

Islam Nusantara

Journal for the Study of Islamic History and Culture



**Renegotiating the Islam-Development Nexus in Indonesia:
Fikih Peradaban as a Middle Ground between Local and
Global Development Paradigms**

Amanda tho Seeth

**The Role of Sufis in Connecting Aceh to the Global Islamic
Network in the 17th Century**

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**نور النفيس في تخریج أحاديث كتاب الدر النفيس
للشيخ محمد نفيس ابن إدريس البنجري**

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Book Review

**Wali Pitu and Muslim Pilgrimage in Bali, Indonesia
(Inventing a Sacred Tradition)**

Siti Nabilah

**Fakultas Islam Nusantara
Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Indonesia**

مجلد اسلامي

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Siti Nabilah

Muhammad Affan

The Role of Sufis in Connecting Aceh to the Global Islamic Network in the 17th Century

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Abstract

In the 17th Century, the Sultanate of Aceh reached its peak. At that time, Aceh was connected to the Islamic world through diplomatic channels and maritime trade. In addition to these political and economic factors, Aceh's connectivity with the Islamic World was also connected through the Sufism network, where Sufis from Aceh sailed to Arabia and several other Muslim regions in order to study. These Sufis then returned to Aceh and established Islamic spiritual centers in Aceh and other Southeast Asian regions. The activities of these Sufis, in turn, helped connect Aceh to the global Islamic network. However, the actual role played by these Sufis in connecting Aceh to the global Islamic network has not been specifically explained because several studies that have been conducted tend to explain the pattern of the ulama network formed by Sufis in a broader scope. So that the more specific role of Sufis in connecting Aceh with the global Islamic network has not received adequate explanation. Based on these issues, this study aims to discuss the role of Sufis in building interconnectivity between Aceh and the global Islamic network in the 17th Century. The main question posed in this study is how the Sufis played their role as agents of connecting Aceh with the international Islamic network in the 17th Century. While, the method used in this study is the historical method where the source search is done through literature study. From the study, it is concluded that Sufis such as Hamzah Fansuri, Syamsuddin as Sumatrani and Shaykh Abdurrauf played an

important role in connecting Aceh with the global Islamic network stretching from Southeast Asia to North Africa through wandering and sending students to study at international centers of Sufism in the Middle East. In addition, Sufis also established correspondence with other Sufis in other parts of the Islamic world. In this way, Aceh became connected to the global Islamic network.

Keywords: Sufism, Islamic interconnectivity, Sultanate of Aceh, global Islamic network, Islamic history.

Abstrak

Pada Abad 17 Masehi, Kesultanan Aceh mencapai puncak kejayaannya. Pada masa itu, Aceh telah terhubung dengan Dunia Islam melalui jalur diplomatik dan perdagangan maritim rempah-rempah. Selain karena faktor politik dan ekonomi tersebut, konektivitas Aceh dengan Dunia Islam juga terhubung melalui jaringan sufisme, dimana para sufi dari Aceh berlayar ke Arab dan beberapa wilayah Muslim lainnya dalam kerangka menuntut ilmu. Para sufi ini kemudian kembali lagi ke Aceh dan mendirikan pusat-pusat spiritual Islam di Aceh dan kawasan Asia Tenggara lainnya. Aktivitas para sufi ini, pada gilirannya telah membantu menghubungkan Aceh dengan jaringan Islam global. Namun bagaimana peran sebenarnya yang dijalankan oleh para sufi ini dalam menghubungkan Aceh dengan jaringan Islam global belum dijelaskan secara khusus karena beberapa kajian yang telah dilakukan cenderung menjelaskan pola jaringan ulama yang terbentuk oleh para sufi dalam lingkup lebih luas. Sehingga peran sufi yang lebih spesifik dalam menghubungkan Aceh dengan jaringan Islam global belum mendapat penjelasan yang memadai. Berdasarkan pada persoalan tersebut, kajian ini bertujuan untuk mendiskusikan peran sufi dalam membangun interkonektivitas antara Aceh dengan jaringan Islam global pada Abad 17. Pertanyaan utama yang diajukan dalam kajian ini adalah bagaimana para sufi menjalankan peran sebagai agen penghubung Aceh dengan jaringan Islam internasional pada Abad 17. Metode yang dipergunakan dalam kajian ini adalah metode sejarah dimana penelusuran sumbernya dilakukan melalui studi kepustakaan. Dari kajian yang dilakukan diperoleh kesimpulan bahwa para sufi semacam Hamzah Fansuri, Syamsuddin as Sumatrani dan Syekh Abdurrauf telah berperan penting menghubungkan Aceh dengan jaringan Islam global yang membentang dari Asia Tenggara sampai ke Afrika Utara melalui pengembaraan dan pengiriman para murid-murid untuk belajar ke pusat-pusat sufisme internasional di kawasan Timur Tengah. Selain itu, para sufi juga menjalin hubungan korespondensi dengan sufi lainnya di belahan dunia Islam lainnya. Dengan cara tersebut, Aceh menjadi terhubung dengan jaringan Islam global.

Kata kunci: sufi, interkonektivitas Islam, Kesultanan Aceh, jaringan Islam global, sejarah Islam.

الملخص

في القرن السابع عشر الميلادي ، وصلت سلطنة آتشيه إلى ذروة مجدها حيث سيطرت على تجارة الفلفل على الساحل الغربي لسومطرة وصلت سلطنة آتشيه إلى ذروتها في القرن السابع عشر. في ذلك الوقت ، كانت آتشيه مرتبطة بالعالم الإسلامي من خلال القنوات الدبلوماسية

والتجارة البحرية. بالإضافة إلى هذه العوامل السياسية والاقتصادية ، كان ارتباط أتشييه بالعالم الإسلامي مرتبطاً أيضاً من خلال شبكة الصوفية ، حيث أبحر الصوفيون من أتشييه إلى شبه الجزيرة العربية والعديد من المناطق الإسلامية الأخرى للدراسة. عاد هؤلاء الصوفيون بعد ذلك إلى أتشييه وأنشأوا مراكز روحية إسلامية في أتشييه ومناطق أخرى في جنوب شرق آسيا. ساعدت أنشطة هؤلاء الصوفيين بدورهم على ربط أتشييه بالشبكة الإسلامية العالمية. ومع ذلك ، فإن الدور الفعلي الذي لعبه هؤلاء الصوفيون في ربط أتشييه بالشبكة الإسلامية العالمية لم يتم شرحه على وجه التحديد لأن العديد من الدراسات التي أجريت تميل إلى شرح نمط شبكة العلماء التي شكلها الصوفيون على نطاق أوسع. حتى أن الدور الأكثر تحديداً للصوفيين في ربط أتشييه بالشبكة الإسلامية العالمية لم يتلق تفسيراً كافياً. بناءً على هذه القضايا ، تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى مناقشة دور الصوفيين في بناء الترابط بين أتشييه والشبكة الإسلامية العالمية في القرن السابع عشر. السؤال الرئيسي المطروح في هذه الدراسة هو كيف لعب الصوفيون دورهم كوكلاء لربط أتشييه بالشبكة الإسلامية العالمية في القرن السابع عشر. بينما الطريقة المستخدمة في هذه الدراسة هي الطريقة التاريخية حيث يتم البحث عن المصدر من خلال دراسة الأدب. خلصت الدراسة إلى أن الصوفيين مثل حمزة فنسوري وسيم الدين مثل سومطرة والشيخ عبد الرؤوف لعبوا دوراً مهماً في ربط أتشييه بالشبكة الإسلامية العالمية الممتدة من جنوب شرق آسيا إلى شمال إفريقيا من خلال التجول وإرسال الطلاب للدراسة في المراكز الدولية. التصوف في الشرق الأوسط. بالإضافة إلى ذلك ، أنشأ الصوفيون أيضاً مراسلات مع صوفيين آخرين في أجزاء أخرى من العالم الإسلامي. وبهذه الطريقة ، أصبحت أتشييه متصلة بالشبكة الإسلامية العالمية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الصوفية ، الترابط الإسلامي ، سلطنة أتشييه ، الشبكة الإسلامية العالمية ، التاريخ

Introduction

So far, the role of Sufism in the Islamic world has not been seen in a broader perspective because there is a tendency to see Sufism only as a form of Islamic mysticism. Thus, Sufis themselves are still often seen as mystical figures in Islam. Therefore, when scholars find Sufi influence in the development of early Islam in the archipelago, they tend to think that it is possible because the local people of the archipelago were quite closely connected to Hindu and Buddhist mysticism before the arrival of Islam. With this fact, scholars argue that it was easier for Sufis to teach Islam through the path of Sufism.¹

Garaudy once argued that equating Sufism with Christian mysticism or Hindu meditation is a mistake because Sufism is a balance between grand jihad and small jihad.

1 M.C Ricklefs et.al, *Sejarah Asia Tenggara, Dari Masa Prasejarah Sampai Kontemporer*, (Depok: Komunitas Bambu, 2013), p. 113.

The grand jihad itself is the struggle of the soul against every desire that deflects humans from their nature, while the small jihad is the effort of Muslims against all forms of idolatry, power, wealth, and wrong knowledge that will keep them away from the path of God.² Thus, it is important to examine the role and contribution of Sufis in the Islamic world regardless of their mystical perspective.

One period in the history of the archipelago that provides information on the wider role of Sufis can be found in Aceh around the 17th Century. It was a time when Aceh was in its heyday with Iskandar Muda as the symbol of Aceh's greatest ruler who built Aceh into the strongest power in the western part of the archipelago.³ At the same time, the court of Aceh was also filled with officials of Sufi origin. Names such as Syamsuddin al Sumatrani, Nuruddin Ar Ranniry, and Shaykh Abdurrauf bin Ali al Fansuri are representations of Sufi scholars who served as court officials.⁴ In addition, Sufis in Aceh also played the role of advisor to the ruler, Sufi master to the wider community, or court judge. However, in addition to these roles, Sufis also served as Aceh's liaison with the global Islamic network. But how Sufis managed to play this role has not been discussed in previous studies on Sufism and Sufism in Aceh.

The studies that have been conducted on Sufis and Sufism in Aceh still focus on the discussion of the teachings, practices, and thoughts of Sufism as conducted by several researchers such as Al Attas,⁵ Mahbub Siraj,⁶ Braginsky,⁷ Vakily,⁸ Johns,⁹ Wormser,¹⁰ Nuraini,¹¹ Muchsin,¹² Manan,¹³ Herimawar,¹⁴ and Fakhriati.¹⁵ Other researchers, such as Harun,¹⁶ Nasution,¹⁷ Fathurahman,¹⁸ Birchok,¹⁹ dan Shadiqin,²⁰ have focused on the prominence and works of Acehnese Sufis. Thus, studies that attempt to discuss the roles and contributions of Sufis in Aceh outside of their roles as Sufi scholars or court officials have not been fully conducted. Although there is one, the closest is the Azra study on the network of scholars of the Middle East and the archipelago.²¹ However, Azra did not specialize his discussion on the role and contribution of Acehnese Sufis in connecting the Sultanate of Aceh with the global Islamic network in the 17th Century. Thus, with this lacuna, a study of the role of Sufis in connecting Aceh with the global Islamic network is necessary. This is important to reconstruct the role and contribution of Sufis and Sufism more broadly in the history of the archipelago and Southeast Asia.

Based on these issues, the following study aims to explain how Sufis became the connecting agent between Aceh and the global Islamic network. The focus of this research is to reveal the role of Sufi figures such as Hamzah Fansuri, Shaykh Syamsuddin al Sumatrani, Shaykh Abdurrauf bin Ali al Fansuri and other Acehnese Sufis in connecting Aceh to the global Islamic network in the 17th Century. While the method used in this research is a historical research method in which the collection of sources is done through literature studies. This research is expected to have positive implications in revitalizing the role and contribution of Sufis in Southeast Asia, especially in Aceh, apart from their main role as agents of Islamization and agents of Islamic spiritual transformation. It is also expected to contribute to the knowledge of Islamic history in the archipelago, especially in the aspect of Sufism.

Sufis and Sufism in Aceh

Sufism has existed since the beginning of Islam because almost all Sufi orders have a

lineage of teachings that are connected to the Prophet Muhammad. According to Garaudy, the path followed by the Sufis has always been regarded by the companions of the Prophet Muhammad, their disciples, and the generations after them as the path of truth and noble ethics.²² However, as a dimension of Islam, early Sufism was still a nameless reality. It was only a few centuries after the birth of Islam that it had a name. The figure who is considered the pioneer of Sufism himself is Junaid al Baghdadi. He was the imam and teacher of the next generation of Sufi Shaykhs. His influence was then continued by Dhu al-Nun al-Mishri and his disciple, al-Syibli.²³

According to Junaid al Baghdadi, Sufism is a collective prayer to God with ecstatic inner concentration and attentive listening, combined with actions that follow the Prophet. Sufism, on the other hand, is analogized by Junaid al Baghdadi to the earth, where every kind of evil thrown upon it will grow into every kind of good. Junaid al Baghdadi also added that Sufis are like the earth on which the righteous and sinners walk. Sufis are also like clouds that give shade to everything. Sufis are also like raindrops that water everything. Junaid al Baghdadi, a Sufi who is concerned with his outward appearance is a Sufi whose inner self is corrupt.²⁴ What Junaid al Baghdadi said about Sufism and Sufis shows that Sufism is an inner dimension of a Muslim that is not concerned with external aspects as its parameter. Therefore, we need to understand that a Sufi is the inner status of a Muslim who follows the path of Sufism. The outward status of a Sufi could be that of a king, nobleman, or commoner, and his profession could be that of a merchant, sailor, teacher, or writer. It is these external aspects that obscure the existence of Sufis and Sufism in a region. Thus, their presence often goes undetected in history.

So far, it is not known when Sufism started in Aceh. However, given that the archipelago has received Islam since the early days of Islam, the seeds of Sufism may have entered the archipelago, especially Aceh, since the beginning of Islam. This is supported by the regular shipping connections between the Middle East and China that usually crossed the Malacca Strait as reported by Jia Dan (729-805) in a document entitled “Routes to Foreign Countries across the Sea from Guangzhou”. The route is described as starting from Guangzhou and ending in Baghdad.²⁵ The presence of the Malacca Strait as one of the waters crossed by the shipping route has caused the coastal areas in the Malacca Strait to become strategic as a transit location for sailors and maritime traders. Therefore, Aceh and the East Coast of Sumatra were the most likely areas to receive the early presence of Sufism in the archipelago.

Although it is not known exactly when Sufism entered Aceh and the East Coast of Sumatra, archaeological evidence from the gravestone of Malik as Saleh found in Pasai has indicated that by the 13th Century, Sufism was already present in the region. Based on their epigraphy, Othman Yatim and Nasir argue that elements of Sufism had colored the art on the gravestone.²⁶ Some epitaphs found on Acehnese gravestones do contain messages that

22 Garaudy, *Janji-Janji Islam*, pp. 65-66.

23 Suteja Ibnu Pakar, *Tasawuf di Nusantara: Tadarus Tasawuf dan Tarekat*, (Cirebon: Aksara Satu, 2016), pp. 2-3.

24 Al Qushayri, *Principles of Sufism*, trans. B.R Von Schlegell, (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2004), p. 304.

25 Hyunhee Park, *Mapping the Chinese and Islamic Worlds: Cross-Cultural Exchange in Pre-Modern Asia*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 31.

26 Othman Mohd. Yatim and Abdul Halim Nasir, *Epigrafi Islam Terawal di Nusantara*, (Kuala Lumpur:

imply Sufism. The messages usually concern the Sufi worldview, death, and the spiritual journey to the “throne of God”.²⁷ According to A.H. Johns, the archaeological evidence in Pasai marks the beginning of the rapid progress of Islam in the region. Johns also argues that by this time, Sufism had played an important role as an international force in maintaining the unity of the Muslim World after the fall of Baghdad in 1258 AD.²⁸ This also means that by the 13th Century, Sufism had played a vital role in the Islamization of various parts of the world, including the archipelago.

John’s account of the role of Sufism is in line with van Bruinessen’s, although his claim about the conversion of the local population to Islam is slightly later than that of Johns, in the 13th Century. Martin van Bruinessen himself argues that the first century of Islamization of Southeast Asia coincided with a period of growth and development of Sufism.²⁹ According to van Bruinessen, foreign Muslim merchant settlements had been present in Southeast Asia for centuries, but it was not until the 14th Century that the local population began to adopt Islam in a significant way. In this transitional period, van Bruinessen claims that Sufism developed from an elite religious movement into the dominant mode of religion.³⁰ From this, we can assume that Sufism has at least been present in the Aceh region and the East Coast of Sumatra since the 13th Century. However, not much is known about what style of Sufism existed in these places at the time.

More information about Sufism in Sumatra, especially in the area under the influence of Aceh, dates back to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with the rise of the Sultanate of Aceh and the popularity of the conflict between the followers of *Wujudiyah* and Nuruddin ar Ranniry. In Aceh, Hamzah Fansuri and his disciple Syamsuddin as Sumatrani were two great Sufis who became the main interpreters of the Sufism-philosophical *Wahdatul Wujud*. If during the time of Sultan Iskandar Muda, *Wujudiyah* had a place in the palace and in society, then during the time of his successor, Sultan Iskandar Tsani, *Wujudiyah* no longer had a place in the palace. Ar Ranniry’s criticism of *Wujudiyah* led to the followers of Sufism philosophy receiving severe punishment from the Acehnese rulers.³¹ Although the episode between the followers of *Wujudiyah* and Ar Ranniry has been a dark chapter in Aceh’s history, it has also helped spread information about Sufism in Aceh.

In the 17th Century, Banda Aceh, the capital of the Sultanate of Aceh, was also the center of Sufism in Aceh with all its dynamics. In the city, there is a grave complex belonging to Shaykh Abdurrauf bin Ali al Fansuri, known by the local people as Syiah Kuala. This grave complex was once also the zawiya of Syiah Kuala. Not so far from the location of Zawiyah Syiah Kuala, there is Zawiyah Tanoo Abee which was founded by Shaykh Fairus

Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 1990), p. 102.

27 Uka Tjandrasasmita, *Arkeologi Islam Nusantara*, (Jakarta: Direktorat Jenderal Sejarah dan Purbakala, Departemen Kebudayaan dan Pariwisata, 2009), p. 30.

28 A.H. Johns, “Islamization in Southeast Asia: Reflections and Reconsiderations with Special Reference to the Role of Sufism,” *Southeast Asian Studies* 31, no. 1 (1993): p. 44.

29 Martin van Bruinessen, “The Origins and Development of Sufi Orders (Tarekat) in Southeast Asia,” *Studia Islamika* 1, no. 1 (1994): p. 3.

30 Martin van Bruinessen, “Sufi Orders in Southeast Asia, From Private Devotions to Social Network and Corporate Action,” in *Buddhist and Islamic Orders in Southeast Asia: Comparative Perspective*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2018), pp. 125–126.

31 Azra, *Jaringan Global dan Lokal Islam Nusantara*, pp. 121–122.

Al Baghdady in around 1627 AD.³² Dayah Tanoh Abee is located in Seulimeum District, Aceh Besar. Shaykh Fairus al Baghdady is also known as Teungku Chik Tanoh Abee. The next generation of Teungku Chik Tanoh Abee was Shaykh Nayan Fairus Al Baghdady who took the certificate of Sattariyah Order from Shaykh Abdurrauf bin Ali al-Fansuri. During the time of Shaykh Nayan Fairus Al Bahgdady, the Tanoh Abee Library was built. This library is one of the oldest libraries in Aceh which to this day holds thousands of ancient manuscripts. Some of the works of Shaykh Abdurrauf bin Ali al Fansuri are also stored in the Dayah Tanoh Abee Library.³³ Apart from Banda Aceh, Sufism also spread in several other places such as Singkil, Barus, and Pariaman. These three places are important to mention because they still have Sufism network links with Sufis in Banda Aceh.

In Singkil there are two graves of scholars believed to belong to Shaykh Abdurrauf as Singkili and Hamzah Fansuri. The two graves are often confused by many people because in Banda Aceh there are also graves believed to be those of Shaykh Abdurrauf bin Ali al Fansuri and Hamzah Fansuri. Two questions that often arise from this issue are what is the original location of the graves and do the graves belong to the same figure or do they belong to different figures who have similar names? So far, no satisfactory answer has been found to these two questions. This confusion is still compounded by Hasmy's opinion that calls Singkil Fansur. This conjecture was put forward by Ali Hasmy based on one of Hamzah Fansuri's poems which informed that his birthplace in Singkil had changed its name to Negeri Fansuri since he founded a zawiya in the village.³⁴

However, disagreement over the actual location of Fansur was also raised by Abu Bakar Aceh who doubted the claim that Fansur was Barus or Singkil located on the West Coast of Sumatra because Hamzah Fansuri and Shaykh Abdurrauf never wrote Barus or Al-Barusi behind their names. Abu Bakar Aceh instead believed that Fansur was the name of a town in the Indra Purwa Kingdom located near the port of Ulelhee, Banda Aceh.³⁵ Abu Bakar Aceh's opinion about Fansur's location is supported by McKinnon's study, which concluded that Fansur's actual location was near Banda Aceh.³⁶ Interestingly, near the location believed by Abu Bakar Aceh and Mc Kinnon to be Fansur, there is a grave on a hill that is believed by residents to be the grave of Hamzah Fansuri. Although these disagreements have confused, they do not detract from the evidence that Sufism has been present in Singkil since at least the 16th Century.

Besides Banda Aceh and Singkil, traces of Sufism are also found in Barus and Pariaman. Today, both places are not part of Aceh, but they were part of Aceh's 17th-Century rule, so it is important to mention them here. Barus itself is located not far from Singkil and is one of the oldest port cities in the archipelago.³⁷ There is archaeological evidence for the presence of Sufism in Barus in the 17th Century, which is known from the inscription of one of the

32 Muhajir Al Fairusy, *Restrospeksi Budaya Hemispheric Islam di Zawiyah Tanoh Abee, Aceh Besar*, (Denpasar: Pustaka Larasan, 2014), p. 41

33 Damanhuri, "Umdah al Muhtajin: Rujukan Tarekat Sattariyah Nusantara," *Ulumuna* 17, no. 2 (2013): p. 311

34 A. Hasmy, "Hamzah Fansuri Sastrawan Sufi Abad XVII," in *Hamzah Fansuri Penyair Sufi Aceh*, (Lotkala, n.d.), pp. 6–7.

35 Abu Bakar Aceh, *Sekitar Masuknya Islam ke Indonesia*, (Solo: Ramadhani, 1971), p. 16.

36 E. Edwards McKinnon and Nurdin A.R, "Fansur Sebagai Kota Tua Islam," *Indonesian Journal of Islamic History and Culture* 1, no. 1 (2020): p. 23.

37 Jajat Burhanudin, *Islam Dalam Arus Sejarah Indonesia*, (Jakarta: Kencana Prenada Media, 2017), p. 7.

gravestones in the Mahligai Grave complex. The gravestone belongs to a disciple of Shaykh Syamsuddin as Sumatrani named Shaykh Zainal Abidin al Fas.³⁸ Meanwhile, in Pariaman, the spread of Sufism are known from the grave of a Sufi named Shaykh Burhanuddin. This figure was a student of Shaykh Abdurrauf bin Ali al Fansuri. After completing his studies with Shaykh Abdurrauf, Shaykh Burhanuddin returned to Minangkabau and opened a surau as a place to teach Islam and also the Sattariyah Order in Ulakan, Pariaman. The former zawiya can still be seen and is known as Surau Gadang Shaykh Burhanuddin, while his grave is not so far from the location of his zawiya. Shaykh Burhanuddin himself is believed to be the first person to teach the Sattariyah Order in Minangkabau.

In addition to Sattariyah brought by Shaykh Abdurrauf, several other Sufi orders developed in Aceh. One of them is the Qadiriyyah Order which was followed by Hamzah Fansuri.³⁹ The Qadiriyyah Order followed by Hamzah Fansuri himself was obtained when he visited Baghdad.⁴⁰ Although Hamzah Fansuri is known to follow Qadiriyyah, it does not mean that he only followed the order because before reaching Baghdad, Hamzah Fansuri had already become a Sufi. There is little similarity between Hamzah Fansuri and Nuruddin ar Ranniry, and Shaykh Abdurrauf, who were also followers of Qadiriyyah. Apart from following Qadiriyyah, ar Ranniry also followed the Rifaiyyah Order and the Aidarusiyyah Order. Meanwhile, Shaykh Abdurrauf also followed several other Sufi orders besides Sattariyah and Qadiriyyah. The Sufi orders with which Shaykh Abdurrauf was affiliated were the Chistiyyah, Firdawsiyah, Tayfuriyyah, Khalwatiyyah, Hamadaniyyah, and Naqsyabandiyyah.⁴¹ This shows that the aforementioned Sufi orders were already present in Aceh in the 17th Century.

Sufis as Connecting Agents to the Global Islamic Network

The connections of Aceh with the global Islamic network are thought to have occurred long before the sultanate reached its heyday in the 17th Century. These connections were largely political and economic, as was the case in 1562 AD, when Acehnese diplomats arrived for the first time in the Ottoman capital of Constantinople.⁴² The diplomat's purpose was to request military assistance against the Portuguese in Malacca. The Ottomans feared that their weapons and military equipment would be intercepted by the Portuguese, so they sent only ten military engineers to assist Aceh.⁴³ On the economic front, Aceh has been connected to the Muslim world since at least the 16th Century through the spice trade. The distribution of spices from Aceh was indeed of considerable value. In the 1550s alone, Aceh had supplied about half of Europe's pepper needs through voyages to the Red Sea.⁴⁴ Then in the 1585 AD, exports from Aceh to Jeddah had reached 40,000-50,000 quintals of spices.⁴⁵

38 Masmedia Pinem, "Inkripsi Islam Pada Makam-Makam Kuno Baru," *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan* 16, no. 1 (2018): pp. 110–111.

39 van Bruinessen, "The Origins and Development of Sufi Orders (Tarekat) in Southeast Asia," p. 6.

40 Azra, *Jaringan Global dan Lokal Islam Nusantara*, p. 119.

41 Ridwan Arif, *Syekh Abd Al-Rauf Al-Fansuri: Rekonsiliasi Tasawuf dan Syariat Abad Ke-17 Di Nusantara*, (Jakarta: Penerbit Buku Kompas, 2020), p. 30.

42 Denys Lombard, *Kerajaan Aceh: Jaman Sultan Iskandar Muda (1607-1636)*, trans. Winarsih Arifin, (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1991), p. 158.

43 Giancarlo Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 118.

44 Anthony Reid, *Menuju Sejarah Sumatra: Antara Indonesia dan Dunia*, (Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia dan KITLV-Jakarta, 2011), p. 6.

45 C.R Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire 1415 – 1825*, (London: Hutchinson & Co. Ltd, 1969), p. 59.

This spice trade was one of the sources of Aceh's prosperity and glory, which according to Azra also played an important role in encouraging more intense contact between Aceh and the Muslim world.⁴⁶

Although Aceh was connected to the global Islamic network through political channels and maritime trade, it could not be fully connected through these two channels in terms of religious spirituality and intellectuality. For this, it was the ulama who played an important role. These scholars were Sufis. We can see evidence of this in some of the Acehnese Sufi figures whose names have been recorded in history. The first name that needs to be mentioned is Hamzah Fansuri. This Sufi poet is thought to have lived from the 16th to the early 17th Century. His poetry is suffused with Sufi imagery that echoes the maritime world of the Malay nation.⁴⁷ His early life is not well known, but he is thought to have died at the end of Sultan Iskandar Muda Meukuta Alam's reign and was buried near the small town of Rundeng on the upper Singkil River.⁴⁸ Besides this opinion, there is another opinion that states that Hamzah Fansuri died before the reign of Iskandar Muda, and his tomb is located far from Aceh. This opinion was put forward by Gulliot and Kalus who said that Hamzah Fansuri died in 1527 AD and was buried in the Bab Ma' la cemetery in Mecca.⁴⁹ Meanwhile, some residents in Aceh Besar believe that Hamzah Fansuri's tomb is located on a hill in Ujong Pancu, Banda Aceh.

Regardless of the polemics over his lifetime and where he died, what is significant about Hamzah Fansuri is the fact that he traveled to many Muslim lands such as Makkah, Madinah, Jerusalem, and Baghdad.⁵⁰ He is representative of the first Sufi travelers of the archipelago to be detected in history. Hamzah Fansuri's wanderings were not without purpose but for the benefit of his religion. A.H. Johns argues that these wandering Sufis played the role of itinerant proselytizers who helped spread Islam to various corners. For the archipelago, this role is informed by local sources such as the Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai, Sejarah Melayu, Babad Tanah Jawi, and Sejarah Banten.⁵¹ However, without many people realizing it, wandering Sufis such as Hamzah Fansuri also acted as liaison agents between his home country and the wider Islamic network. This is possible because in Sufism there is a very strong bond between fellow Sufis, especially those who share the same Sufi orders.

In the case of Aceh, the second name that needs to be mentioned is Shaykh Syamsuddin as Sumatrani. He was an Acehnese scholar, diplomat, and spokesman for the Kingdom of Aceh Darussalam as well as a Sufi master and advisor to Sultan Iskandar Muda. Although it is not clear whether he ever traveled to the Middle East or not, he was a Sufi teacher affiliated with at least four Sufi orders namely, Qadiriyyah, Sadziliyyah, Madyaniyyah, and Chistiyyah.⁵² His important role in the sultan's court is reflected in reports that during the

46 Azra, *Jaringan Global dan Lokal Islam Nusantara*, p. 91.

47 Michael Laffan, *Sejarah Islam di Nusantara*, trans. Indi Aunullah and Rini Nurul Badariah, (Yogyakarta: Bentang, 2015), p. 11.

48 Edwar Djamaris and Saksono Prijanto, *Hamzah Fansuri dan Nuruddin Ar Raniri*, (Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1996), p. 3.

49 Claude Guillot and Ludvik Kalus, *Batu Nisan Hamzah Fansuri*, trans. Rita Parasman (Jakarta: Departemen Kebudayaan dan Pariwisata dan Ecole française d'Extreme-Orient dan Forum Jakarta-Paris, 2007), p. 4.

50 Azra, *Jaringan Global dan Lokal Islam Nusantara*, p. 119.

51 A.H. Johns, "Sufism as A Category in Indonesian Literature and History," *Journal of Southeast Asian History* 2, no. 1 (1961): p. 15.

52 Rohaimi Rastam, Mohd Syukri Yeoh Abdullah, and Yusri Muhammad Ramli, "Analisis Salasilah Tarekat

period 1600 AD to 1630 AD, many Western explorers dealt with him.⁵³ He is also believed to have been a student of Hamzah Fansuri.⁵⁴ With all his importance in the sultan's court and his affiliation with several Sufi orders, Shaykh Syamsuddin as Sumatrani also played a role as a link between international Islamic networks and Aceh.

Another slightly different example is provided by two conflicting Sufis. They are Nuruddin ar Ranniri and Saif al Rijal. Nuruddin ar Ranniry was not from Aceh but from Ranir, Gujarat, India. He was also a Sufi who was affiliated with several Sufi orders such as Rifai'yah, Aidarusiyah, and Qadiriyyah.⁵⁵ Before coming to Aceh, he studied religion in various places, including Tarim, Yemen. Then he went to Mecca to perform the pilgrimage and then to Medina. Nuruddin ar-Raniri himself reached Aceh around 1637 AD, during the reign of Sultan Iskandar Muda. However, he did not stay long in Aceh and chose to settle in Pahang, Malay Peninsula. He only returned to Aceh during the reign of Sultan Iskandar Tsani, possibly in 1658 AD, and stayed for quite a long time and had become an important figure in the sultan's palace. It was also during the reign of Iskandar Tsani that Nuruddin ar Raniri wrote his greatest work, *Bustan as Salatin*.⁵⁶ He later returned to Ranir and died there around 1658 AD.⁵⁷

Meanwhile, Saif al Rijal was an Acehnese Sufi who traveled as far as India. When he returned to Aceh, Saif al Rijal opposed ar Ranniry's opinions, causing him to lose court support. According to Azra, it was this Sufi who caused Ar Ranniry to leave Aceh and return to his hometown of Ranir, India.⁵⁸ The story of ar Ranniry and Saif al Rijal informs us that Sufis of the time were easily able to travel and settle in various Muslim lands and were even invited to the court to express their views. This shows that the Sufis could cross the borders of each Muslim country without any difficulty. In other words, for the Sufis, the Muslim world was seen as a single entity of which they were agents.

Another name that gives us important information about the role of Sufis as Aceh's link to the global Islamic network in the 17th Century is Shaykh Abdurrauf bin Ali al Fansuri. He was a Sufi who was very productive in writing books. The number of books written by Shaykh Abdurrauf bin Ali al Fansuri during his lifetime is still a matter of debate. Some argue that the number of works written by Shaykh Abdurrauf bin Ali al Fansuri during his lifetime reached around 56 works.⁵⁹ However, some other researchers mention a smaller number. Oman Fathurahman said that Shaykh Abdurrauf bin Ali al Fansuri wrote 36 works.⁶⁰ Wan Mohammad Shagir Abdullah mentioned 25 works.⁶¹ While Azyumardi Azra

Shaykh Shams al Din al Sumatra'i," *International Journal of Islamic Thought* 8 (December 2015): p. 76.

53 Lombard, *Kerajaan Aceh: Jaman Sultan Iskandar Muda (1607-1636)*, pp. 217–218.

54 Hasmy, "Hamzah Fansuri Sastrawan Sufi Abad XVII," p. 9.

55 Azra, *Jaringan Global dan Lokal Islam Nusantara*, p. 121.

56 Raden Hoesein Djajadiningrat, *Kesultanan Aceh: Suatu Pembahasan Tentang Sejarah Kesultanan Aceh Berdasarkan Bahan-Bahan Yang Terdapat Dalam Karya Melayu*, (Banda Aceh: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Proyek Pengembangan Permuseuman Daerah Istimewa Aceh, 1984), p. 54.

57 Djamaris and Prijanto, *Hamzah Fansuri dan Nuruddin Ar Raniri*, p. 21.

58 Azra, *Jaringan Global dan Lokal Islam Nusantara*, p. 122.

59 Mohd Syukri Yeoh Abdullah, "Zawiyah Shaykhkuala: Pusat Penyebaran Islam di Alam Melayu Abad Ke-17 Masihi," *Sari: International Journal of the Malay World and Civilisation* 27, no. 2 (2009): p. 94.

60 Fathurahman, *Tanbih al Masyi: Menyoal Wahdatul Wujud Kasus Abdurrauf Singkel Di Aceh Abad 17*, pp. 28–30.

61 Wan Mohammad Shagir Abdullah, *Khazanah Karya Pusaka Asia Tenggara*, vol. 1 (Kuala Lumpur: Khazanah Fathaniyah, 1991), pp. 39–41

mentioned 22 works.⁶²

Shaykh Abdurrauf bin Ali al Fansuri himself was born in Singkil which in the 17th Century was included in the territory of the Sultanate of Aceh.⁶³ At first, he studied religion in his hometown before continuing his education at Barus.⁶⁴ After Barus, Shaykh Abdurrauf bin Ali al Fansuri then sailed to Arabia and studied religion from several teachers. Among his teachers, two names were very important in the spiritual and intellectual network of Islam in the 17th Century, namely Shaykh Ahmad Qusashi and Shaykh Ibrahim al Kurani. These two Sufis were scholars who became the dominant figures in the network of scholars in Mecca and Medina in the 17th Century.⁶⁵ Thus, when the young Abdurrauf studied with Shaykh Ahmad Qusashi, he automatically entered the global Islamic spiritual and intellectual network at that time. This was possible because Shaykh Ahmad Qusashi was the teacher of many students from other parts of the Muslim world such as the Hijaz, Yemen, North Africa, India, and the archipelago.

Shaykh Abdurrauf bin Ali al Fansuri studied with Shaykh Ahmad al Qushashi for approximately seven years. After finishing studying with his teacher, Shaykh Abdurrauf bin Ali al Fansuri asked to stay with his teacher in Medina. Shaykh Abdurrauf bin Ali al Fansuri accompanied Shaykh Ahmad al Qushashi until his teacher died in 1071 AH/1661 AD. After the death of his teacher, Shaykh Abdurrauf bin Ali al Fansuri left Medina and sailed to Aceh.⁶⁶ In Aceh, Shaykh Abdurrauf established a zawiya in Kuala Sungai Aceh. This zawiya functioned as a place to teach Islam and also the Sattariyah Order where his students came from the archipelago and beyond. With his new role as a Sufi master, Shaykh Abdurrauf not only became Aceh's link to the global Islamic network, he even expanded the network to various parts of the archipelago through his students. In other words, the connection between Aceh and the global Islamic network was extended by Shaykh Abdurrauf through his students who opened zawiya in Terengganu, Pariaman, Tasik Malaya, and Sulawesi.⁶⁷

Although Shaykh Abdurrauf has settled in Aceh, he is also always in a relationship with Islamic networks outside Aceh. It is known from two stories about him that inform a close relationship with other scholars in the Middle East. The first story relates to the correspondence of Shaykh Abdurrauf with Shaykh Ibrahim al-Kurani on the question of the death penalty dropped on the followers of Wujudiyah in Aceh. Shaykh Ibrahim al-Kurani answered the question of Shaykh Abdurrauf through a book that was believed to have been written by Abraham al-Kurani around 1675 AD.⁶⁸ Meanwhile, the second story is known from one of the books written by Shaykh Abdurrauf with the title *Lubb al Kashf wa al-Bayan li Ma Yarah al Muhtadar bi al Iyan*, which says that he sent a letter to Shaykh Ibrahim al Qur'an to ask for his opinion on the discussion in the book. The Shaykh Abdurrauf correspondence is directly one of the channels that keep Aceh connected to the

62 Azra, *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad XVII & XVIII: Akar Pembaruan Islam Indonesia*, p. 254.

63 Arif, *Syekh Abd Al-Rauf Al-Fansuri: Rekonsiliasi Tasawuf dan Syariat Abad Ke-17 di Nusantara*, p. 19.

64 Azra, *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad XVII & XVIII: Akar Pembaruan Islam Indonesia*, p. 240.

65 Azra, *Jaringan Global dan Lokal Islam Nusantara*, p. 97.

66 Azra, *Jaringan Global dan Lokal Islam Nusantara*, p. 104.

67 Abdullah, "Zawiyah Shaykhkuala: Pusat Penyebaran Islam di Alam Melayu Abad Ke-17 Masihi," p. 91.

68 Azra, *Jaringan Global dan Lokal Islam Nusantara*, p. 124.

global Islamic network.

Thus, the travel of the Sufis, whether to study or teach Sufism or in the framework of adventure for inner peace and their correspondence with the Sufi in other parts of the Islamic world, has helped Aceh connect with the global Islamic network in the 17th Century. Further, the relationship will continue to the formation and expansion of the network of Islamic spirituality and intellectuality. In terms of the formation of the expansion of the global network of Islamic spirituality and intellectuality, the Sufi are directly involved. This kind of role, of course, could not be performed by diplomats, seafarers, and maritime merchants freely considering that they act for special interests in the political and economic spheres. Sufis are more flexible and flexible even though they sometimes have other positions or roles such as judges, court officials, or merchants.

Conclusion

The above description of Sufis and Sufism suggests that Sufism had been present in Pasai since at least the 13th Century. Sufism then spread to other parts of Sumatra and began to play an important role at the court of the Sultanate of Aceh around the 16th and 17th Centuries. At the same time, Aceh had also reached the height of its glory and was well connected to the global Islamic network. Although after Iskandar Muda there was conflict between the followers of *Wujudiyah* and Ar Ranniry, Sufis still played an important role in the court of Aceh where they continued to serve as judges and advisors to the ruler. In addition to playing an important role in the Acehnese court and society, another important role played by the Sufis was as agents connecting Aceh with the global Islamic network. Sufis played this role by traveling to Muslim countries to study or teach Sufism. When a Sufi studies with a Sufi master of a particular Sufi orders, he is automatically connected to the master's spiritual and intellectual network. In turn, he will also connect his home country to these networks when he returns and teaches Sufism in Aceh.

While in Aceh, Sufis continued to play this liaison role through various methods, one of which was correspondence with fellow Sufis in other parts of the Islamic world and sending students to study at zawiya in the center of the Islamic world. In this way, Aceh maintained its connection to the global Islamic network. The Sufis also did not merely serve as connecting agents but also expanded the network through their disciples who opened zawiya in other places. Sufi names such as Hamzah Fansuri, Syamsuddin as Sumatrani, Saif al Rijal, Nuruddin ar Ranniry, and Shaykh Abdurrauf bin Ali al Fansuri are just a few of the many Sufis who played this role. This role did not only take place in the 17th Century but had also begun in earlier and later centuries. Therefore, further studies on the broader role of Sufis as masters of Sufism need to be conducted in the future in different places and periods.

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Author Guideline

Islam Nusantara Journal for the Study of Islamic History and Culture facilitates publication of article and book review on study of Islam, Muslim culture, social and politics in Southeast Asia (Nusantara) and beyond. It is published twice a year and written in Indonesia, English and Arabic. It aims to present academic insight of social and cultural complexity of Muslim world in Southeast Asia under the frame of dialectic between Islam and local culture or cultural realities.

The journal invites scholars and experts working in various disciplines in the Islamic studies, humanities and social sciences. Articles should be original, research-based, unpublished and not under review for possible publication in other journals. All submitted papers are subject to review of the editors, editorial board, and blind reviewers.

Papers submitted for publication must conform to the following guidelines:

1. Papers must be typed in one-half spaced on A4-paper size;
2. Papers' length is about 8,000-10,000 words;
3. All submission must include a 200-300 word abstract;
4. Full name(s) of the author(s) must be stated, along with his/her/their institution and complete e-mail address;
5. All submission should be in Microsoft Word, RTF, or WordPerfect document file format;
6. Arabic words should be transliterated according to the style of 'Islam Nusantara Studies';
7. Bibliographical reference must be noted in footnote and bibliography according to 'Islam Nusantara Studies' style.ain.

Examples of footnote style:

¹Ryan Sugiarto, *Psikologi Raos: Saintifikasi Kawruh Jiwa Ki Ageng Suryomentaram*, (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Ifada, 2015), p. 139.

²Nur Syam, *Tarekat Petani: Fenomena Tarekat Syattariyah Lokal*, (Yogyakarta: LkiS, 2013), p. 164.

³Syam, *Tarekat Petani*, p. 173.

⁴Ubaidillah Achmad dan Yuliyatun Tajuddin, *Suluk Kiai Cebolek Dalam Konflik Keberagamaan dan Kearifan Lokal*, (Jakarta: Prenada, 2014), p. 140.

⁵Nur Syam, *Tarekat Petani*, p. 99.

⁶M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Misbah*, vol. 14 (Bandung: Lentera Hati, 2013), p. 167.

⁷Deny Hamdani, "Cultural System of Cirebonese People: Tradition of Maulidan in the Kanoman Kraton," *Indonesian Journal of Social Sciences* 4, no. 1 (January-June 2012): p.12.

⁸Hamdani, "Cultural System of Cirebonese People," p. 14.

⁹Deny Hamdani, "Raison d'être of Islam Nusantara," *The Jakarta Post*, 06 Agustus 2015, p. 5.

¹⁰Azyumardi Azra, "Islam di "Negeri Bawah Angin" dalam Masa Perdagangan," *Studia Islamika* 3, no. 2 (1996): h. 191-221, review buku Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

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Please include, at the beginning of the review:

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