
EARLY ISLAMIC HISTORIOGRAPHY (SUFISTIC) IN INDONESIA:

The Dynamics of Sufism and Al-Raniri's Criticism in the Historiography of Early Islam in Indonesia by Hamzah Fansuri

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Abstrak

Artikel ini membahas historiografi Islam awal di Indonesia, dengan fokus pada kontribusi Hamzah Fansuri sebagai tokoh sufi terkemuka. Karyanya mencerminkan integrasi tasawuf dengan budaya lokal, termasuk melalui konsep Wahdat al-Wujud yang menekankan kesatuan manusia, alam, dan Tuhan. Historiografi ini, terutama dalam tradisi sufi, menekankan pemberian makna bagi komunitas Muslim, serupa dengan pendekatan historiografi abad pertengahan Eropa yang memadukan unsur fiksi untuk memperkuat pesan. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode sejarah dengan pendekatan kepustakaan, menganalisis karya dan pemikiran Hamzah Fansuri dalam konteks sinkretisme dengan tradisi Hindu-Buddha. Artikel ini juga mengkaji kritik Nuruddinal-Raniri terhadap ajaran Wujudiyah Hamzah, yang mencerminkan tantangan interpretasi sufistik dalam budaya lokal. Melalui studi ini, ditemukan bahwa tasawuf berperan sentral dalam historiografi Islam di Indonesia, memberikan wawasan tentang dinamika pemikiran sufistik, budaya, dan filsafat pada masa awal Islamisasi di Nusantara

Kata kunci: *Historiografi, Islam, sufisme, Hamzah Fansuri, Arraniri.*

Abstract

This article discusses early Islamic historiography in Indonesia, focusing on the contributions of Hamzah Fansuri as a prominent Sufi figure. His works reflect the integration of Sufism with local culture, particularly through the concept of Wahdat al-Wujud, emphasizing the unity of humans, nature, and God. This historiography, especially in the Sufi tradition, highlights the significance of meaning for Muslim communities, akin to medieval European historiography that incorporated fictional elements to reinforce its messages. The study employs historical methods with a literature review approach, analyzing Hamzah Fansuri's works and thoughts in the context of syncretism with Hindu-Buddhist traditions. It also examines Nuruddin al-Raniri's criticism of Hamzah's *Wujudiyah* teachings, showcasing the challenges of

interpreting Sufi ideas within local cultures. This study reveals that Sufism played a central role in shaping Islamic historiography in Indonesia, offering insights into the dynamics of Sufi thought, culture, and philosophy during early Islamization in the archipelago.

Keywords: *Historiografi, Islam, sufism, Hamzah Fansuri, Arraniri*

A. Intodustion

Early Islamic historiography in Indonesia focused on giving meaning and relevance to the Muslim community. This was similar to the way medieval European history was conducted, where fictional elements were used to make history more meaningful and convincing to the reader. The aim is to provide deeper "meaning" for Muslims in Indonesia. The use of fictional elements is a way to reinforce the importance of the Islamic community and tell their history in a more interesting and meaningful way. Using fictional elements in the context of historiography refers to adding imaginative or fabricated elements to historical narratives. In the case of the sentence, stating that early Islamic historiography in Indonesia, like medieval European historiography, involves the use of fictional elements means that in the presentation of history, there are additional story elements or events that may not necessarily reflect actual events, but are intended to reinforce certain values, meanings, or messages desired by the author or society at that time.

These works of classical Islamic historiography cannot be separated from Sufistic themes, which are strongly influenced by the spread of Islamic teachings and the movement to spread the influence of tarekat in Indonesia. The majority of historians agree on the power of Sufism in the process of spreading and reforming Islam in the archipelago (Auliahadi & Oktavia, 2019).

The historiography of early Islam in Indonesia, particularly in the Sufi tradition, is a subject of great interest to researchers. Classical Indonesian Sufistic scholars produced works influenced by the complexities of Sufism, which incorporated a wide variety of themes. These themes include not only spiritual and mystical aspects, but also everyday life, reflecting stories from the past. The writing of classical Islamic texts was heavily influenced by Sufism during the heyday of Islam in Indonesia. One important figure in the early days of Islamic historiography in Indonesia was Hamzah Fansuri, a prominent Qadiriyyah Sufi master, who contributed to the development of Islam in the archipelago with his famous work *Wahdat al-Wujud* by Ibn al-Arabi, which had a wide impact across the archipelago. The core of his teaching explains the unity of being, reflecting the great influence of Sufism on early Islamic historiography in Indonesia.

B. Method

This research is library research or often called library research. This library research is done by collecting data in the form of writings and books related with the theme to be studied. The nature of this research is descriptive qualitative, namely the

author will analyze the thoughts and historical works of Hamzah Fansuri as well as criticism from Arraniniry on the work of Hamzah Fansuri. According to Koentjaraningrat (Koentjaraningrat, 1993) descriptive research aims to describe precisely a certain situation or to determine the main cause of a problem that will be studied later. that will be researched later (Koentjaningrat, 1993).

C. Result and discussion

Sufism throughout the development of Islamization and renewal of Islamic teachings in Indonesia has a stronger position than aspects of theology and law. The strength of this aspect of Sufism is due to the tendency of accommodation and acculturation carried out by Sufi groups to the religion and culture of the Archipelago community (Abdurrahman & Syaifan, 2018).

In the early history of Islam in Indonesia, Sufism played an important role in shaping the religious and cultural landscape of the region, Sufism, which arrived in Indonesia in the 13th century, was integrated into the existing Hindu-Buddhist tradition, resulting in a fluid and pluralistic form of Sufism that was Indonesianized in culturally specific ways (Smith, 2021).

The works of early Indonesian Islamic historiography generally share a common theme of discussing the teachings of Sufism, such as how to dhikr, glorify Allah, and the relationship between sharia, tariqah, hakikat and makrifat. The manuscripts of these tariqah scholars include information on social, cultural and religious aspects. Not infrequently there are also texts made by tariqah scholars that criticize the teachings of other tariqahs (Pinem, 2012). The essence of the teachings in his wahdatul wujud explains how God is very close to humans, even beyond the veins of the human neck. Hamzah Fanshuri's teachings were later continued by his students who wrote texts with similar themes, namely by Syamsuddin Sumatrani (Auliahadi & Oktavia, 2019).

1. Hamzah Fansuri Biografi

To date, no written evidence has been found that describes his life and journey, what his treatises on Sufism are and how many historiographical works he has written. The history of his birth and death is also unknown, nor does anyone know where he is buried (Hadi, 2001). Only on the basis of limited and inadequate facts can scholars confirm that Hamzah Fansuri lived between the mid-16th and early 17th centuries. Syamsuddin Pasai (Sumatrani) who became and commentator on his book in his writing "Syarh Rub" said that Hamzah Fansuri died in 1630 (Solihin, 2005).

Hamzah Fansuri is thought to have been born in the land of Fansuri or Barus, between the mid-16th century and the early 17th century, but when and where exactly Hamzah Fansuri was born is not known for certain. And the land of

Fansuri or Barus was included in the territory of the Kingdom of Aceh Darussalam since the late 16th century. Hamzah Fansuri was a prominent figure, he was a scholar, ulama, literary figure, and cultural figure of his time (Haryadi, 2012).

Almost all writers of Islamic history note that Shaykh Hamzah Fansuri and his student Shaykh Syamsuddin Sumatrani were among the Sufi figures who understood Al-Hallaj. Hulul, Ittihad, Mahabah and others. Syaikh Hamzah Fansuri is recognized as one of the most popular Islamic poets of his time, so that now his name adorns the pages of Malay and Indonesian literary history. His name is recorded as a figure of great caliber in the development of Islam in the archipelago from his century to the present century (Abdullah, 1980). Hamka's statement in his book "Tasawuf Development and Purification" shows appreciation for the role of several early Sufi figures in Indonesia in the development of Sufism in the Malay region. Among the figures mentioned by Hamka, Hamzah Fansuri, Abdur Rauf Singkel, and Nuruddin Ar-Raniri are considered Sufi figures who made significant contributions in introducing and developing the tradition of Sufism in Indonesia (Hamka, 2005).

Hamzah was recognized as a great scholar. It is narrated that he traveled to the Middle East, visiting several centers of Islamic knowledge, including Mecca, Medina, Jerusalem and Baghdad, where he was initiated into the Qadariyah tariqah. He also reportedly traveled to Pahang, Kedah and Java. Hamzah mastered Arabic, Persian as well as Urdu. He was a prolific writer of religious treatises as well as prose works filled with mystical ideas (Azra, 2005).

2. Hamzah Fansuri's Thought

Hamzah Fansuri was a thinker who was influenced by pantheist thought or what is known as wujudiyah. He was influenced by several Muslim philosophers such as Ibn 'Arabi, al-Ghazali, al-Junaid al-Baghdadi, al-Hallaj, Abu Yazid al-Busthami, and Jalal al-Din al-Rumi. Hamzah Fansuri studied and quoted their opinions to strengthen his argument in his wujudiyah. He also translated their works because he had the ability to compose good words that were in accordance with Ibn 'Arabi's wahdatul wujud (Awaluddin et al., 2011).

Hamzah Fansuri's wahdatul wujud believes that there is only one true being, namely God. In his view, God can be compared to a deep and calm ocean, while the universe and its contents are likened to waves arising from God's form. Hamzah explains that everything comes from the true God and the entire process of life, such as water becoming vapor, clouds, rain, and finally returning to the ocean, is part of the cycle of creation that leads back to God. This reflects a deep understanding of Islamic mysticism, where the relationship between creation and the Creator, as well as the realization of God's oneness, is the main focus (Sholihin, 2001).

3. The Works of Hamzah Fanshuri

The works or writings made by Hamzah Fansuri are very many but after the policy of the Aceh kingdom based on Nuridin Arraniri, many works and books of Hamzah Fansuri were burned and destroyed even more than that the followers of Hamzah Fansuri until some were sentenced to death. This event occurred during the reign of Sultan Iskandar Tsani (1637-1641 AD) with the consideration that they did not want to change the stance of the Wujudiah teachings which were then considered heretical by the Sultan but other works can still be kept well until now.

The works of Shaykh Hamzah Fansuri in both verse and prose have attracted the attention of both western scholars or western orientalists and local scholars. Hamzah Fansuri was the first known writer to express mystical panentheistic ideas¹ in the Malay language. His works include both prose and poetry, reflecting his deep understanding of Sufi philosophy and mysticism. Fansuri's influence was profound in the spread of Islam in the Aceh region and beyond, particularly in the development of wujudiyah Sufism, a form of Sufism that focuses on the unity of being. His writings, including the "Risalah Tasawuf" and his poems, have been the subject of extensive study and have had a lasting impact on the development of Sufism in the region. Fansuri's ideas on the nature of God, man, and the universe are summarized in his various works, such as "Syarah Al-Asyiqin" and "Asrar Al-Arifin". His life and works have been the focus of numerous research efforts aimed at understanding his contribution to Sufi thought and his lasting influence in the Nusantara region.²

Some of Hamzah Fansuri's works that reflect the historiographical dimension of early Islam in Indonesia involve poetic and mystical depictions of Islamic history and teachings. His poems attempt to depict Islamic values, the greatness of God, and spiritual journeys. In his works, Fansuri also frequently uses symbols and metaphors, reflecting his understanding and interpretation of Islamic teachings.

The three works of Sufism by Shaykh Hamzah Fansuri that have been found and translated are:

1. Syarah Al-Asyiqin (The drink of those who make love) (Hadi, 2001) The content of Syarah Al-Syiqin is a summary of the teachings of Ibn Arabi's "Wahdat Al Wujud", Sadr, Al-Din Al-Qunawi and "Ad Al-Karim Al-Jilli, and how to achieve makrifat, possibly following the practices of the Qadariyah tariqah that Syaikh Hamzah Fansuri adhered to.

¹ In the panentheistic view, God is considered to be present in and beyond the world, and Hamzah Fansuri's works reflect this concept. His innovative and unique way of conveying his panentheistic ideas brought him into the spotlight in the academic world.

² (Haya, 2022)

The book consists of seven chapters and its description of Sufism is very brief. Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4 describe the stages of the science of suluk which consists of shari'at, tariqah, hakekat, and makrifat. Chapter 5 describes the tajjali of the substance of God the Most High. Here the principles of Wujudiyah ontology are outlined. Chapter 6 describes the attributes of God. Chapter 7 describes the contents of Da Sukr (mystical drunkenness).

2. Asrar Al-Arifin (the secret of the wise)(Samad, 2000) In this treatise, Shaykh Hamzah Fansuri drops fifteen poems he composed and interpreted himself and analyzed line by line. The analysis turns out to be a long description of the doctrine of metaphysics or the ontology of Wujudiyah. This book is an Ikhtiasar tasawuf intended for readers with higher knowledge.
3. Al-Muntahi (the one who reaches the highest recognition)(Hadi, 2001) In summary, this book discusses three important issues, including:
 - a. About the occurrence or creation of the universe as the back of the manifestation of than and His omnipotence.
 - b. About how God manifests Himself and how the universe is viewed from the point of view of the masters of insight as well as the first cause (cousa prima) of all events.
 - c. About how a person can return to his origin, namely to the state of Kanz Makhfi (hidden treasury) when God according to a Qudsi hadith "kuntum kanzan makhfiyan wa ahbabtu an u'rafa" (I am the hidden treasury, I love to be known so I create).

In addition to his Sufism works, the works of Hamzah Fansuri in the form of famous poems are 6 poems, including:

1. Syair Burung Pingai
2. Syair Dagang
3. Syair Sidang Fakir
4. Syair Ikan Tongkol
5. Syair Perahu
6. Syair Burung Pungguk
7. Thair al-'uryan

Nuruddin al-Raniri, a prominent scholar, provided significant criticism of Hamzah Fansuri's work, particularly focusing on the concept of Wujudiyah. Al-Raniri's critique was based on the concern that the teachings propagated by Hamzah Fansuri could lead to misinterpretation and misunderstanding. His critique was based on the concern that Hamzah Fansuri's teachings could be misinterpreted. Al-Raniri focused on the concept of intrinsic and inherent form in Fansuri's work, saying that inherent form is essentially meaningless and can

disappear at any time. Their debate reflects the complexity of Sufi thought in Indonesia.

Some fundamental criticisms of Hamzah Fansuri's work:

1. Sufi Thought: Hamzah Fansuri was a pioneer in the development of Sufism in the archipelago, especially in the form of Wujudiyah Sufism (Haya, 2022). In Fansuri's works, the main focus is on the usefulness of Sufism to create salvation and the use of God's bloody power.
2. Hermeneutic: Fansuri's works, such as the "Risalah Tasawuf" and poems, require a deep hermeneutic in order to be understood and decoded (Haya, 2022)
3. Interpretation of these works requires an understanding of the social, political, and historical context as well as expertise in Sufism.
4. The influence of the Kingdom of Aceh: Hamzah Fansuri provides a critique of the Kingdom of Aceh, which shows how Sufi thought at the time was directed primarily towards the politics of the region. This shows how Fansuri's work became part of a wider Sufi tradition and community.

Overall, Hamzah Fansuri's historiographical work shows how Sufi thought and literary works at the time had a profound influence on the history and culture of the Nusantara. A number of important writings by al-Raniri, however, are devoted entirely to this polemic and reject what he sees as the shirk writings of Hamzah Fansuri and his followers. Among al-Raniri's works is *Jawahir al-'Ulum fi Kasyf al-Ma'lum* in which al-Raniri's position is clearly stated and a sharp critique of the teachings of his predecessors.

The strong reaction of Nuruddin Ar-Raniri with the political support of Sultan Iskandar Tsani was to declare the teachings of Hamzah Fansuri and Syamsuddin Sumatrani, followers of Hamzah Fansuri, as heretical and infidels. The books of Hamzah and Syamsuddin Sumatrani were burned in the courtyard of the Baiturrahim mosque. However, although Raniri's criticism of Fansuri's and Sumatrani's *wahdatul wujud* view is harsh, his own thinking can actually be seen as in line with this view in its more cautious form.

The difference between Fansuri and Raniri is actually very slight, it only lies in whether God is inside or outside nature. Both agree that nature is a shadow (*dhill*) because the ultimate and sole form is only God. While Fansuri sees God as within the shadow, Raniri sees God as outside the shadow. In other words, Fansuri emphasizes the immanence aspect of God, while Raniri emphasizes the transcendence aspect of God Himself. In simple terms, Fansuri believed that God is all around us and can be felt in our daily lives. Raniri, on the other hand, believes that God exists beyond our understanding and beyond anything we can see or feel.

in this world. Thus, Fansuri emphasized God's presence in our lives, while Raniri focused more on God's infinite majesty. (Rahman, 2008)

In terms of basic conception, Raniri should have followed or walked with Hamzah [Fansuri] to the end of the road in accordance with the message received from Ibn Arabi without contradicting him in the slightest. Conceptually, his accusation of Hamzah Fansuri's wujudiyah [wahdatul wujud] as heretical is very weak." Thus, Raniri's violent attacks on Fansuri and Sumatrani seem to have been more political than doctrinal in nature (Bruinessen & Van, 1995).

D. Conclusion

Overall, the works and thoughts of Hamzah Fansuri take center stage in the history and development of Islam in Indonesia. As a pioneer of Wujudiyah Sufism, Fansuri made a significant contribution in shaping the foundation of Islamic mystical thought in the archipelago. However, Fansuri's views, especially regarding the concept of Wujudiyah, were sharply criticized by scholars such as Nuruddin al-Raniri. The polemic between Fansuri and al-Raniri reflects the complexity of Sufi philosophical thought in Indonesia at that time. Fansuri emphasized the immanence of God, while al-Raniri focused more on the transcendence of God. Although this difference seems subtle, it has a big impact in the context of understanding God's presence in everyday life. The use of fictional elements in early Islamic historiography in Indonesia, as recognized by some researchers, adds an interesting and meaningful dimension to the delivery of history. The incorporation of imaginative or fictional elements aimed to reinforce certain values and messages, in line with medieval European historiographical practices. While Fansuri became an integral part of Nusantara history and culture, especially in the development of wujudiyah Sufism, the criticism he received from al-Raniri shows the complexity in the understanding and interpretation of Sufi teachings. This debate reflects the dynamics of Islamic thought in Indonesia at the time. In a broader context, the historiography of early Islam in Indonesia, particularly that influenced by Sufi traditions, provides an interesting and in-depth look at the development of Islam in the region. The works of scholars, such as Hamzah Fansuri, cover social, cultural and religious aspects, creating a valuable intellectual legacy to be studied and understood in the context of the history of the Nusantara.

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