in Mecca.

REFERENCES:

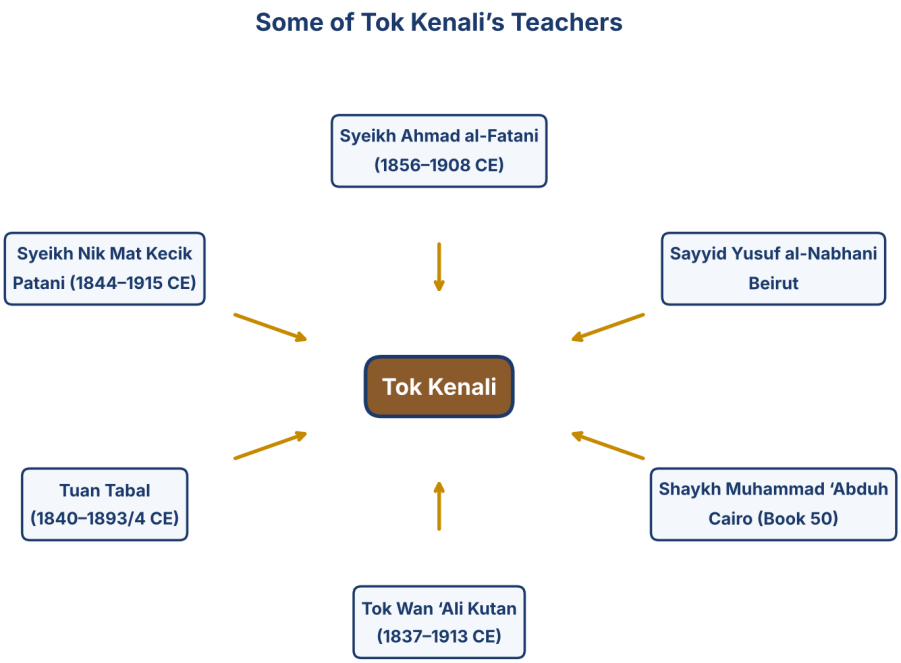
Patani Studies, "Muhammad Yusuf b. Ahmad (1868–1933)". https://patanistudies.com/ulama/muhammad-yusuf-b-ahmad-1868-1933/

YEAR	TOK KENALI ABROAD
1886 CE	Arrives in Mecca, aged 18.
1886–1903 CE	Studies with scholars of Patani, Kelantan and Arabia.
1903 CE	Taken to Cairo by Shaykh Ahmad al-Fatani.
1908 CE	Returns to Kelantan.

© 2026 CE / 1448 AH All Rights Reserved Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron — Free for Muslims

TOK KENALI'S TEACHERS

Tok Kenali studied with ***many teachers***, in Kelantan, Mecca and Cairo. The figure below shows some of them.



Source: patanistudies.com. Arrows: knowledge flowing from teacher to student.

Figure 2: Some of Tok Kenali's teachers.

© 2026 CE / 1448 AH All Rights Reserved Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron — Free for Muslims

HISTORY NOTE: SHAYKH AHMAD AL-FATANI

Shaykh Ahmad ibn Muhammad Zayn al-Fatani (1856–1908 CE) was a Patani scholar in Mecca, skilled in many sciences, and involved in ***editing and printing Jawi books*** in Mecca.

He saw Tok Kenali's talent and made him ***his favourite student***. In 1903 he took Tok Kenali to ***Cairo***.

REFERENCES:

Patani Studies, "Muhammad Yusuf b. Ahmad (1868–1933)". https://patanistudies.com/ulama/muhammad-yusuf-b-ahmad-1868-1933/

TEACHER	NOTES
Shaykh Nik Mat Kecik al-Fatani	Scholar of Patani (1844–1915 CE).
Tuan Tabal	Scholar of Kelantan (1840–1893/4 CE).
Tok Wan 'Ali Kutan	Scholar of Kelantan (1837–1913 CE).
Sayyid Yusuf an-Nabhani	Scholar in Beirut.

© 2026 CE / 1448 AH All Rights Reserved Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron — Free for Muslims

TO CAIRO AND AL-AZHAR

In ***1903 CE***, Shaykh Ahmad al-Fatani took Tok Kenali to ***Cairo, Egypt***, to deepen his learning around ***al-Azhar***. According to patanistudies.com, there he also studied with ***Shaykh Muhammad 'Abduh*** — the subject of ***Book 50***.

HISTORY NOTE: CAIRO IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY

Cairo was then a lively centre of ***book printing*** and ***Islamic thought***. Students from the Malay world who went there brought home ideas about ***education, newspapers and magazines***.

This experience may have shaped Tok Kenali's interest in ***education and magazines***, which later appeared in ***Pengasuh***.

REFERENCES:

Patani Studies, "Muhammad Yusuf b. Ahmad (1868–1933)". https://patanistudies.com/ulama/muhammad-yusuf-b-ahmad-1868-1933/

© 2026 CE / 1448 AH All Rights Reserved Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron — Free for Muslims

UNDERSTANDING OF THE RELIGION

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 71 (MUTTAFAQ ‘ALAIH)

حَدَّثَنَا سَعِيدُ بْنُ عُفَيْرٍ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا ابْنُ وَهْبٍ، عَنْ يُونُسَ، عَنِ ابْنِ شِهَابٍ، قَالَ قَالَ حُمَيْدُ بْنُ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ سَمِعْتُ مُعَاوِيَةَ، خَطِيبًا يَقُولُ سَمِعْتُ النَّبِيَّ صلى الله عليه وسلم يَقُولُ «مَنْ يُرِدِ اللَّهُ بِهِ خَيْرًا يُفَقِّهْهُ فِي الدِّينِ، وَإِنَّمَا أَنَا قَاسِمٌ وَاللَّهُ يُعْطِي، وَلَنْ تَزَالَ هَذِهِ الأُمَّةُ قَائِمَةً عَلَى أَمْرِ اللَّهِ لاَ يَضُرُّهُمْ مَنْ خَالَفَهُمْ حَتَّى يَأْتِيَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ».

TRANSLATION:

Humayd ibn ‘Abd ar-Rahman said: I heard Mu‘awiyah رضى الله عنه delivering a sermon, saying: I heard the Prophet ﷺ say: **“Whoever Allah wishes good for, He gives him understanding of the religion. I am only a distributor, and Allah is the One who gives. This nation will remain upright upon the command of Allah; those who oppose them will not harm them, until the command of Allah comes.”**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Sa‘id ibn ‘Ufayr, from Ibn Wahb, from Yunus, from Ibn Shihab az-Zuhri, from Humayd ibn ‘Abd ar-Rahman, from Mu‘awiyah رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Knowledge, Hadith No. 71. Also narrated by Muslim (No. 1037).

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:71

Allah gave Tok Kenali ***understanding of the religion***, and he used it to ***give*** to the Ummah — just as the Messenger ﷺ said: “I am only a distributor, and Allah is the Giver.”

© 2026 CE / 1448 AH All Rights Reserved Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron — Free for Muslims

RETURNING TO TEACH HIS PEOPLE

SURAH AT-TAWBAH 9:122

وَمَا كَانَ ٱلْمُؤْمِنُونَ لِيَنفِرُوا۟ كَآفَّةً ۚ فَلَوْلَا نَفَرَ مِن كُلِّ فِرْقَةٍ مِّنْهُمْ طَآئِفَةٌ
لِّيَتَفَقَّهُوا۟ فِى ٱلدِّينِ وَلِيُنذِرُوا۟ قَوْمَهُمْ إِذَا رَجَعُوٓا۟ إِلَيْهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَحْذَرُونَ ﴿١٢٢﴾

And it is not for the believers to go forth [to battle] all at once. For there should separate from every division of them a group [remaining] to obtain understanding in the religion and warn their people when they return to them that they might be cautious.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/9:122

Allah tells a group of the believers ***"to obtain understanding in the religion and warn their people when they return to them"***. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 9:122.

In ***1908 CE***, Tok Kenali ***returned to Kelantan***. He began ***teaching from his house***, and students built ***small huts (pondok)*** around it to live and study. Source: Britannica.

© 2026 CE / 1448 AH All Rights Reserved Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron — Free for Muslims

HISTORY NOTE: THE PONDOK SYSTEM

The ***pondok*** is the traditional institution of religious learning in the Malay world. Students live in ***small huts*** near the house or surau of the tuan guru, and study books ***chapter by chapter***.

Pondok learning was usually ***free*** or very cheap. Students cooked for themselves, served their teacher, and learned ***manners (adab)*** together with knowledge.

REFERENCES:

Britannica, "Tok Kenali". https://www.britannica.com/biography/Tok-Kenali

FEATURE OF THE PONDOK	ITS BENEFIT
Living near the teacher	Learning character by watching the teacher.
Books read chapter by chapter	Ordered and deep knowledge.
Low cost	The children of the poor can study too.
Independent living	Training in patience and responsibility.

© 2026 CE / 1448 AH All Rights Reserved Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron — Free for Muslims

PONDOK TOK KENALI

By ***1910 CE***, Pondok Tok Kenali was ***flourishing***, and by ***the mid-1920s*** it had ***more than 300 students***.

His students came not only from Kelantan but also from ***the Peninsula, Sumatra, Patani and Cambodia***. Tok Kenali's name was known as far as ***Java***. Sources: Britannica and patanistudies.com.

HISTORY NOTE: A MODEL PONDOK TEACHER

Britannica describes Tok Kenali as ***the archetype of the rural Malay religious teacher (alim)***.

Key dates: in 1908 he began teaching at home; by 1910 his pondok was flourishing; from 1915 to 1920 he taught in Kota Bharu; in ***1920*** he returned to ***Kampung Kenali***.

REFERENCES:

Britannica, "Tok Kenali". https://www.britannica.com/biography/Tok-Kenali

Patani Studies, "Muhammad Yusuf b. Ahmad (1868–1933)". https://patanistudies.com/ulama/muhammad-yusuf-b-ahmad-1868-1933/

© 2026 CE / 1448 AH All Rights Reserved Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron — Free for Muslims

BROTHERHOOD IN THE PONDOK

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 13 (MUTTAFAQ ‘ALAIH)

حَدَّثَنَا مُسَدَّدٌ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى، عَنْ شُعْبَةَ، عَنْ قَتَادَةَ، عَنْ أَنَسٍ - رضى الله عنه - عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم. وَعَنْ حُسَيْنٍ الْمُعَلِّمِ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا قَتَادَةُ، عَنْ أَنَسٍ، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ «لاَ يُؤْمِنُ أَحَدُكُمْ حَتَّى يُحِبَّ لأَخِيهِ مَا يُحِبُّ لِنَفْسِهِ».

TRANSLATION:

Anas رضى الله عنه reported that the Prophet ﷺ said: **“None of you (truly) believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself.”**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Musaddad, from Yahya ibn Sa‘id al-Qattan, from Shu‘bah, from Qatadah, from Anas ibn Malik رضى الله عنه; and through a second chain from Husayn al-Mu‘allim, from Qatadah.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Faith, Hadith No. 13. Also narrated by Muslim (No. 45).

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:13

In the pondok, students from many states lived ***together***: sharing food, helping one another, and learning ***to love their brothers*** as themselves.

© 2026 CE / 1448 AH All Rights Reserved Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron — Free for Muslims

TEACHING AT THE STATE MOSQUE OF KOTA BHARU

In ***1915 CE***, ***the Sultan of Kelantan*** invited Tok Kenali to teach at ***the state mosque*** in Kota Bharu, and he taught there until ***1920 CE***. Source: Britannica.

Allah says (58:11): ***"Allah will raise those who have believed among you and those who were given knowledge, by degrees"***. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 58:11.

HISTORY NOTE: THE STATE MOSQUE OF KOTA BHARU

The state mosque in Kota Bharu was an important centre of religious learning in Kelantan. According to patanistudies.com, in 1915 Tok Kenali moved to Kota Bharu and taught at ***the Kota Bharu mosque*** and at ***Pondok Kubang Pasu***.

Teaching at the state mosque meant that his knowledge reached ***the general public***, not only pondok students.

REFERENCES:

Patani Studies, "Muhammad Yusuf b. Ahmad (1868–1933)". https://patanistudies.com/ulama/muhammad-yusuf-b-ahmad-1868-1933/

© 2026 CE / 1448 AH All Rights Reserved Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron — Free for Muslims

THE ISLAMIC COUNCIL OF KELANTAN

On ***24 December 1915 CE***, ***the Council of Islamic Religion and Malay Custom of Kelantan (MAIK)*** was founded to manage Islamic affairs in the state. Tok Kenali was among the figures who ***shaped*** this council.

HISTORY NOTE: A MODEL FOR OTHER STATES

According to Britannica, this council was ***the first*** of its kind, and it became ***the model*** for Islamic councils in the other Malay states.

The council managed ***religious education, zakat, the treasury (baitulmal)*** and publishing — including the ***Pengasuh*** magazine from 1918.

REFERENCES:

Britannica, "Tok Kenali". https://www.britannica.com/biography/Tok-Kenali

HRMARS, "Pengasuh's Magazine: Catalysts of Social Awareness in Education (1918–1941)". https://hrmars.com/papers_submitted/14801/pengasuhs-magazine-catalysts-of-social-awareness-in-education-between-the-years-1918-1941.pdf

© 2026 CE / 1448 AH All Rights Reserved Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron — Free for Muslims

A GROUP INVITING TO GOOD

SURAH AL 'IMRAN 3:104

وَلۡتَكُن مِّنكُمۡ أُمَّةٞ يَدۡعُونَ إِلَى ٱلۡخَيۡرِ وَيَأۡمُرُونَ بِٱلۡمَعۡرُوفِ وَيَنۡهَوۡنَ عَنِ ٱلۡمُنكَرِۚ وَأُوْلَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ ٱلۡمُفۡلِحُونَ ١٠٤

And let there be [arising] from you a nation inviting to [all that is] good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, and those will be the successful.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/3:104

"And let there be [arising] from you a nation inviting to [all that is] good". Tafsir Ibn Kathir 3:104.

A religious council is an example of ***collective work*** in inviting to good — more organised and more lasting than the efforts of one person alone.

© 2026 CE / 1448 AH All Rights Reserved Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron — Free for Muslims

THE PENGASUH MAGAZINE

Pengasuh was ***the first*** religious magazine published by MAIK. Its first issue appeared on ***Thursday, 11 July 1918 CE***, and ***Tok Kenali*** was its first ***honorary chief editor***.

HISTORY NOTE: TOK KENALI AND PENGASUH

A study in ***Jurnal Pengajian Melayu (University of Malaya)*** describes Tok Kenali as ***"the driver, the founder and, above all, the true inspiration of the Pengasuh magazine since 1918"***.

In 1918 alone he wrote ***seven articles***, including ***"Kesempurnaan Manusia Dan Bahagiannya"*** (The Perfection of Man and Its Parts) and ***"Kenyataan Dan Pengharapan Yang Besar"*** (Facts and Great Hopes).

REFERENCES:

Jurnal Pengajian Melayu, University of Malaya.
https://adab.um.edu.my/index.php/JAT/article/download/8653/6148/18032

© 2026 CE / 1448 AH All Rights Reserved Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron — Free for Muslims

BY THE PEN

SURAH AL-QALAM 68:1

نٓ وَٱلۡقَلَمِ وَمَا يَسۡطُرُونَ ١

Nun. By the pen and what they inscribe.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/68:1

Allah swears: ***"By the pen and what they inscribe"***. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 68:1.

ABOUT PENGASUH	DETAILS
Publisher	Council of Islamic Religion and Malay Custom of Kelantan.
First issue	11 July 1918 CE.
Honorary chief editor	Tok Kenali.
Price (early years)	15 cents a copy; $2.88 a year within the state.

Sources: HRMARS and Jurnal Pengajian Melayu. One study says Pengasuh appeared ***fortnightly***, while another calls it ***weekly***.

© 2026 CE / 1448 AH All Rights Reserved Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron — Free for Muslims

CHANGE YOURSELVES TO CHANGE A PEOPLE

SURAH AR-RA'D 13:11

لَهُۥ مُعَقِّبَٰتٌ مِّنۢ بَيۡنِ يَدَيۡهِ وَمِنۡ خَلۡفِهِۦ يَحۡفَظُونَهُۥ مِنۡ أَمۡرِ ٱللَّهِۗ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوۡمٍ حَتَّىٰ يُغَيِّرُواْ مَا بِأَنفُسِهِمۡۗ وَإِذَآ أَرَادَ ٱللَّهُ بِقَوۡمٖ سُوٓءٗا فَلَا مَرَدَّ لَهُۥۚ وَمَا لَهُم مِّن دُونِهِۦ مِن وَالٖ ١١

For each one are successive [angels] before and behind him who protect him by the decree of Allah. Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves. And when Allah intends for a people ill, there is no repelling it. And there is not for them besides Him any patron.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/13:11

"Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves". Tafsir Ibn Kathir 13:11.

This verse was quoted in Pengasuh articles to awaken society to the fact that ***change begins with education***.

© 2026 CE / 1448 AH All Rights Reserved Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron — Free for Muslims

HISTORY NOTE: THE THEMES OF PENGASUH (1918–1941)

The HRMARS study found that Pengasuh discussed ***Islamic education, social awareness, the meaning of ad-din, schooling for girls, the Malay language, manners*** and ***national spirit***.

Pengasuh became ***a catalyst for awareness*** of education in Kelantan's Malay society at that time.

REFERENCES:

HRMARS, "Pengasuh's Magazine: Catalysts of Social Awareness in Education (1918–1941)". https://hrmars.com/papers_submitted/14801/pengasuhs-magazine-catalysts-of-social-awareness-in-education-between-the-years-1918-1941.pdf

THEME	MESSAGE TO SOCIETY
Education	Knowledge is the path of the Ummah's progress.
Girls	They too have the right to learn.
The Malay language	A language of knowledge and religion to be preserved.
Manners	Knowledge without manners brings no good.

© 2026 CE / 1448 AH All Rights Reserved Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron — Free for Muslims

A SIMPLE LIFE

Tok Kenali was known for ***his simple life***. Although honoured by the sultan and the people, he remained in his village and ***put knowledge*** before wealth.

Allah says (28:77): ***"But seek, through that which Allah has given you, the home of the Hereafter; and [yet], do not forget your share of the world"***. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 28:77.

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 6416

حَدَّثَنَا عَلِيُّ بْنُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ، حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ أَبُو الْمُنْذِرِ الطُّفَاوِيُّ، عَنْ سُلَيْمَانَ الأَعْمَشِ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنِي مُجَاهِدٌ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عُمَرَ ـ رضى الله عنهما ـ قَالَ أَخَذَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم بِمَنْكِبِي فَقَالَ «كُنْ فِي الدُّنْيَا كَأَنَّكَ غَرِيبٌ، أَوْ عَابِرُ سَبِيلٍ». وَكَانَ ابْنُ عُمَرَ يَقُولُ إِذَا أَمْسَيْتَ فَلاَ تَنْتَظِرِ الصَّبَاحَ، وَإِذَا أَصْبَحْتَ فَلاَ تَنْتَظِرِ الْمَسَاءَ، وَخُذْ مِنْ صِحَّتِكَ لِمَرَضِكَ، وَمِنْ حَيَاتِكَ لِمَوْتِكَ.

TRANSLATION:

'Abdullah ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنهما said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ took hold of my shoulder and said: **"Be in this world as though you were a stranger or a traveller."** Ibn 'Umar used to say: "When evening comes, do not wait for the morning; when morning comes, do not wait for the evening. Take from your health for your sickness, and from your life for your death."

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from 'Ali ibn 'Abdullah al-Madini, from Abu al-Mundhir at-Tufawi, from Sulayman al-A'mash, from Mujahid, from 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنهما.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Softening of Hearts, Hadith No. 6416.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:6416

© 2026 CE / 1448 AH All Rights Reserved Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron — Free for Muslims

THE BLESSING OF TIME

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 6412

حَدَّثَنَا الْمَكِّيُّ بْنُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ، أَخْبَرَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ سَعِيدٍ ـ هُوَ ابْنُ أَبِي هِنْدٍ ـ عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنِ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ ـ رضى الله عنهما ـ قَالَ قَالَ النَّبِيُّ صلى الله عليه وسلم «نِعْمَتَانِ مَغْبُونٌ فِيهِمَا كَثِيرٌ مِنَ النَّاسِ، الصِّحَّةُ وَالْفَرَاغُ». قَالَ عَبَّاسٌ الْعَنْبَرِيُّ حَدَّثَنَا صَفْوَانُ بْنُ عِيسَى، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ سَعِيدِ بْنِ أَبِي هِنْدٍ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، سَمِعْتُ ابْنَ عَبَّاسٍ، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم مِثْلَهُ.

TRANSLATION:

Ibn ‘Abbas رضى الله عنهما said: The Prophet ﷺ said: **“There are two blessings in which many people are deceived: health and free time.”**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from al-Makki ibn Ibrahim, from ‘Abdullah ibn Sa‘id ibn Abi Hind, from his father Sa‘id ibn Abi Hind, from ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Abbas رضى الله عنهما.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Softening of Hearts, Hadith No. 6412.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

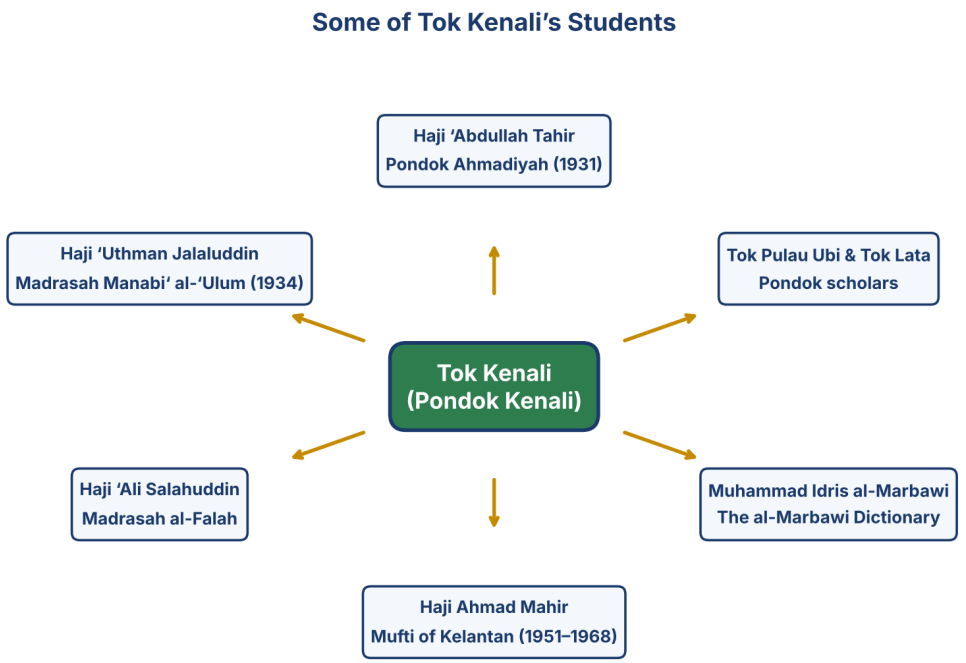
Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:6412

Tok Kenali used his ***free time*** to study from childhood, and his ***health*** to teach until the end of his life.

© 2026 CE / 1448 AH All Rights Reserved Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron — Free for Muslims

STUDENTS AND INSTITUTIONS

Tok Kenali's greatest legacy is ***his students***. Many of them later ***held important posts*** in Islamic affairs and ***opened pondok and madrasahs***.



Source: patanistudies.com. Years show when the institution was founded or the term of office.

Figure 3: Some of Tok Kenali's students.

© 2026 CE / 1448 AH All Rights Reserved Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron — Free for Muslims

STUDENT	CONTRIBUTION
Haji ‘Abdullah Tahir (1897–1961 CE)	Founded Pondok Ahmadiyah (1931).
Haji ‘Uthman Jalaluddin (1867–1952 CE)	Founded Madrasah Manabi‘ al-‘Ulum (1934).
Haji ‘Ali Salahuddin (1888–1968 CE)	Founded Madrasah al-Falah.
Haji Ahmad Mahir (1910–1968 CE)	Mufti of Kelantan (1951–1968).
Muhammad Idris al-Marbawi	Compiler of the al-Marbawi Dictionary.
Tok Pulau Ubi and Tok Lata	Pondok scholars in Kelantan.

Source: patanistudies.com. https://patanistudies.com/ulama/muhammad-yusuf-b-ahmad-1868-1933/

A teacher who trains ***a mufti, several founders of madrasahs and a dictionary compiler*** has multiplied his knowledge to ***thousands*** after him.

© 2026 CE / 1448 AH All Rights Reserved Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron — Free for Muslims

CONVEY AND INVITE

Allah says (16:125): ***"Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction"***. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 16:125.

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 3461

حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو عَاصِمٍ الضَّحَّاكُ بْنُ مَخْلَدٍ، أَخْبَرَنَا الأَوْزَاعِيُّ، حَدَّثَنَا حَسَّانُ بْنُ عَطِيَّةَ، عَنْ أَبِي كَبْشَةَ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَمْرٍو، أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ «بَلِّغُوا عَنِّي وَلَوْ آيَةً، وَحَدِّثُوا عَنْ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ وَلاَ حَرَجَ، وَمَنْ كَذَبَ عَلَىَّ مُتَعَمِّدًا فَلْيَتَبَوَّأْ مَقْعَدَهُ مِنَ النَّارِ».

TRANSLATION:

'Abdullah ibn 'Amr رضى الله عنهما reported that the Prophet ﷺ said: **"Convey from me, even if it is a single verse. And narrate from the Children of Israel, there is no harm (in it). And whoever lies about me deliberately, let him take his seat in the Fire."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Abu 'Asim ad-Dahhak ibn Makhlad, from al-Awza'i, from Hassan ibn 'Atiyyah, from Abu Kabshah as-Saluli, from 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr رضى الله عنهما.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of the Prophets, Hadith No. 3461.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:3461

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

Tok Kenali conveyed knowledge through ***three channels***: the pondok, the mosque and the magazine. Each channel reached a different group.

© 2026 CE / 1448 AH All Rights Reserved Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron — Free for Muslims

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 2674

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ أَيُّوبَ، وَقُتَيْبَةُ بْنُ سَعِيدٍ، وَابْنُ حُجْرٍ، قَالُوا حَدَّثَنَا إِسْمَاعِيلُ، - يَعْنُونَ ابْنَ جَعْفَرٍ - عَنِ الْعَلاَءِ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ «مَنْ دَعَا إِلَى هُدًى كَانَ لَهُ مِنَ الأَجْرِ مِثْلُ أُجُورِ مَنْ تَبِعَهُ لاَ يَنْقُصُ ذَلِكَ مِنْ أُجُورِهِمْ شَيْئًا وَمَنْ دَعَا إِلَى ضَلاَلَةٍ كَانَ عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الإِثْمِ مِثْلُ آثَامِ مَنْ تَبِعَهُ لاَ يَنْقُصُ ذَلِكَ مِنْ آثَامِهِمْ شَيْئًا».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: **"Whoever calls to guidance will have a reward like the rewards of those who follow him, without that diminishing their rewards in the least.** And whoever calls to misguidance will bear a sin like the sins of those who follow him, without that diminishing their sins in the least."

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Yahya ibn Ayyub, Qutaybah ibn Sa'id and 'Ali ibn Hujr, from Isma'il ibn Ja'far, from al-'Ala' ibn 'Abd ar-Rahman, from his father 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn Ya'qub, from Abu Hurairah رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Knowledge, Hadith No. 2674.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim, the second most authentic book of Hadith after Sahih al-Bukhari.

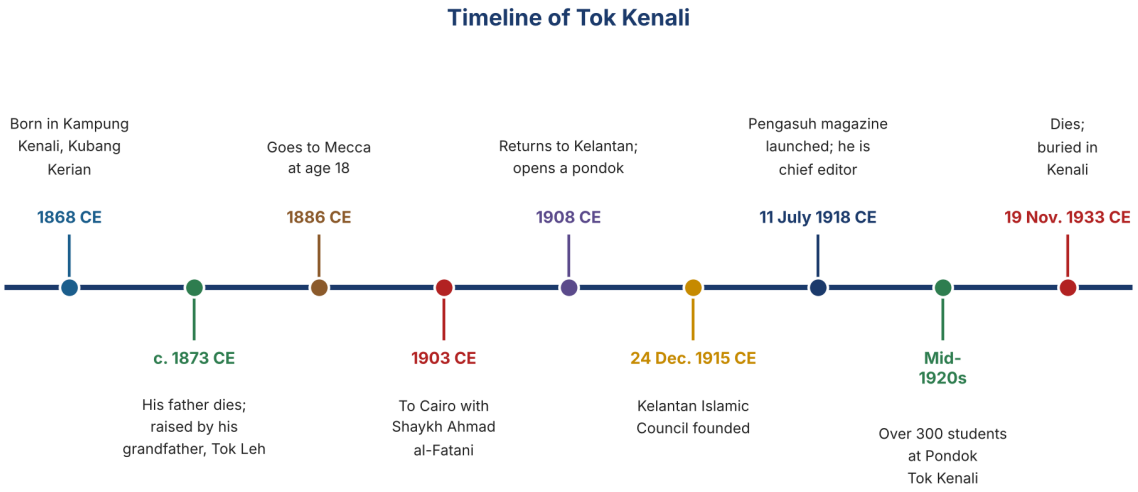
Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:2674

CHANNEL	WHO IT REACHED
Pondok Tok Kenali	Students who lived and studied for years.
The Kota Bharu mosque	The general public in the state capital.
The Pengasuh magazine	Readers across Kelantan and beyond.

© 2026 CE / 1448 AH All Rights Reserved Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron — Free for Muslims

KNOWLEDGE TAKEN AWAY WITH THE SCHOLARS

The timeline below sums up Tok Kenali's life — from an orphan in Kenali to the teacher of a generation of scholars.



Sources: Britannica, patanistudies.com, HRMARS and Jurnal Pengajian Melayu (UM).

Figure 4: Timeline of Tok Kenali.

Sahih al-Bukhari 100 (Chapter 2) reminds us that knowledge is taken away ***with the death of the scholars***. Tok Kenali made sure his knowledge ***did not stop*** by raising students who carried on the teaching.

© 2026 CE / 1448 AH All Rights Reserved Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron — Free for Muslims

ESTABLISHED REPORTS AND POPULAR STORIES

SURAH AL-ISRA' 17:36

وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِۦ عِلْمٌ ۚ إِنَّ ٱلسَّمْعَ وَٱلْبَصَرَ وَٱلْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْـُٔولًا ﴿٣٦﴾

And do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge. Indeed, the hearing, the sight and the heart - about all those [one] will be questioned.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/17:36

"do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge". Tafsir Ibn Kathir 17:36.

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, INTRODUCTION NO. 5 — FROM IMAM MUSLIM'S OWN INTRODUCTION

وَحَدَّثَنَا عُبَيْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ مُعَاذٍ الْعَنْبَرِيُّ، حَدَّثَنَا أَبِي ح، وَحَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ الْمُثَنَّى، حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنُ مَهْدِيٍّ، قَالاَ حَدَّثَنَا شُعْبَةُ، عَنْ خُبَيْبِ بْنِ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ، عَنْ حَفْصِ بْنِ عَاصِمٍ، قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم «كَفَى بِالْمَرْءِ كَذِبًا أَنْ يُحَدِّثَ بِكُلِّ مَا سَمِعَ».

TRANSLATION:

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: **"It is enough of a lie for a person to narrate everything he hears."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from 'Ubaydullah ibn Mu'adh al-'Anbari, from his father Mu'adh ibn Mu'adh; and from Muhammad ibn al-Muthanna, from 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn Mahdi, both from Shu'bah, from Khubayb ibn 'Abd ar-Rahman, from Hafs ibn 'Asim. In the following narration, Imam Muslim narrates it with a connected chain: from Abu Bakr ibn Abi Shaybah, from 'Ali ibn Hafs, from Shu'bah, with the same chain, from Hafs ibn 'Asim, from Abu Hurairah رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in the Introduction to Sahih Muslim, Hadith No. 5; the connected narration through Abu Hurairah is in the Introduction, narration 7 (sunnah.com/muslim/introduction/7).

GRADE: SAHIH — Imam Muslim placed it in the Introduction to Sahih Muslim and narrated it with a connected chain through Abu Hurairah رضى الله عنه.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:5

© 2026 CE / 1448 AH All Rights Reserved Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron — Free for Muslims

STORIES AND THEIR STATUS

POPULAR STATEMENT	STATUS
He was born in 1868 CE.	The main view; one reference gives 1870 CE.
He studied for 22 years in Mecca (1886–1908).	Stated by Britannica.
He studied with Muhammad ‘Abduh in Cairo.	Stated by patanistudies.com; details are limited.
The first issue of Pengasuh was on 11 July 1918.	One study also gives 1 July; 11 July is cited more often.
Various stories of his miracles (karamah).	Popular oral stories; cannot be verified.
He died on 19 November 1933.	Established in many sources.

REFLECTION — HONOURING WITHOUT EXAGGERATING

We honour Tok Kenali by ***following his example of striving*** for knowledge, and by being ***honest*** about stories that are not established.

© 2026 CE / 1448 AH All Rights Reserved Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron — Free for Muslims

HIS DEATH AND LEGACY

Tok Kenali died on ***Sunday, 19 November 1933 CE***, and was buried in ***Kampung Kenali, Kubang Kerian*** — the village now known as ***Kampung Kubur Tok Kenali***.

Allah says (2:156): ***"Indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return"***. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 2:156.

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 1 — THE FIRST HADITH OF AL-ARBA'IN AN-NAWAWIYYAH

حَدَّثَنَا الْحُمَيْدِيُّ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ الزُّبَيْرِ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا سُفْيَانُ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ سَعِيدٍ الْأَنْصَارِيُّ، قَالَ أَخْبَرَنِي مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ التَّيْمِيُّ، أَنَّهُ سَمِعَ عَلْقَمَةَ بْنَ وَقَّاصٍ اللَّيْثِيَّ، يَقُولُ سَمِعْتُ عُمَرَ بْنَ الْخَطَّابِ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ عَلَى الْمِنْبَرِ، قَالَ سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، يَقُولُ «إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ، وَإِنَّمَا لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مَا نَوَى، فَمَنْ كَانَتْ هِجْرَتُهُ إِلَى دُنْيَا يُصِيبُهَا أَوْ إِلَى امْرَأَةٍ يَنْكِحُهَا، فَهِجْرَتُهُ إِلَى مَا هَاجَرَ إِلَيْهِ».

TRANSLATION:

'Alqamah ibn Waqqas al-Laythi said: I heard 'Umar ibn al-Khattab رضى الله عنه say on the pulpit: I heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say: **"Actions are only by intentions, and every person will have only what he intended. So whoever emigrated for worldly gain he would attain, or for a woman he would marry, his emigration is for that to which he emigrated."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from al-Humaydi 'Abdullah ibn az-Zubayr, from Sufyan ibn 'Uyaynah, from Yahya ibn Sa'id al-Ansari, from Muhammad ibn Ibrahim at-Taymi, from 'Alqamah ibn Waqqas al-Laythi, from 'Umar ibn al-Khattab رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of the Beginning of Revelation, Hadith No. 1 (the first Hadith of Sahih al-Bukhari); also narrated by Muslim (No. 1907).

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:1

A LEGACY FOR US

LEGACY	LESSON FOR US
An orphan who succeeded	Hardship is no barrier to seeking knowledge.
Pondok Tok Kenali	Education for all, including the poor.
The Islamic Council	Religious work should be organised and collective.
The Pengasuh magazine	Use the media to educate the Ummah.
His students	Knowledge lives on through those who are taught.

Tok Kenali's name is still remembered in Kelantan — in ***place names, institutions and roads***, and above all in ***the chain of knowledge*** that continues to this day.

© 2026 CE / 1448 AH All Rights Reserved Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron — Free for Muslims

LESSONS AND CONCLUSION

LESSONS FROM THIS EBOOK

First: Strive, and Allah will guide you (29:69; 2:286).

Second: Read and write (96:1–5; 68:1).

Third: Honour the orphan (93:6–9; Sahih al-Bukhari 5304).

Fourth: Teach the Qur'an to your children and grandchildren (Sahih al-Bukhari 5027).

Fifth: Every step in seeking knowledge is a path to Paradise (Sahih Muslim 2699).

Sixth: Understanding of the religion is a sign of good (Sahih al-Bukhari 71).

Seventh: Return to teach your people (9:122).

Eighth: Love your brother (Sahih al-Bukhari 13).

Ninth: Work together as a community (3:104).

Tenth: Change begins with oneself (13:11).

Eleventh: Live simply and value time (28:77; Sahih al-Bukhari 6416, 6412).

Twelfth: Be honest about what is established and what is not (17:36).

CONCLUSION

Tok Kenali began as an orphan walking to the mosque and ended as ***the teacher of teachers***. The next book of **Tracing the Scholars of Islam**, in sha' Allah, will tell the story of ***Hamka***, scholar and writer, whose father once studied with Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani. And Allah knows best.

© 2026 CE / 1448 AH All Rights Reserved Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron — Free for Muslims

GLOSSARY AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

GLOSSARY

TERM	MEANING
Pondok	A traditional Islamic school in the Malay world.
Tuan guru	The teacher who leads a pondok.
Serambi Mekah	"Verandah of Mecca", a title for Kelantan.
MAIK	Council of Islamic Religion and Malay Custom of Kelantan (1915).
Pengasuh	A religious magazine published by MAIK since 1918.
Chief editor	The person who leads a magazine's publication.
Karamah	An extraordinary event attributed to a saint; must be verified.
Al-Azhar	A famous centre of Islamic learning in Cairo.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What does Allah promise in verse 29:69 to those who strive?

2. Who was Tok Kenali's first teacher, and what did he teach him?

3. Why did the pondok system allow the children of the poor to study?

4. What role did the Pengasuh magazine play in Kelantan society?

5. Why should stories of miracles be checked before they are spread?

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: Work out the distance from your home to the nearest mosque, and compare it with Tok Kenali's walk from Kenali to Kota Bharu.

Activity 2: Visit a pondok or madrasah in your area and ask about the history of its founding.

© 2026 CE / 1448 AH All Rights Reserved Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron — Free for Muslims

REFERENCES

THE QUR'AN

The Noble Qur'an, Uthmani text and Sahih International translation. https://quran.com

Tafsir Ibn Kathir, surahs 2, 3, 9, 13, 16, 17, 28, 29, 58, 68, 93 and 96. https://tafsir.app/ibn-katheer/29/69

HADITH

Sahih al-Bukhari 1, 13, 71, 100, 3461, 5027, 5304, 6412, 6416. https://sunnah.com/bukhari

Sahih Muslim 2674, 2699, and Introduction 5. https://sunnah.com/muslim

HISTORY AND MODERN RESEARCH

Britannica, "Tok Kenali". https://www.britannica.com/biography/Tok-Kenali

Patani Studies, "Muhammad Yusuf b. Ahmad (1868–1933)". https://patanistudies.com/ulama/muhammad-yusuf-b-ahmad-1868-1933/

Jurnal Pengajian Melayu, University of Malaya — a study of the Pengasuh magazine. https://adab.um.edu.my/index.php/JAT/article/download/8653/6148/18032

HRMARS, "Pengasuh's Magazine: Catalysts of Social Awareness in Education Between the Years 1918–1941". https://hrmars.com/papers_submitted/14801/pengasuhs-magazine-catalysts-of-social-awareness-in-education-between-the-years-1918-1941.pdf

Penang Travel Tips, "Makam Tok Kenali". https://www.penang-traveltips.com/malaysia/kelantan/kota-bharu/makam-tok-kenali.htm

Wikipedia, "Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1909". https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglo-Siamese_Treaty_of_1909

© 2026 CE / 1448 AH All Rights Reserved Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron — Free for Muslims

SUPPORT & DONATIONS

This eBook is published **entirely free** for Muslims and is **never to be sold**. Donations are most welcome to help with the costs of research, hosting the website quranscience.my and publishing further eBooks — but they are **not obligatory**. May Allah accept every donation as an ongoing charity (sadaqah jariyah).

SURAH AL-BAQARAH 2:261

مَّثَلُ ٱلَّذِينَ يُنفِقُونَ أَمۡوَٰلَهُمۡ فِي سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ أَنۢبَتَتۡ سَبۡعَ سَنَابِلَ فِي كُلِّ سُنۢبُلَةٖ مِّاْئَةُ حَبَّةٖۗ وَٱللَّهُ يُضَٰعِفُ لِمَن يَشَآءُۚ وَٱللَّهُ وَٰسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ٢٦١

The example of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is like a seed [of grain] which grows seven spikes; in each spike is a hundred grains. And Allah multiplies [His reward] for whom He wills. And Allah is all-Encompassing and Knowing.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/2:261

SURAH SABA' 34:39

قُلۡ إِنَّ رَبِّي يَبۡسُطُ ٱلرِّزۡقَ لِمَن يَشَآءُ مِنۡ عِبَادِهِۦ وَيَقۡدِرُ لَهُۥۚ وَمَآ أَنفَقۡتُم مِّن شَيۡءٖ فَهُوَ يُخۡلِفُهُۥۖ وَهُوَ خَيۡرُ ٱلرَّٰزِقِينَ ٣٩

Say, "Indeed, my Lord extends provision for whom He wills of His servants and restricts [it] for him. But whatever thing you spend [in His cause] - He will compensate it; and He is the best of providers."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/34:39

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 2588

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ أَيُّوبَ، وَقُتَيْبَةُ، وَابْنُ، حُجْرٍ قَالُوا حَدَّثَنَا إِسْمَاعِيلُ، - وَهُوَ ابْنُ جَعْفَرٍ - عَنِ الْعَلاَءِ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ « مَا نَقَصَتْ صَدَقَةٌ مِنْ مَالٍ وَمَا زَادَ اللَّهُ عَبْدًا بِعَفْوٍ إِلاَّ عِزًّا وَمَا تَوَاضَعَ أَحَدٌ لِلَّهِ إِلاَّ رَفَعَهُ اللَّهُ ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Charity does not decrease wealth.

Allah does not increase a servant who forgives except in honour. And no one humbles himself for the sake of Allah except that Allah raises him in rank."

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Yahya bin Ayyub, Qutaibah bin Sa'id and 'Ali bin Hujr, from Isma'il bin Ja'far, from al-'Ala' bin 'Abd al-Rahman, from his father 'Abd al-Rahman bin Ya'qub, from Abu Hurayrah رضي الله عنه .

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Virtue, Good Manners and Joining the Ties of Kinship (Kitab al-Birr wa al-Silah wa al-Adab), chapter on the encouragement of forgiveness and humility, Hadith No. 2588.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:2588

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 1631

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ أَيُّوبَ، وَقُتَيْبَةُ - يَعْنِي ابْنَ سَعِيدٍ - وَابْنُ حُجْرٍ قَالُوا حَدَّثَنَا إِسْمَاعِيلُ، - هُوَ ابْنُ جَعْفَرٍ - عَنِ الْعَلاَءِ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ « إِذَا مَاتَ الإِنْسَانُ انْقَطَعَ عَنْهُ عَمَلُهُ إِلاَّ مِنْ ثَلاَثَةٍ إِلاَّ مِنْ صَدَقَةٍ جَارِيَةٍ أَوْ عِلْمٍ يُنْتَفَعُ بِهِ أَوْ وَلَدٍ صَالِحٍ يَدْعُو لَهُ ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضي الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "When a person dies, his deeds come to an end except for three: an ongoing charity, knowledge that is benefited from, or a righteous child who prays for him."

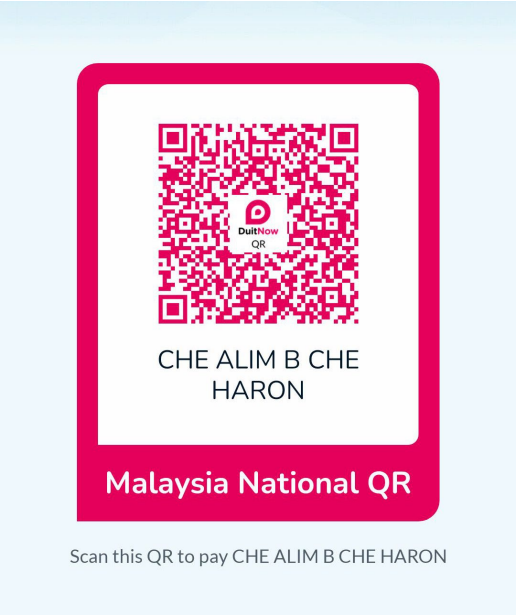
CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Yahya bin Ayyub, Qutaibah bin Sa'id and 'Ali bin Hujr, from Isma'il bin Ja'far, from al-'Ala' bin 'Abd al-Rahman, from his father 'Abd al-Rahman bin Ya'qub, from Abu Hurayrah رضي الله عنه .

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Wills (Kitab al-Wasiyyah), chapter on the reward that reaches a person after his death, Hadith No. 1631.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:1631

JAZAKUMULLAHU KHAIRAN KATHIRA



Scan the QR code above (DuitNow, Malaysia) to donate.

DONATE

International donors: click the DONATE button or visit paypal.me/quranscience

© 2026 CE / 1448 AH All Rights Reserved Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron — Free for Muslims