

## The debate on philosophical sufism: Dynamics and dialectics in Aceh

Mukhlis Latif<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of the Qur'anic Studies and Tafseer, Faculty of Usuluddin, Adab and Dakwah, Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Negeri Majene, Indonesia

**Abstract:** This research aims to explain the philosophy of tasawuf Hamzah Fansuri in Nusantara Islam. The textual research method was employed to interpret the contents in the manuscripts of tasawuf falsafi in Aceh, especially regarding tasawuf falsafi, which Hamzah Fansuri developed. The study findings confirm that Hamzah Fansuri's philosophical tasawuf thought is "symbolic-comtemplative" and attempts to locate the exploration of the symbols that are highlighted as the essence and substance of the teachings of philosophical tasawuf. There is a misunderstanding about philosophical Sufism, especially by other parties who try to observe and assess the substance of the teachings of philosophical Sufism, which is a natural thing. Criticism of Hamzah Fansuri's philosophical tasawuf thoughts, especially those made by Nūr al-Dīn al-Ranīrī, is commonplace and reasonable in the scientific realm of Islam. However, the accusation of slander and the opinion that Hamzah Fansuri has gone astray and deviated from Islamic principles is something common sense cannot accept. Hamzah Fansuri's thoughts related to Wujudiyah's views are widespread and have not only developed in Aceh. The originality of this study is that it confirms that philosophical Sufism has a symbolic and implicit aspect and characteristics that are difficult to understand. Therefore, if one is trapped in a narrow understanding of symbols, then philosophical Sufism is only a "skin" which is different from the substance or "content" inside.

**Keywords:** Islamic thought; sufism; falsafi sufism

### Citation (APA):

Latif, M. (2023). The debate on philosophical sufism: Dynamics and dialectics in Aceh. *Ibda': Jurnal Kajian Islam dan Budaya*, 21(1), 57-72. <https://doi.org/10.24090/ibda.v21i1.7779>

Submitted: Feb 6, 2023

Accepted: Mar 3, 2023

Published: April 1, 2023

Copyright © 2023 Author

Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.



\*Corresponding Author: Mukhlis Latif (mukhlis.latif@stainmajene.ac.id), Totoli, Kec. Banggae, Kabupaten Majene, Sulawesi Barat 91415, Indonesia.

## A. Introduction

Studying Islamic thought is a separate study area and is interesting to be involved in because it considers the developments related to Islamic thought (Sholihin, 2021). One of the interesting Islamic schools of thought that is studied is that of Sufism. This type of study in Islamic science leads humans to the spiritual aspect with a very high level of philosophical understanding, focusing on aspects of rituals and special practices that are oriented towards efforts to minimize love and excessive dependence on worldly aspects. The terminology of Sufism comes from Arabic, specifically the word *taṣawwafa*, *yataṣawwafu*, *taṣawwuf*, which means to purify the soul, keep away evil, and maintain moral clarity (Arrasyid, 2020). Sufism also means that 'hairy' in this context is synonymous with the meaning of simplicity, because a Muslim who practices Sufism, who is usually called a Sufi, is identified with clothing made of fleece/wool (Nuraini & Marhayati, 2019, p. 299). The meaning of dressing in fleece/wool represents a simple way of life. Therefore, Sufism involves the simple behavior of a Muslim in addressing the world with an orientation towards the hereafter; for practitioners of Sufism (Sufi), this means someone who has a pure heart (shafa) and clean behavior.

The term Sufism was not known in the time of the Prophet Muhammad, nor in the following period, the time of Khulafaur Rashidin. Judging from historical records, the term began to be known during the time of Abu Hasyim al-Kufy, around the year 250 H. (Badrudin, 2015). Although initially developed in the Middle East and surrounding areas, along with the spread and development of Islamic teachings, Sufism also developed in countries or regions that received the appeal of Islam, including in the country with many islands. Here, understanding Sufism has become a condition sine qua non-discussion about the spread of Islam. It is based on the opinion of James L. Peacock (1978), which emphasizes that the development of Islam in the Indonesian Archipelago, especially in Java, is also related to the understanding of Sufism (Arifina et al., 2020; Retsikas, 2012). It is evidenced by the existence of *primbon bonang*, *suluk linglung*, *suluk shaykh malaya*, and various other *suluks* (*the path to inner perfection*) that characterize an understanding of Sufism.

Apart from Java, Sufism is also developing in the Malay Peninsula, especially in the Aceh region, which is also related to spreading Islam's teachings. In Aceh, there were several Sufist figures, such as Hamzah Fansūrī Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrānī Nūr al-Dīn al-Ranīrī and 'Abd al-Ra'ūf Sinkel This research focuses a description of Hamzah Fansūrī Sufist thoughts, together with a critique of these made by Nūr al-Dīn al-Ranīrī. Studies on Sufist thought in Aceh have been conducted by several previous researchers, such Muchsin et al. (2021), which focus on the response of the

people of north and east Aceh to the integration of the teachings of the Tauhid-Tasawuf Study Council (MPTT) with *ratéb siribèe*, commonly known as community groups who perform a thousand *dhikr* to draw closer to Allah. Furthermore, the study conducted by Faridi and Selamat Ariga (2022) on Sufism in Islamic approaches focused on the practice of Sufist approaches in learning Islam in general. The research conducted can be considered original because it tries to capture the views of thought and the dynamics of philosophical *taṣawuf* thought from Hamzah Fansūrī. The study aims to capture and find God's instructions according to Hamzah Fansūrī's *tasawuf* philosophical thought in Islam Nusantara with two substances, namely the characteristics of Hamzah Fansūrī's *tasawuf* thought and criticism of this, especially the issues raised by Nūr al-Dīn al-Raniri.

## B. Methods

The research method used was library research (Manzilati, 2017). The data were sourced from search and analysis, as well as evaluation of the study results discussing philosophical *taṣawuf* in Aceh, specifically the philosophical *taṣawuf* developed by Hamzah Fansūrī. Data collection and analysis techniques were conducted by compiling and inventorying or collecting various previous studies and research on Hamzah Fansūrī's philosophical Sufism. The results of the data obtained were then reduced in the form of sorting based on the needs and topics of the study discussion. This research method was textual research that needed to read the contents of the philosophical *taṣawuf* texts in Aceh, especially Hamzah Fansūrī's *taṣawuf* thoughts.

## C. Results and Discussion

### Hamzah Fansūrī's Thoughts on Philosophical Sufism

Hasymi believes that Hamzah Fansūrī lived during the reign of Sultan Alauddin Riayat Syah in the 16th century, who lived in approximately 997-1011 H or 1589-1604 AD, until the beginning of the reign of Sultan Iskandar Muda Mahkota Alam, who in turn lived around 1016-1045 H or 1607-1636 M

Based on this information, it can be concluded that Hamzah Fansūrī is estimated to have lived in the 16th century and during two reigns, those of Sultan Alauddin Riayat Syah and Sultan Iskandar Muda Mahkota Alam (Sultan Iskandar Muda Johan Pahlawan Meukuta Alam Ibni Sultan Mansyur Syah). Syekh Hamzah al-Fansūrī last name, namely Fansur, was the city's identity which Arab and Persian traders at that time identified with the Barus area. Kota Barus in the current era is a small town on the west coast of Sumatra, located between the cities of Sibolga and Singkel. It is understandable because until the 16th AD Kota Barus was one of the most important

trading ports in the Malay Peninsula and even to the region. The fame of Kota Barus as a trading city at that time focused on meeting various civilizations in the area. It is therefore only natural that Barus City gave birth to many thinkers due to the advancement of culture and literacy activities concerning the thoughts and ideas at that time.

Experts also have different opinions about where Hamzah Fansūrī came from. Some conclude that he was from the Shahmawi area, but there is no common understanding of the exact location of this region (Aizid, 2016a). Some argue in the Aceh area, but some opinions claim to come from Siam (currently Thailand, especially the south of the country, which is the base of the Muslim community). Some even claim that Hamzah Fansūrī came from Persia or the Persian regions, which are now included in Iran. Regarding the learning activities undertaken by Hamzah Fansūrī several sources explain that he studied with various teachers in various locations, such as Aceh (where he devoted himself), Banten (West Java), all of Java, the Malay Peninsula, India, Persia and Arabic (Aizid, 2016b). Related to the fields of knowledge he mastered, besides being famous for having expertise in the area of Sufism, Hamzah Fansūrī is also famous for his abilities in various disciplines such as fiqh, philosophy, mantiq, theology, history, and literature. Some of the poems by Hamzah Fansūrī are famous in the Malay Peninsula throughout the region, including: a) Pingai bird poems, b) Trade poetry, c) Back verse, d) Faqir trial poems, e) Tuna verse, f) Boat poems.

In addition to poetry, Hamzah Fansūrī is also famous for several books (Ni'am, 2017, p. 265), which include: a) *Asfār al-'ārifīn fī bayānī 'ilmi al-suluki wa tawhīd*, b) *Sharb al-'āshiqīn*, c) *al-Muhtadi*, d) *Ruba'i Hamzah al-Fansūrī* (Hamzah Fansūrī's poetry collection).

One of the ideas and teachings attached to the figure of Hamzah Fansūrī is related to the teachings of philosophical tasawuf, which he developed from various written works. In general, philosophical Sufism is understood as the teachings of Sufism which emphasize a deep understanding of a conception with symbolic-philosophical language. These symbols are usually not easy to understand without in-depth study and certain practice or action to understand them. Therefore, in philosophical Sufism, apart from the efforts to study it intellectually (i.e., based on scientific sources that can be accounted for), it must also be based on a certain kind of spiritual practice whose orientation is in the form of inner enrichment.

Such deep understanding sometimes makes Sufis experience ecstasy, often associated with spiritual intoxication events. Spiritual drunkenness is when the servant feels a deep love for God. It makes them "intoxicated", or beyond

consciousness. The servant seems to be in the substance of a "feeling of oneness" with their Lord. In this spiritual intoxication, Sufis sometimes make unusual statements, such as that of Ibn 'Arabi, who is famous for the saying *ana al-ḥaqq* and the term *Manunggaling kawula-Gusti* (*the union between the servant and God who is worshiped or in other words surrender and surrender to God*), which was popularized by Syech Siti Jenar (Siraj, 2021, pp. 13–15). *Manunggaling kawula-Gusti* is generally interpreted as one with God. This concept is defined as the process by which humans are able to capture God's spirit or the holy spirit within themselves and is also referred to as servitude and surrender to God. The view of *ana al-ḥaqq* conveyed by Ibn 'Arabi is also often attributed to Al-Halaj, who also states that *ana al-ḥaqq* as a manifestation has found "true truth", namely in the form of "taste" to unite with God. The views of Syech Lemah Abang actually have similarities with those of Ibn 'Arabi and al-Halaj in relation to efforts to achieve spiritual drunkenness.

In general, philosophical Sufism is identified with the existence of Sufist teachings in the form of symbols and a state of spiritual intoxication, that makes philosophical Sufism adherents provide philosophical, deep conceptions, and requires a certain way of understanding them. Philosophical Sufism in the context of its understanding can be categorized as exclusive, which means that it can only be understood in certain ways, and with certain methods and approaches. Its exclusive character makes it necessary to make special efforts and adopt a certain orientation in understanding it. This means that without a special spiritual guide, understanding of philosophical Sufism is not optimal and can even be said to be a failure and not directed.

It is sometimes "contrasted" with Sunni Sufism in discourses related to philosophical Sufism. Several views hold that Sunni Sufism is Sufism, which is considered in accordance with the teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad. Sunni Sufism is considered to still hold Shari'a and not be in accordance with the four schools of fiqh or schools of jurisprudence, namely Shafi'i, and Hambali, Hanafi, and Maliki (Badriyyah & Az-Zaf, 2020, p. 65). Some influential figures in Sunni Sufism include al-Junaid al-Baghdadi, al-Ghazali, and al-Qusyairi (Nuridin, 2020). The characteristics of this Sufism are in its practical application in the form of streams (*Tarekat is the path taken based on the Shari'a by a seeker of the essence of Allah*) which is still preserved and maintained (Nuridin, 2020). Some consider Sunni Sufism to be a type Sufism that has an inclusive character, so it is easier to understand and learn. In addition, it is also identical to the emphasis on aqidah on *Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jamā'ah* (name for Sunni Muslims), so it is considered impossible to deviate from the value of monotheism and the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Even though it is often stigmatized for being of no value and even considered that some of its understandings are out of the context of sharia, philosophical Sufism still has developed and expanded and has followers in the Region, especially among the people of Aceh. In Aceh, four famous Sufist figures influence the form of teachings and their followers, namely Hamzah Fansūrī (1607 AD), Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrānī (1630 AD), Nūr al-Dīn al-Ranīrī (1658 AD) and 'Abd al-Ra'ūf Sinkel (1693M) (Riddel, 2020, pp. 154–156). Concerning the understanding of Sufism, the thoughts of the four figures can be divided into three groups of understanding. First, the characteristics of Hamzah Fansūrī and Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrānī are identical to understandings related to philosophical Sufism, Second, Nūr al-Dīn al-Ranīrī is known as a follower of the Sunni and Third, the Sufism method and stream (*madhhab*), with the expert in the field being 'Abd al-Ra'ūf Sinkel, who is a moderate and accommodating figure of Sufism (Hakiki, 2018, p. 27).

The three groups have a conflict between the first and second. The first group has an understanding of Sufism in the form of philosophical Sufism, as represented by Hamzah Fansūrī and Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrānī. In contrast, the second group has an understanding of Sufism in the form of Sunni Sufism, as espoused by Nūr al-Dīn al-Ranīrī, even to the point of conflict of misdirection or the labeling of one Sufist group by another as "heretical" (Hakiki, 2018, p. 28). The character of philosophical Sufism, identical to Wujūdiyyat Sufism, became one of the focuses of conflict between the first and second groups. The first group, namely Hamzah Fansūrī and Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrānī, who are students of Hamzah Fansūrī, tried to develop the teachings of Wujūdiyyat Sufism in various works, both in Malay and Arabic. The development of Wujūdiyyat Sufism teachings politically was also supported by the position of Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrānī, as mufti and advisor to Sultan Iskandar Muda, who was the Sultan of the Aceh Sultanate from 1607 to 1636 AD (Burhanudin, 2017). The political position of Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrānī, which was quite influential from a religious perspective, gave him access and privileges to develop the teachings of philosophical Sufism (Hakiki, 2018, p. 28). In this context, it can be seen that political ripples affect the development of a Sufist thought. In this case, the support of the mufti and advisors of Sultan Iskandar Muda, who was in power at that time in Aceh, made understanding philosophical Sufism, or commonly referred to as Wujūdiyyat Sufism, more flexible and extensive.

The strategic position of the government of the Sultanate of Aceh gave Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrānī the flexibility to spread the Sufi philosophical understanding that his teacher, Hamzah Fansūrī, had previously developed. Fansūrī's philosophical Sufist teachings are embodiment teachings (Nur, 2020, p. 26). Some consider his

teaching identical to the pantheistic view, which believes that existence is one, even though there appear to be many (Kurniati, 2021, pp. 20–21). From this form of teaching, Fansūrī developed the thoughts of Ibn 'Arabi's Sufism and is even considered the first person to be able to explain the *wiḥdat al-wujūd* form of Ibn 'Arabi with precision in Southeast Asia (Rasuki, 2019, p. 215). In addition, in supporting the teachings of Ibnu 'Arabi's embodiment, Fansūrī also quoted the opinions of several figures who adhered to embodiment, such as al-Junaid al-Baghdadi, al-Ghazali, Abu Yazid al-Busthami, al-Hallaj, Jalal al-Din al-Rumi and Farid al-Din al-Attar (Rasuki, 2019, p. 215).

One of the views of Hamzah Fansūrī's thought, who began to develop his Sufism teachings, is saying that it was the One who created human beings who was the Most Holy and Most High. It is confirmed in the words of Hamzah Fansūrī. who stated that: Know, all you Muslim children of Adam, that Allah made us, from nothing; and from the nameless is given a name, and from nothing is given form; complete with ears, heart, life, and mind. Yogya, we are looking for our Lord so that we can know him with our wisdom or solemnity to a perfect teacher who knows him so that we don't overestimate us (Arifin, 2015).

This statement confirms Fansūrī's two philosophical Sufist views: first, in relation to God, who has a very high and holy position in front of humans and all of his creations (creatures). Second, a *sālik* (Sufi follower and traveler) must act through a teacher/sheikh who can guide and deliver them to be able to achieve *ma'rifatullah* (discovery of the essence of God).

Fansūrī's other philosophical Sufist teachings are related to the nature of existence and creation. According to him, there is only one form, even though it appears to be multiple (many or more than one). One form is skin (*madhhar* or outward reality), and the other is in the form of content (inner reality). All things in the world are emanations (manifestations/*tajalliyāt*) of the essential, which is called *al-Ḥaqq Ta'āla* (Allah) (Arifin, 2015). Fansūrī describes God's form as an immovable deep ocean; the universe and its contents are waves of this. This symptom concept is called the *ta'ayyun* of the Essence, *lā ta'ayyun* (Damanhuri, 2021).

According to Fansūrī, the form has seven dignities. However, the essence of the dignity of the seven is one. These dignities (Damanhuri, 2021) are:

- a. *Aḥadiyah*, the true essence of Allah as God Almighty.
- b. *Waḥdah*, the essence of the Prophet Muhammad.
- c. *Wāḥidiyah*, the essence of Adam, the first human ancestor on Earth.
- d. The spirit realm, which is the essence of life and an essential element for it. This is because every human being is considered alive if they have a life.

- e. *Mithal* nature, the essence of all forms of the creator or all of God's creation, Allah.
- f. *‘Ālam ajsam*, the essence of the body, which is a means used by every creature of God to worship as well as muamalah in everyday life.
- g. Human nature is related to the nature of humans as "special" creatures created by Allah, especially regarding their duties as caliphs on Earth created by Allah.

The concept of philosophical Sufism developed by Hamzah Fansūrī and his students was later subject to responses, criticism and *fatwā* of error from several Sufism experts, especially Nūr al-Dīn al-Ranīrī. The views and criticisms of the philosophical Sufism developed by Fansūrī are understandable because it has three characteristics that mean its critics or observers sometimes do not understand holistically. Therefore, the issue needs to be considered and understood in certain ways and with certain methods. In this context, the understanding of philosophical Sufism is not optimal and even has the potential to fail to capture the substance taught by it. Second, philosophical Sufism has a symbolic-contemplative character. This indicates that what it shows are symbols that must be explored. The symbols highlighted by philosophical Sufism are the "skin" and "contents" which must be explored. Therefore, understanding the symbols in philosophical Sufism must be truly substantive so that its "content" can be explored and not trapped in symbols or skin. Third, the character of philosophical Sufism is the feeling of being "drunk in love" with God, as if the servant has merged with his God. This third context is often used as an "infidel" stigma by other Sufists. The symbol highlighted by philosophical Sufism is the "skin" which must be explored and the "contents" explored. Thus, understanding the symbols in philosophical Sufism must be truly substantive so that the "content" of philosophical Sufism can be explored and not trapped in symbols or skin. Third, the character of philosophical Sufism is the feeling of being "drunk in love" with God so that it is as if the servant has merged with his God. This third context is often used as a stigma of "infidel" by other Sufism. The development of Fansūrī's thought was influenced by the geographical location of Aceh, which was a trading center. Therefore, community mobilization also influenced the development of ideas, which were also spread throughout the archipelago. Therefore, in addition to the development of ideas of wudaiyah in the archipelago, the development of the Fansūrī idea also developed, supported by the development of Aceh's geographical location, meaning that its thinking was oriented towards development in other regions.

Based on the three characters above, it can be concluded that there is a misunderstanding of philosophical Sufism, especially by other parties attempting to

observe and assess the substance of its teachings. Philosophical Sufism with its "symbolic-contemplative" character attempts to find and explore symbols which are highlighted as the essence and substance of their teachings. In this context, philosophical Sufism must be understood and studied gradually and contemplatively because its meaning and essence are always hidden. This symbolic and contemplative character is often used as the basis for attacking and even providing "infidel" justification for it.

### **Nūr al-Dīn al-Ranīrī's Criticism of Hamzah Fansūrī**

Nūr al-Dīn al-Ranīrī's criticism of Hamzah Fansūrī mainly relates to the attributes of God (Allah); Fansūrī declares God to be immanent like empirical phenomena. This is one of the basic criticisms made by Nūr al-Dīn al-Ranīrī (Nūr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Alī ibn Ḥasanji al-Ḥamīd al-Shāfi'i al-Ash'ā'rī al-Aydarusi al-Ranīrī). In addition, Nūr al-Dīn al-Ranīrī's criticism of Hamzah Fansūrī was also supported by political momentum in the form of a change in the government of the Sultanate of Aceh from Sultan Iskandar to Sultan Iskandar Muda (1607-1636 AD) to Sultan Iskandar Tsani Alauddin Mughayat Syah (Sultan Iskandar II, 1641 AD). It was during the reign of Sultan Iskandar II that the influence of embodiment began to fade, especially after the death of Sultan Iskandar Muda and Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrānī. This took place because Nūr al-Dīn al-Ranīrī, an Islamic scholar from Gujarat who came to Aceh in 1637, held the position of *mufti*.

These two aspects (*Waḥdat al-wujūd* and denial of heaven and hell) demonstrate the dominance of the spread of Sufism that had taken root in society, and the political role and succession of leadership in its development. In terms of the rooted aspect of philosophical Sufism, it can be said that in general it has so far been recognized by the people of the Archipelago, especially those of Aceh, but substantially and essentially it has not become an important matter.

It can be understood because of its "symbolic-substantial-contemplative" character. Instead of facilitating understanding, philosophical Sufism is easily recognized through its symbols in the form of poetry and advice, while its deepest meaning is only understood by certain people, who understand it in certain ways and using certain methods. It confirms that philosophical Sufism is familiar as a symbol manifested in poems and expressions in society, but its substance is difficult to understand and not deeply rooted in society. The second aspect relates to the existence of political succession factors in leadership. It can be seen from the momentum of the transition of the transfer of power of the Sultanate of Aceh from Sultan Iskandar to Sultan Iskandar Muda and then to Sultan Iskandar II, which

resulted in changes in the composition of the sultanate officials. One of the positions which played an important role was that of mufti, which Nūr al-Dīn al-Ranīrī, a major critic of philosophical Sufism, later held. The second aspect relates to the existence of political succession factors in leadership. It can be seen from the momentum of the transition of the transfer of power of the Sultanate of Aceh from Sultan Iskandar to Sultan Iskandar Muda to Sultan Iskandar II which has also resulted in changes in the composition of the sultanate officials. One of the positions that had an important role was the position of mufti which Nūr al-Dīn al-Ranīrī later held as a major critic of philosophical Sufism.

The change in the position of the sultan and then the impact on that of mufti had a major influence on the development of Sufist thought, in this case philosophical Sufism. The importance of the position of mufti in the religious field is because he is considered a religious expert or ulema, whose authoritative decisions/fatwas are strengthened by the legitimacy of power from the Sultan. This means that what is decreed by the mufti, or even tasawuf adopted by him, will be supported by the Sultan and facilitated to be developed in the community. In this context, when Nūr al-Dīn al-Ranīrī, the main critic of philosophical Sufism, held the role of mufti.

This right political position created an opportunity for Nūr al-Dīn al-Ranīrī to criticize and at the same time, revise the Sufist views of the previous mufti, which were oriented towards embodiment and philosophical Sufism. Nūr al-Dīn al-Ranīrī used a written method and approach in an attempt to criticize such views. In addition, Nūr al-Dīn al-Ranīrī made an effort to debate with followers of Hamzah Fansūrī and Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrānī by inviting and gathering together around forty scholars and Sufism experts to discuss and make criticisms of the embodiment view. The criticisms made by Nūr al-Dīn al-Ranīrī are quite interesting because they carry out scientific efforts and are based on a scientific process and literacy and scientific debate in criticizing the views of Hamzah Fansūrī and Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrānī and their followers. In this context, the revision efforts made by Nūr al-Dīn al-Ranīrī also include an attempt to promote Sunni Sufism as a substitute for philosophical Sufism. It was mainly in its emphasis on its simpler form, based on monotheism, and promotion of the Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah creed, which at that time the majority was embraced by the Acehnese and Malays in general. The revision efforts made by Nūr al-Dīn al-Ranīrī also included ones to promote Sunni Sufism as a "substitute" for philosophical Sufism.

Substantially, Nūr al-Dīn al-Ranīrī's criticism of the embodiment view developed by Hamzah Fansūrī and Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrānī is based on four points (Sudarajat, 2017), as detailed below:

- a. Hamzah Fansūrī's embodiment view emphasizes that God is immanent or in the womb of the universe, natural phenomena and the universe. This confirms that Hamzah Fansūrī's embodiment view considers God to be the essence of empirical phenomena. In fact, in the creed of Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah, Allah is different from creatures and cannot be empirically explained.
- b. Hamzah Fansūrī's view states that life is in the middle between the creator and the creature, that life is neither a creator nor a creature. Nūr al-Dīn al-Ranīrī considers this view to resemble the view of the Mu'tazilah, which seeks to rationalize something that should be irrational.
- c. Hamzah Fansūrī's view is that the Qur'an is based on God's commands and statements (*Kalāmullāh*) covering aspects of the validity of life, faith, and the history of the human journey, which is then identified as a Mu'tazilah view, and by Nūr al-Dīn al-Ranīrī is considered contrary to the creed of *Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jamā'ah*.
- d. Hamzah Fansūrī's view that human life is like a wave that will return to the sea. According to this, life comes from God and will return to "unite" with God. This unification view has drawn criticism because it seems to unite the creator and creation. It is in the view of Nūr al-Dīn al-Ranīrī because the truth is that between the creator and creation comprises two different essences which cannot be equated, let alone united.

The four criticisms by Nūr al-Dīn al-Ranīrī of the embodiment view developed by Hamzah Fansūrī and Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrānī are encapsulated in two problems: *tanzīh* and *tashbīh* (a way of expressing a sentence by likening something or more with something else). Fansūrī's view regarding *tanzīh* is that God has attributes and qualities that exceed all his creatures (Aizid, 2016). In addition, Nūr al-Dīn al-Ranīrī's critique of Hamzah Fansūrī and Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrānī's views regarding tasybih is considered to "equalize" between God as creator and creatures as creation. This is especially the case with Hamzah Fansūrī's embodiment view, which emphasizes that God is immanent or in the womb of the universe, and is a natural phenomenon. Based on this view, Nūr al-Dīn al-Ranīrī categorizes Hamzah Fansūrī's embodiment view as pantheistic, based on the following verses:

"All kinds of him; all colors, His colors; all sounds, his sounds; because He is *Wahdahūlāsyarikalahū*. If it is said that there is something other than Him, it is *shirk* (shirk needs to be interpreted if you believe and claim to testify that there is someone other than him and all his possessions are also owned by someone who is not him) with the ruling on zhulm."

In addition to his criticism and categorization, pantheism, Nūr al-Dīn al-Ranīrī also stigmatized Hamzah Fansūrī for not practicing sharia. However, Nūr al-Dīn al-

Ranīrī's accusation against Hamzah Fansūrī, who was considered not to care about sharia, was finally refuted through Hamzah Fansūrī's poem (Aizid, 2016):

"Muhammad's Sharia is too *'amq*, the light is bright in *Bayt al-'Athīq*, the sign is that the *ghalīb* is perfect again, the number of *kāfir* becomes *raq*, *Bayt al-'athīq* is the name of the *kaaba*, the worship in it is never tired, the place is *ma'lūm* in the land of Mecca, Islam will be the Mecca of worshiping Allah."

"Let us not leave the prayer and not leave the Shari'a because the Shari'a is essentially one. Whoever is not drunk or *mahwu* (having lost consciousness) or is not *junun* (crazy) then this comes from Allah, if he leaves prayer and fasting and eats physically unclean food and from disobedience."

Based on these two verses from Hamzah Fansūrī, the accusation that Hamzah Fansūrī is not syar'i and even "deviant" cannot be accepted by common sense. On the one hand, the various stigmas and allegations of being heretical from Nūr al-Dīn al-Ranīrī in relation to philosophical Sufism cannot in fact, be blamed. This is because philosophical Sufism is symbolic and implicit, so deep understanding is needed. In this context, it is natural that because it overemphasizes the symbolic aspect, so the existence of a deviant "stigma" against philosophical Sufism is also reasonable. It is only necessary to understand philosophical Sufism comprehensively before describing or assessing the heresy of a school of Sufism thought, especially philosophical Sufism.

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that the criticism of Nūr al-Dīn al-Ranīrī is commonplace and reasonable in the scientific repertoire of the Islamic religion, but the accusation that Hamzah Fansūrī is not syar'i is misguided and is something that cannot be reasonably accepted. In fact, Hamzah Fansūrī's thoughts regarding the embodiment view are commonly held ones and have not only been developed in Aceh. The embodiment view or similar is also widespread in the Archipelago, for example, in Java, namely Syekh Siti Jenar. Despite this, blaming Nūr al-Dīn al-Ranīrī's for his negative assessment of philosophical Sufism cannot be justified, because it has a symbolic and implicit character that is difficult to understand, so stuck in a narrow understanding of the symbols that are highlighted as the essence and substance of the teachings of philosophical *tasawuf*.

## D. Conclusion

Hamzah Fansūrī's philosophical tasawuf thought is "symbolic-contemplative" and aims to place it behind the symbols or signs that are highlighted as the essence and substance of the teachings of philosophical tasawuf. In this case, an understanding of philosophical tasawuf, especially by other parties attempting to observe and evaluate the substance of the teachings of philosophical tasawuf, is

natural. In this context, philosophical Sufism must be understood and studied gradually and thoroughly, because its meaning and nature are always hidden. This symbolic and contemplative character is often used as the basis for providing "infidel" justification for the concepts and thoughts of philosophical Sufism.

Criticism of Hamzah Fansurī's philosophical ṭaṣawuf thoughts, especially those made by Nūr al-Dīn al-Ranīrī, is common and natural in the scientific realm of Islamic philosophy, but the "accusation" that Hamzah Fansurī violated religion to the point of misguided understanding is something that cannot be taken for granted because of Islamic philosophy. In fact, Hamzah Fansurī's thoughts related to Wuduiyah views are general views and have not only developed in Aceh; Wuduiyah views or similar have also developed in other parts of the archipelago, one example being in Java, with its well-known figure, Syekh Siti Jenar. However, the blaming and negative judgment of Nūr al-Dīn al-Ranīrī towards philosophical ṭaṣawuf can neither be justified, because philosophical ṭaṣawuf has symbols or signs (clues) and implicit characters, which are difficult to understand if one is trapped in a narrow understanding of these. Moreover, there is a judgment against philosophical ṭaṣawuf which claims it is only on the "skin (surface)", which is different from the substance and "content (matter)" contained in it.

## References

- Aizid, R. (2016a). *Biografi ulama Nusantara* (1st ed.). DIVA Press.
- Aizid, R. (2016b). *Sejarah Islam Nusantara* (1st ed.). DIVA Press.
- Arifin, M. (2015). *Wujudiyah di Nusantara: Kontinuitas dan perubahan*. Pustaka Pelajar.
- Arifina, M., Agussanib, A., & Rudianto, R. (2020). Anthropological approaches in Islamic studies. *Revista Argentina de Clínica Psicológica*, 29(3), 653–661. <https://doi.org/10.24205/03276716.2020.768>
- Arrasyid, A. (2020). Konsep-konsep tasawuf dan relevansinya dalam kehidupan. *El-Afkar*, 9(1), 50.
- Badriyyah, L., & Az-Zaf, A. (2020). Perbedaan mazhab empat imam besar (Hanafi, Maliki, Syafi'i, dan Hambali) dalam paradigma Hukum Fikih. *Al-Muaddib*, 5(1), 65–79. <https://doi.org/10.31604/muaddib.v5i1.65-79>
- Badrudin. (2015). *Pengantar Ilmu Tasawuf* (1st ed.). A-Empat.
- Burhanudin, J. (2017). *Islam dalam arus sejarah Indonesia* (2nd ed.). Kencana.
- Damanhuri, D. (2021). Hamzah Fanshuri tentang konsep wujud. *Jurnal Pemikiran Islam*, 1(1), 62–67.

- Faridi, F., & Ariga, S. (2022). Kajian tasawuf dalam pendekatan agama Islam (Studi deskriptif tasawuf konvensional dan tasawuf modern serta implementasinya di sekolah). *Jurnal Pendidikan Tambusai*, 6(2), 16477–16483.
- Hakiki, K. M. (2018). Tasawuf Wujūdiyyat: Tinjauan ulang polemik penyesatan Hamzah Fansūrī oleh Shaykh Nūr al-Dīn al-Ranīrī. *Theologia*, 29(1), 25–58. <https://doi.org/10.21580/teo.2018.29.1.2400>
- Kurniati, D. (2021). Ulama-ulama sufi penyebar Islam dari Aceh abad 17 (Biografi, karya, dan ajaran). *Tsaqofah & Tarikh: Jurnal Sejarah Dan Kebudayaan*, 17(1), 17–30.
- Manzilati, A. (2017). *Metode penelitian kualitatif: Paradigma, metode, dan aplikasi*. Universitas Brawijaya Press.
- Muchsin, M. A., Hadi, A., Manan, A., & Putra, R. S. (2021). The disputes of Ratéb Siribèe in Aceh. *Miqot: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman*, 45(1), 127–141. <https://doi.org/10.30821/miqot.v45i1.798>
- Ni'am, S. (2017). Hamzah Fansūrī: Pelopor tasawuf Wujudiyah dan pengaruhnya hingga kini di Nusantara. *Epistemé: Jurnal Pengembangan Ilmu Keislaman*, 12(1), 261–286. <https://doi.org/10.21274/epis.2017.12.1.261-286>
- Nur, A. F. (2020). Mencari karakteristik ekspresi bahasa metaforis dalam Tasawuf Wujudiyah Nusantara. *Jurnal Al-Tsiqoh*, 5(1), 25–27. <https://doi.org/10.31538/altsiq.v5i1.608>
- Nuraini, N., & Marhayati, N. (2019). Peran tasawuf terhadap masyarakat modern. *Analisis*, 19(2), 297–320. <https://doi.org/10.24042/ajskv19i2.3375>
- Nurdin, E. S. (2020). *Pengantar Ilmu Tasawuf*. Aslan Grafika Solution.
- Peacock, J. L. (1978). *Muslim puritans: Reformist psychology in Southeast Asian Islam*. University of California Press.
- Rasuki, R. (2019). Hamzah Fansūrī dan doktrin Wahdat al-Wujud di Nusantara. *Jurnal Kariman*, 6(2), 213–224. <https://doi.org/10.52185/kariman.v6i2.89>
- Retsikas, K. (2012). Becoming sacred: Humanity and divinity in East Java, Indonesia. In *Articulating Islam: Anthropological approaches to Muslim worlds* (pp. 119–138). Springer Netherlands. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-4267-3\\_6](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-4267-3_6)
- Riddel, P. G. (2020). The sufi path: Travelling in search of learning: An Indonesian case study. In R. J. Nicholls & P. G. Riddel (Eds.), *Insights into Sufism: Voices from the hearth* (pp. 151–168). Cambridge Scholar Publishing.
- Sholihin, P. (2021). Pemikiran tasawuf perspektif syariat Islam. *SEMJ: Sharia Economic Management BusinessJournal*, 2(1), 14–23.
- Siraj, F. M. (2021). Pengaruh Ibn Arabi dalam Kosmologi Hamzah Faansuri. *Jurnal Peradaban*, 1(1), 10–28.

Sudrajat, A. (2019). Pemikiran Wujudiyah Hamzah Fansūrī dan kritik Nurudin al-Raniri. *Humanika*, 17(1), 55–76.  
<https://doi.org/10.21831/hum.v17i1.23123>

This page has been intentionally left blank.