



**THE CONTROVERSY OF WUJŪDĪYAH SUFISM:
Muḥammad Zain ibn Faqīh Jalāl al-Dīn's Response to
the Doctrine of the Seven Stages in the 18th Century**

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Abstract: This article discusses the teaching of the seven stages (*martabat tujuh*) in the 18th century, which had previously developed and became controversial in the Nusantara region since the 17th century. The seven stages are a central topic in philosophical Sufi teachings. The article's primary focus is the response of Muḥammad Zain ibn Faqīh Jalāluddīn al-Āsyī (d. 1783 CE), as articulated in his translation and commentary on the book *Umm al-Barāhīn*. Although the book he translated and commented on pertains to creed (*aqidah*), he interjected his views regarding the seven stages. Using the socio-intellectual and historical approach, this study illustrates how Muḥammad Zain established the Sunni-Ash'ārī creed. The doctrine of the seven stages is complex, and finding competent scholars to explain it is challenging. However, Muḥammad Zain cautiously evaluates the proponents of the doctrine of the unity of existence, which forms the basis of the seven stages, such as Ibn Arabī and 'Abd Karīm al-Jīlī. He even sharply criticizes those who mislead figures like Ibrāhīm al-Kurānī, Aḥmad al-Qushāshī, and 'Abdurraūf al-Fansūrī. Muḥammad Zain's views also reflect the dominance of the Sunni-Ash'ari creed, indirectly impacting the decline of philosophical Sufi trends in Aceh, particularly and in the Malay territory generally.

Keywords: Aceh, Ash'ārī Theology, Muḥammad Zain, Seven Stages, *Umm al-Barāhīn*.

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Introduction

THE HISTORY of Islamic development and the role and influence of Sufi in spreading the religion in the Nusantara Archipelago

remains a subject of debate among scholars in this field.¹ One popular theory contends that Sufi scholars introduced Islam to the archipelago.² For instance, Anthony Johns argues that those Sufi scholars and traders came to these lands, initiating Islamization in the region.³ Fatimi backed Johns's arguments and added that Sufi Scholars' preaching succeeded in Islamisation in the Indian Subcontinent, primarily in the first decades of the 13th century.⁴ Of course, it does not necessarily dismiss the views of other Scholars, like Martin van Bruinessen, who questioned the evidence that Islamisation in the Lands is carried out by Sufis, considering that historical records have shown that Sufi orders appeared in the later 16th century CE in the region.⁵ Despite this, the strong opinion is that Sufis (scholars and their orders) became inseparable entities of Islam's presence and discourse in the lands. This aligns with Braginsky's opinion that since the second half of the 14th century, especially in the 16th and 17th centuries, Sufism has played a significant role in the Malay and Indonesian regions' history,

¹ Azyumardi Azra, *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad XVII & XVIII*, (Jakarta: Kencana, 2013), 2-13; Carool Kersten, *A History of Islam in Indonesia: Unity in Diversity*, (Scotland: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 16-23.

² Martin van Bruinessen, *Pesantren, Tarekat, dan Kitab Kuning*, (Yogyakarta: Penerbit Gading, 2012), 226-227.

³ See Anthony H. Johns, "Islam in Southeast Asia: Reflection and New Directions," *Indonesia* 19 (1975), 33-35; Michael Feener stated about the complexity of the Islamisation process in Southeast Asia. It ties in with the economic, political, and cultural transformation process of the circumstances. Sufism scholars are part of this rendered process of Islamisation. For further explanation, see Michael R. Feener, "Islam in Southeast Asia to c. 1800", *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Asian History*. Retrieved 23 Aug. 2024, from <https://oxfordre.com/asianhistory/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277727.001.0001/acrefore-9780190277727-e-40>.

⁴ Q.S. Fatimi, *Islam Comes to Malaysia*, (Singapura: Malaysian Sociological Institute, 1963), 31-2.

⁵ Martin van Bruinessen, 'The Origins and Development of Sufi Orders (tarekat) in Southeast Asia,' *Studia Islamika: Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies*, 1 (1994): 1-23.; Carool Kersten, *A History of Islam in Indonesia: Unity in Diversity*, (Scotland: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 16-23.

religion and culture.⁶ His opinion is supported by the intense illumination of Sufism characteristics in the early process of Islamisation in this area.

The teaching of Sufism, which initially developed in Nusantara, is philosophical Sufism (*taṣawwuf falsafī*), characterized by one of its teachings, *wujūdīyah*. One of *wujūdīyah*'s primary concepts is the unity of God and Humankind.⁷ The concepts are frequently tied with teachings established by Ibn' 'Arabī (d. 1240).⁸ In the Nusantara, Syaikh Ḥamzah Fansūrī transformed it popularly.⁹ Syams al-Dīn al-Sumatrā'i (d. 1630 M), Fansūrī's disciple, had a role importantly in the dissemination of one of *wujūdīyah* teachings, the stages of being (*marātib al-wujūd*). He expanded the concept of the five stages of being adapted from a prominent philosophical Sufism renowned figure, 'Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī (d. 1424), and burned the teaching of the seven stages of being.¹⁰

⁶ V. I. Braginsky, *Tasawuf dan Sastra Melayu Kajian dan Teks-Teks*, (Jakarta: Rul, 1993), xi; Azyumardi Azra, "Relevansi Pemikiran Tasawuf Syekh 'Abd al-Rauf al-Fansuri dalam Konteks Kekinian", introduction in Ridwan Arif, *Syekh 'Abd al-Rauf al-Fansuri Rekonsiliasi Tasawuf dan Syariat Abad ke-17 di Nusantara*, (Jakarta: Kompas, 2020), ix-xi.

⁷ Dudung Abdurrahman, "Islam, Sufism, and Character Education in Indonesia History," *Tawarikh: International Journal for Historical Studies*, Volume 9 (2), April (2018): 159-176.

⁸ A.C.S. Peacock, *Arabic Literary Culture in Southeast Asia in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, (Leiden: Brill, 2024), 59.

⁹ Dudung Abdurrahman, "Islam, Sufism, and Character Education in Indonesia History", *Tawarikh: International Journal for Historical Studies*, vol. 9 (2), April (2018): 159-176; Abdillah, A. "Aspek Ontologi dan Kosmologi Dalam Ajaran Tasawuf Martabat Tujuh Shaykh Abdul Muhyi Pamijahan", *ISLAM NUSANTARA: Journal for the Study of Islamic History and Culture*, vol. 4, no. 2, (2023): 63-82. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.47776/islamnusantara.v4i2.689>

¹⁰ Michael Laffan, *The Making of Indonesian Islam: Orientalism and the Narration of Sufi Past*. (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011); Reference of translating the term *Marta bat tujuh* into *seven stages* referred to by Martin van Bruinessen, through his considered argument that the term "*Marta bat*" refers to *maqam* (Sufi's stage or station of spirituality); an emanation of existence; and/or station. Even so, scholars interpret the term differently. Martin van Bruinessen prefers using "*Seven Stages*," see: Martin van Bruinessen, "Studies of Sufism and the Sufi Orders in Indonesia," *Die Welt des Islams, New Series*, vol. 38, issue 2

The seven stages concept became increasingly popular after the renowned Sufi from Gujarat, Syaikh Fadl Allah al-Burhānpūrī (d. 1620), composed the work entitled *al-Tuḥfah al-Mursalāh ilā Rūḥ al-Nabī* and circulated in the Nusantara. Following Azra, though it was used as the core reference for Nusantaranese 'Ulama in the period for the issue, starting from Syams al-Dīn al-Sumatra'ī, Nūr al-Dīn al-Ranīrī (d. 1658), Yusūf al-Maqāsīrī (d. 1699), 'Abd Ṣamad al-Palimbānī (d. 1789), as well as Nafīs al-Banjārī, some of its contents, particularly on seven stages concept, has generated some polemics.¹¹ The seven stages are known as the concept of existence's levels. Al-Burhanpuri classifies the concept of existence into seven levels—first, *aḥadiyyah*, which refers to the God's Self. Second, *waḥdah*, or in the other term, is referred to as *al-Ḥaqīqāt al-Muḥammadiyah*. Third, *waḥīdiyyah* (oneness). Fourth, '*ālam arwaḥ* (spiritual realm). Fifth, '*alām miṭāl*. Sixth, '*alām ajsām* (physical realm). Seventh, *al-Jāmi'ah* or *al-Insān al-Kāmil*.¹² These stages are used philosophically to explain the creation process of beings. To some extent, it becomes a fundamental reference to explain the levels of spirituality of human beings in their unity with God's Self.¹³ The concept of unification being's spirituality to the God's

(1998):192-219. Noorhaidi Hasan follows Bruinessen's term. See: Noorhaidi Hasan, "The Tuḥfat al-Rāghibīn: The work of Abdul Samad al-Palimbani or Muhammad Arsyad al-Banjari?", *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, vol. 163, no. 1 (2007): 67-85. The other, Braginsky uses the term *Seven Stages of Being*. See I.V. Braginsky, "Universe - Man - Text: The Sufi Concept Of Literature (With Special Reference To Malay Sufism)", *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, Deel 149, 2de Afl. (1993): 201-225. Cristomy translates it to *The Seven Levels of Being*. See Tomy Cristomy, *Signs of the Wali: Narratives at the Sacred Sites in Pamijahan, West Java*, (Canberra: ANU Press, 2008), 27. Muhaimin's dissertation interprets the term to "seven stages of creation," see in Muhaimin A.G, *The Islamic Traditions of Cirebon: Ibadat and Adat Among Javanese Muslims*, (Canberra: ANU Press, 2006), 247.

¹¹ Azyumardi Azra, *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad XVII & XVIII*, (Jakarta: Kencana, 2013), 143.

¹² See Fadl Allah al-Burhanpuri, *al-Ḥaqīqah al-Muwāfiqah 'alā al-Tuḥfah al-Mursalāh*, ed. Ahmad Ginandjar Sya'ban, (Jakarta: Kementerian Agama RI, 2022).

¹³ Jajang A. Rohmana, "Diskursus Tasawuf Nusantara di Mekah: Respons Mukhtar 'Atarid al-Bughuri Terhadap Ajaran Martabat Tujuh", *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan*, vol. 19, no. 1, (202):1-36.

self is part of the *waḥdat al-wujūd* concept pioneered by Ibn ‘Arabī.¹⁴ Therefore, similar to the controversial nature of *Waḥdatul Wujūd* among scholars in the Middle East, the doctrine of the seven stages also drew the same circumstances from who agreed with it and who was against it.

Thus, the concept of the seven stages has become a noteworthy discourse that marks the intellectual debate among scholars in the Nusantara region on the field of Sufism. Characterized by public discourse and its warm discussion, the seven stages concept is continuously discussed among scholars these days. Additionally, several manuscripts written by scholars that respond to the concept have recently been unearthed and rediscussed among current scholars.

The works (published or in manuscript format) that respond to philosophical Sufism, particularly the seven stages, are not limited to Sufism works but are also embedded in translated versions of the creed subject. Only limited scholars were aware that in a translated book *Umm al-Barāhīn*, composed by Syaikh Muḥammad Zain ibn Faqīh Jalāl al-Dīn al-Āsyī (d. 1783 M), exists embedded responses on the polemic of the seven stages that happened in that period. Syaikh Muḥammad Zain, an Acehnese scholar, expressed his views on the seven stages concept through his work titled *Bidāyah al-Hidāyah*.¹⁵, translation and commentary edition of Al-Sanūsī’s *Umm al-Barāhīn* written with Jawi script and in Malay language. Notwithstanding it is a translated piece of the widely known treaty of Ash’arism, it nonetheless embedded serious responses on particular polemic (the seven stages teachings) that he considered that in that period, there were no longer Scholars who were capable of comprehending these concepts, rendering it not to be taught.

His expression in that work underlined Muḥammad Zain’s stand and response on the seven stages as an adherent of Ash’arism. It was known, Al-Sanūsī’s *Umm al-Barāhīn* has become

¹⁴ See Said Aqil Siroj, *Allah dan Alam Semesta Perspektif Tasawuf Falsafi*, (Jakarta: Yayasan SAS, 2021).

¹⁵ Muḥammad Zain ibn Jalāl al-Dīn al-Āsyī, *Bidāyah al-Hidāyah*, (Patani: Mathba’ah ibn Halabi, nd)

one of the standard references in Ash'ārism that explain mandatory, unattainable, and contingent attributes of Allah's Being. Furthermore, Muḥammad Zain also implicitly emphasized that comprehension of theology, specifically on Allah's Being and His attributes, is sufficiently addressed through the *Umm al-Barāhīn*.

Muhammad's Zain effort in responding to the seven stages concept has illuminated that the surrounding dynamic discussion on it continuously evolved after the 17th century and was previously mediated by a Kurdish sufi scholar, Ibrahim al-Kūrānī.¹⁶ Moreover, the responses are not only contained in the specific treaties on Sufism or written partially but also mediated through translation texts of Ash'ārism. Then, it highlights the significant contribution of Ash'ārī theology in responding to existing heterodox Sufi teachings. Several questions arise from those illuminations: 1) what are Muḥammad Zain's responses to developing the seven stages teachings in Nusantara? How did he respond to the teachings of Ibn 'Arabī and 'Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī? To what extent is his use of the translation of *Umm al-Barāhīn* as a medium in responding to the concept? The article will try to elucidate those questions.

Several former studies by a few scholars have examined the concept of the seven stages and the responses of the Acehnese scholars in the 18th century. For Instance, the works of Azra and Peacock tend to overlook Muhammad Zain as a significant figure in the period who dealt with the discourse.¹⁷ Other Scholars that deal with translated works of *Umm al-Barāhīn*, such as what is discussed by Burhān al-Dīn, do not address Muḥammad Zain's response to the seven stages concept.¹⁸ There were various studies

¹⁶ Oman Fathurahman, "Ithaf Al-Dhaki by Ibrāhīm Al-Kurānī: A Commentary of Wahdat Al-Wujud for Jawi Audience," *Archipel*, 81 (2011): 177–98.

¹⁷ Azyumardi Azra, *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad XVII & XVIII*, (Jakarta: Kencana, 2013), 140; *Arabic Literary Culture in Southeast Asia in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, (Leiden: Brill, 2024), 59.

¹⁸ Jajat Burhanudin, "The Popularizing of Sunni Doctrine In Southeast Asia: Sifat Dua Puluh in Malay Kitab Jawi of the 19th Century", *Ulumuna*, vol. 26, no. 2, (2022): 269-295.

by scholars on that topic, such as Jajang A. Rohmana's two articles.¹⁹, Syukri al-Fauzi Harlis & Arrasyid²⁰, Asep Lukman Hamid²¹, Nurul Hidayah Aziz, Shahril Nizam Zulkifli, Amin Che Amat, Che Zarrina Saari²², and Ali Muzakir.²³ Others focus on the philological aspects of *Umm al-Barāhīn*, as seen in the research of Sangidu²⁴, Mochammad Bagja, Agung Nugraha Zainaldy, Sangidu²⁵, dan Faudzinaim dan Badaruddin.²⁶ Hence, the study wants to elucidate the notable role and contribution of Muḥammad Zain, an Acehnese Scholar in the 18th century whose work is widely spread in the Malay archipelago. It also illuminates Muhammad Zain's

¹⁹ Jajang A. Rohmana, "Diskursus Tasawuf Nusantara di Mekah: Respons Mukhtār 'Aṭārīd Al-Bughūrī terhadap Ajaran Martabat Tujuh", *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan*, vol. 19, (2021):1–36; Jajang A Rohmana, "Tasawuf Sunda dan Warisan Islam Nusantara: Martabat Tujuh dalam Dangding Haji Hasan Mustapa (1852-1930)", *Buletin Al-Turas*, vol. 20, no. 2, (2014). 259–284. <https://e-resources.perpusnas.go.id:2229/10.15408/bat.v20i2.3760>

²⁰ Syukri Alfauzi Harlis, & Arrasyid Arrasyid, "The Suluk of The Salik in the Concept of Seven Stages (Martabat Tujuh) of Abdel Samad al-Palimbani," *Jurnal Theologia*, vol.33, no.1 (2022): 87–100. <https://e-resources.perpusnas.go.id:2229/10.21580/teo.2022.33.1.12575>

²¹ Asep Lukman Hamid, "The Conception of Martabat Tujuh in Wirid Hidayat Jati of Ranggawarsita (Konsepsi Martabat Tujuh Dalam Wirid Hidayat Jati Ranggawarsita)", *Al-Afkar*, vol. 4, no. 1 (2019): 77–91. <https://e-resources.perpusnas.go.id:2229/10.5281/zenodo.3333725>

²² Nurul Hidayah Aziz, Shahril Nizam Zulkipli, Amin Che Ahmat, & Che Zarrina Saari, "An Analysis on Doctrine of Nur Muhammad in Bahr Al-Lahut: A Corelation to Martabat Tujuh (Seven Echelon)", *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, vol. 7, no. 11 (2017): 1418-1433.

²³ Ali Muzakir, "Wacana Martabat Tujuh Di Jambi", *JURNAL AL-AQIDAH*, vol. 11, (2019):208–218.

²⁴ Sangidu, "Konsep Martabat Tujuh Dalam At-Tuchfatul-Mursalah Karya Syaikh Muhammad Fadhllullah Al-Burhanpuri: Kajian Filologis Dan Analisis Resepsi", *Jurnal Humaniora*, vol. 14, no. 1(2012): 1-11.

²⁵ Mochammad Bagja Agung Nugraha Zainaldy, & Sangidu Sangidu, "Naskah Tuhfah Al-Mursalah (Maa.021) Masjid Agung Surakarta; Konsep Posisi Salik Dalam Martabat Menuju Maqam 'Ilahiyyah", *Metahumaniora*, vol. 13, no.1 (2023): 65-73.

²⁶ Faudzinaim Badaruddin, "Tuhfah al-Mursalah ila Ruh al-Nabiy as the Source of the Doctrine Seven Grades of Being in the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago," *Teosofia: Indonesian Journal of Islamic Mysticism*, vol. 10, no. 1, (2021): 59–74. <https://e-resources.perpusnas.go.id:2229/10.21580/tos.v10i1.8580>

position in standardizing the teachings of Sunni Sufism, reflected in his work *Umm al-Barāhīn* translation.

This article focuses explicitly on Muḥammad Zain's responses to the doctrine of the seven stages in the Nusantara, particularly in Aceh, during the 18th century. The methodology used in this article is a literature review with a socio-intellectual historical approach to uncover the social and religious historical contexts of that period.²⁷ This approach was chosen because the authors need to thoroughly examine the *Bidāyah al-Hidāyah*, focusing on how developed ideas have evolved.²⁸

Intellectual history is often used interchangeably with the history of ideas. According to Bavaj, Harvey Robinson first used intellectual history as a historical research concept, while Arthur O. Lovejoy initially used the history of ideas.²⁹ However, the history of ideas is an outdated term that scholars no longer use extensively.³⁰ Intellectual history broadly means studying intellectuals, ideas, and intellectual patterns. As a study, intellectual history is related to philosophy because it often involves philosophical arguments to reconstruct history.³¹

As the primary corpus in this research article, the text of *Bidāyah al-Hidāyah* has a significant role in standardizing discourses of Ash'arism and Sunni Sufism in the Nusantara Regions. The secondary sources of the article are several research

²⁷ John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Pendekatan Metode Kualitatif, Kuantitatif, dan Campuran*, trans. Achmad Fawaid dan Riyanati Kusmini Pancasari, (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2016), 245.

²⁸ Nyong Eka Teguh Iman Santosa, *Sejarah Intelektual Sebuah Pengantar*, (Sidoarjo: Uruannabooks, 2014), 62.

²⁹ Riccardo Bavaj, "Intellectual History". Version: 1.0, Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte. (2010) URL: http://docupedia.de/zg/Intellectual_History?oldid=76819.

³⁰ Peter A. Gordon, Amabel B. James & Harvard College Professor. (n.d.). "What is Intellectual History? A frankly partisan introduction to a frequently misunderstood field". URL: <https://ces.fas.harvard.edu/uploads/files/Reports-Articles/What-is-Intellectual-History-Essay-by-Peter-Gordon.pdf>

³¹ Peter A. Gordon, Amabel B. James & Harvard College Professor. (n.d.). "What is Intellectual History? A frankly partisan introduction to a frequently misunderstood field".

about the dynamic of the intellectual milieu of Aceh in the 18th century.

As a scholar who lived during a period when the central part of Aceh underwent several decadences in economic, political, and intellectual traditions, Muḥammad Zain endeavored to continue the traditions of the formers by becoming an educator of traditional Islamic subjects and composing works. Nonetheless, according to Hadi, the period is marked as a decadent era of Acehnese scholar traditions, both in terms of the qualities and the number of successors.³²

The techniques for analyzing the corpus data are as follows: Muhammad Zain's thoughts on philosophical Sufism, which exists on *Bidāyah al-Hidāyah*, the seven stages, and its prominent adherents, are collected, and then the data is analyzed using a socio-intellectual historical approach to examine aspects of Muhammad Zain's surroundings that affect his position in the text.

The *Ash'ārī* Creed in Nusantara

Books on creed (*'aqidah*) are among the most widely circulated texts in the Muslim world, including Southeast Asia. According to Arai Kazuhiro's catalog, books on creed rank fourth in the most circulated books in Asia, totaling 275 titles.³³ The *Umm al-Barāhīn* was authored by Abū 'Abd Allah Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf ibn 'Umar al-Ḥasanī al-Sanūsī al-Tilimsanī, commonly known as Imām al-Sanūsī. *Umm al-Barāhīn* is one of the most popular family³⁴

³² Amirul Hadi, "Aceh in History, Preserving Traditions and Embracing Modernity," *MIQOT*, vol. XXXVII, no. 2 July-December (2013): 449-464.

³³ Arai Kazuhiro, "Characteristic of The Collection," in *A Provisional Catalogue of Southeast Asian Kitabs of Sophia University (Second Version)*, ed. Kawashima Midori (Tokyo: Institute of Asian Cultures – Center for Islamic Area Studies, Sophia University, 2015), 21.

³⁴ The term "family" used here refers to the term used by Kooria. He uses the term "family" to classify the texts of the Shafi'ī school of fiqh, which later received responses from subsequent scholars who wrote works such as *sharḥ* and *ḥasyiyah*. Meanwhile, Widjojo prefers to use the term "group." See Mahmood Kooria, "Cosmopolis of Law: Islamic Legal Ideas and Texts across the Indian Ocean and Eastern Mediterranean Worlds," (Ph.D Thesis, Leiden University, 2006), 46-57;

Books in this field.³⁵ He was a scholar born and raised in Tilimsān (now part of Algeria) who passed away in 895 H / 1490 CE. Imām al-Sanūsī authored numerous works across various disciplines, with his works on creed, particularly within the Ash'arī school, being the most significant. His works on the creed of the school founded by Abū Ḥasan al-Asy'arī amount to eight, with the most famous being the book al-'Aqīdah al-Shughrā, renowned as *Umm al-Barāhīn*.³⁶

The book *Umm al-Barāhīn* has received various responses through commentaries and glosses written by various scholars. Its popularity has subsequently placed Imām al-Sanāsī as one of the foremost scholars of the Asy'arī school. Borrowing the term from Fernand Braudel, this book spans a considerable "longue durée" or long-duration³⁷ In Southeast Asia, which holds a distinctive place. *Umm al-Barāhīn* has been copied, translated, and commented upon by scholars in the Southeast Asian region.

As a standard reference for Ash'arim with its compact and simple narratives, the *Umm al-Barāhīn* has acquired wide acceptance by using it as teaching material in the madrasas of Southeast Asia.³⁸ Its compactness and clarity earned a special place among scholars by translating and conducting commentaries on

Alex. S. Widjojo, "Shaykh Nawawi of Banten: Texts, Authority, And The Gloss Tradition," (Ph.D Thesis, Columbia University, 1997), 220.

³⁵ Eryan Nurtawab, "Which Are among the Most Important Printed Kitabs?" in *A Provisional Catalogue of Southeast Asian Kitabs of Sophia University (Second Version)*, ed. Kawashima Midori, (Tokyo: Institute of Asian Cultures – Center for Islamic Area Studies, Sophia University, 2015), 19.

³⁶ Caitlyn Olson, "Ma Ba'da al-Sanusi: New Horizons in the Study of Ash'ari Theology in the Islamic West," *Philosophy and Sciences in the Islamic Context*, July (2022): 5-6.

³⁷ Fernand Braudell and Immanuel Wallerstein, "History and the Social Sciences: The Longue Durée," *Review Fernand Braudel Center*, vol. 32, no. 2 (2009): 171–203. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40647704>

³⁸ For further reading on Theology books teaching in the traditional madrasas in the Muslim World, see Aaron Spevack, *The Archetypal Sunni Scholar: Law, Theology, and Mysticism in The Synthesis of Al-Bājūrī*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 2014)

it.³⁹ Thus, it is understandable that its copies can be found in numerous places in the Nusantara region.⁴⁰ It is also understandable that during the period, many of whom lacked Arabic-language sources, there was a need to work with a simple and compactness of narrations. Hence, the *Umm al-Barahin* is selected as the material. On that occasion, Syaikh Muhammad Zain explains:

سسعکهن تله اکو ملیهت فد زمن این اکن اورع جاوي درفد کسعکاتن
ارتین درفد عقل فد برلاجر دغن بهاس عرب مک اکو کهندق اکو
ترجمهکن اکن کراعن امام یع لبیه لاکي ورع یائیت أبو عبد الله کنهیا
محمد نمانیا انق یوسف سنویس نما نکرنیا حسنی بعسانیا یع رضا الله
درفد نیا یع دنمائی کراعن نیا یائیت أم البراهین دغن بهاس جاوي سره
اکو نیتاکن معنایا دغن برعیع اکو لهت اکندی فد ستعهد رفد ببراف
شرح دان ستعهد رفد ببراف حاشیه دان اکو همفنکن کفدنیا ستعه
ببراف فائده یع برکهندق کفدنیا کارنا ممبری منفعة دغندی سکل
اورعیع بهارو اکو نمائی اکندی بدایة الهدایة

"Indeed, I have seen in this era that Jawi people face burdens in comprehending Arabic Language, So I intend to translate the work of the pious (*wirā'i*) Imām, Abū 'Abd Allah, the epithet of Muhammad, son of Yusuf, Sanūsi by his origin, and Hasānī by his lineage – may Allah be pleased with him. His work is titled *Umm al-Barāhin*, which I have translated into the Java language in its explanation by referencing commentaries and super-commentaries books on the theme. It (the translation) will benefit the beginner adherences, and I have titled it *Bidāyah al-Hidāyah*".⁴¹

³⁹ Philip Bruckmayr, "The Sharh/Hāshiya Phenomenon in Southeast Asia", *Mélanges de l'Institut dominicain d'études orientales* 32 (2017): 27-52.

⁴⁰ Muhammad Rosadi, et all, *Naskah-Naskah Tauhid di Indonesia Bagian Barat dan Kekayaan Khazanah Karya-Karya Ulama Indonesia*, (Jakarta: Balai Penelitian dan Pengembangan Agama Jakarta, 2013).

⁴¹ Muḥammad Zain ibn Jalāl al-Dīn al-Āsyī, *Bidāyah al-Hidāyah*, (Patani: Mathba'ah ibn Halabi, nd), 2.

Muhammad Zain and His Work

Sources that explain the biography of Sheikh Muhammad Zain are scarce. Even in his published works, historical information about him is absent. His exact birth and death years remain uncertain, though it is estimated that he passed away after 1977 CE. He is mentioned to have studied under Bābā Dāwud, a prominent scholar who taught several Southeast Asian scholars.⁴²

His book is titled *Bidāyat al-Hidāyah Syarḥ Umm al-Barāhīn* in Malay Language. It is mentioned at the end of the book that the manuscript was completed in Mecca on Friday night, the 24th of Sya'bān, in the year 1170 H (1757 CE)⁴³. According to Wan Muhammad Shaghīr Abdullah, as quoted by Sya'bān, besides being taught in the Malay world, this book was also taught to Malays studying in Mecca.⁴⁴

As explained by the author himself in the introduction to his book, this translation was written out of necessity at that time when many "ahlul Jawi" people could not understand Arabic⁴⁵. This aligns with the historical context of the 18th century when few people in the Nusantara had direct access to primary textual sources of Islam. Therefore, one of his motivations in translating the creedal book by Imām al-Sanūsī was to facilitate the study of creed among the Muslim community in the Malay region.

Another factor that likely contributed to the publication of this translation is that it was born within the context of teaching creedal books, especially *Umm al-Barāhīn*. As stated by Jhons, works published during that time up to the 19th century were

⁴² Mehmet Özey, "'Rumi' Networks of al-Sinkīlī: A Biography of Bāba Dāwud," *Studia Islamika*, vol. 24, no. 2, (2017): 247-270.

⁴³ Muhammad Zain ibn Jalāl al-Dīn al-Āsyī, *Bidāyah al-Hidāyah*, (Patani: Mathba'ah ibn Halabi, nd), 46.

⁴⁴ Ahmad Ginanjar Sya'ban, *Mahakarya Islam Nusantara: Kitab, Naskah, Manuskrip dan Korespondensi Ulama Nusantara*, (South Tangerang: Pustaka Compass, 2017), 105.

⁴⁵ Muhammad Zain ibn Jalāl al-Dīn al-Āsyī, *Bidāyah al-Hidāyah*, (Patani: Mathba'ah ibn Halabi, nd), 2.

often the result of a teacher instructing students in Arabic texts at the place of teaching.⁴⁶

Despite the background surrounding the emergence of this work, *Bidāyat al-Hidāyah* as a text possesses many unique aspects. One exciting feature of Muḥammad Zain's translation work is its systematic presentation. He does not employ a straightforward word-for-word translation or what is commonly known as interlinear translation hanging below the main text. Instead, Muḥammad Zain elaborates extensively beyond the main text by discussing topics not found in *Umm al-Barāhīn*. He utilizes this work to comment on matters fundamentally absent from the original text as a form of expansion (*sharḥ/commentary*).

For example, Muḥammad Zain writes:

فرتما وجوب كدوا استحالة كتيك جواز (مك) معنى واجب ايت يانت
بريع تباد تروفا اتو تبادا دترىما فد عقل اكن كتيديانيا دان واجب بك
ولي كانق ٢ معاجراقن بريع واجب بك ذات الله تعالى دان يع مستحيل
دان يع هارس دان دميكيلاك واجب اتس سوامي معاجر استرين دان
يع مخدوم معاجر خدمنيا دان فعهلولو معاجر همبانيا

*"[and it is obligatory] for the guardian of children to teach them what is obligatory regarding the Essence of Allah, and what is impossible, and what is permissible, and similarly obligatory for the husband to teach his wife, and the master to teach his servant, and the leader to teach his subjects."*⁴⁷

In this example, he is elaborating on a passage from *Umm al-Barāhīn* that states: "It is obligatory upon every responsible person by *Shari'ah* to know what is obligatory upon our Lord, the Exalted and Glorified, and what is impossible, and what is permissible." This passage is placed at the beginning, along with its textual translation.

⁴⁶ A. H. Jhons, "Penerjemahan Bahasa Arab ke dalam Bahasa Melayu" in *Sadur: Sejarah Terjemahan di Indonesia dan Malaysia*, ed. Henri Chambert-Loir, (Jakarta: KPG Gramedia, 2009), 55.

⁴⁷ Muḥammad Zain ibn Jalāl al-Dīn al-Āsyī, *Bidāyah al-Hidāyah*, (Patani: Mathba'ah ibn Halabi, nd), 6.

Muḥammad Zain consistently adopts this writing pattern. The portion of direct translation from the main text is much smaller than his elaborations and discussions of religious ideas or viewpoints. He uses the medium of *Umm al-Barāhīn* to respond to religious issues occurring in Acehese society.

The main characteristic of this translation of *Umm al-Barāhīn* is that after translating its textual content, Muḥammad Zain introduces several new issues often beyond the scope of *Umm al-Barāhīn*'s discussions. For instance, he uses the term "fāidah" (benefit) to begin a new discussion as follows:

(فائدة) این سوات فائدة (برمول) بالغ کانق ۲ ایت دعن دوا فرکارا
(فرتما) دعن برمفینیا کمدين درفد عمرنیا سمبیلن تاهن (دان کدوا)
دعن سامفی عمرنیا لیم بلس تاهن این فد حق لاک ۲ دان دلہکن فد
حق فرمفوان دعن حیض کمدين درفد عمرنیا سمبیلن تاهن فول

[*faidah*] This is a benefit. [Beginning] When a child reaches puberty, it involves two matters. [First], through his or her dreams, then at nine. [And second], by reaching the age of fifteen, which applies to boys and is extended to girls with menstruation starting from the age of nine.⁴⁸

In this passage, Muḥammad Zain discusses aspects related to the stages of maturity and the responsibilities that come with it, particularly in the context of Islamic teachings. He elaborates on the age at which children are considered mature based on their physical and developmental milestones, emphasizing the importance of understanding these aspects within Islamic education and upbringing.

Muhammad Zain's efforts in embedding several faiths (detailed explanations) in the *Bidāyah al-Hidāyah* show his consciousness as a scholar of Ash'arism in theology and adherent of Junaid al-Baghdādī and al-Gazālī in Sufism order. Therefore, he has added several explanations as a project to spread the campaign of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah*, containing

⁴⁸ Muḥammad Zain ibn Jalāl al-Dīn al-Āsyī, *Bidāyah al-Hidāyah*, (Patani: Mathba'ah ibn Halabi, nd), 6.

its theology, law, and mysticism typologies. About Ahl Aunnah wa al-Jamaah theology is seen in the work through this following explicit expression:

(كهوي) اولهم هي طالب بهوس علم تصوف ايتو سوت بهاي درفد علم
 شريعة نبي محمد ﷺ كارن علم شريعة ايتو تيكا بهاي (فرتام) علم فقه
 (كدوا) علم أصول الدين (كتيك) علم تصوف دان طريقة دان يع تيكا
 اين دي كلوركن درفد حديث نبي محمد ﷺ (مك) يع معلوركن علم أصول
 الدين يائيت إمام أبو الحسن الأشعري (دان) يع معلوركن علم تصوف
 يائت إمام أبو القاسم الجنيد البغدادي

*“Know it, O Students, Sufism knowledge is one of the Sharia preached by the Prophet Muḥammad SAW (peace be upon him). The sharīa consists of three parts: firstly, fiqh (law) knowledge; secondly, foundations of the creed; and thirdly, Sufism and the order (tariqah). Those three are derived from the Qur’an and Hadith of the Prophet. Imam Abū Ḥasan al-Ash’ārī first insists on the foundations of the creed. (then) who insist sufism is Imām Abū al-Qāsim al-Junaid al-Baghdādī.”*⁴⁹

Bidāyah Al-Hidāyah and Umm al-Barāhīn

The network of scholars in the Nusantara and the Middle East was established through educational channels such as mosques, madrasas, and ribats, making this network academically oriented⁵⁰. This interconnectedness in Islamic history is not a recent phenomenon. The relationship between teachers and students, as recorded in the tradition of transmitting Hadith, is crucial for measuring someone's scholarly authority and credibility.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Muḥammad Zain ibn Jalāl al-Dīn al-Āsyī, *Bidāyah al-Hidāyah*, (Patani: Mathba’ah ibn Halabi, nd), 32.

⁵⁰ Azyumardi Azra, *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad XVII & XVIII*, (Jakarta: Kencana, 2013), 118.

⁵¹ In the study of Hadith, the tradition of transmission is heavily focused on the issue of sanad (chain of transmission). The credibility of the informant measures the truth of the information. For further details, check the books on *muṣṭalāḥ al-ḥadīṭ*.

Finding accurate data on when and who in Nusantara first established scholarly connections with Middle Eastern scholars is challenging. Based on written sources, Mas'ūd ibn 'Abd Allah is suspected to be the first person from Nusantara to bear the appellation al-Jawī after his name and to have early scholarly ties with scholars in Yemen.⁵² Ibn Battuta's account of the condition of the Sultanate of Samudera Pasai under Sultan Mālik al-Zāhir, who showed high regard for the scholarly world, provides another early indicator of such connections.⁵³

In the subsequent centuries, particularly in the 17th century CE, the scholarly network linking scholars from the Malay region with the Middle East strengthened⁵⁴ This network typically involved sufi orders rather than scholarly networks in other disciplines like theology, specifically Umm al-Barāhīn. Although figures like Syaikh 'Abd al-Raūf Singkil, Syaikh Yusūf Makassarī, and other Nusantara scholars were connected to centers of Islamic studies and were disciples of Syaikh Ibrāhīm al-Kurānī within the chain of sufi transmission, their names do not appear in later scholarly chains outside of Sufism.

The book of scholarly chains written by Syaikh Mahfūz al-Tarmasī and Syaikh Yāsīn ibn 'Īsā al-Fadānī, which includes chains of transmission of various disciplines, including theology, only mentions Nusantara scholars from the 18th century such as Syaikh 'Abd al-Samad al-Falimbānī. This data leaves some questions unanswered but will not be addressed in this discussion.

Regarding the scholarly chain of transmission of Umm al-Barāhīn, according to the book of scholarly chains written by Sheikh Mahfūdz al-Tarmasī, the arrangement is as follows: From

⁵² Muḥammad ibn As'ad al-Yāfi'ī, *Mir'at al-Jinān wā 'Ibrah al-Yaqzan fī Ma'rīfat mā Yu'tabar min Hawādīṭ al-Zaman*, (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 1997), 232; Michael Feener and Michael Laffan, "Sufi Scents Across the Indian Ocean: Yemeni Hagiography and the Earliest History of Southeast Asian Islam," *Archipel* 70, Paris (2005): 185-208.

⁵³ Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allah ibn Baṭūṭa al-Tanūkhī, *Rihlah Ibn Baṭūṭa: Tuḥfat al-Nadzdār fī Garāib al-Amṣār wa 'ajāib al-Asfār*, (Damascus: Dar al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 2012), 459.

⁵⁴ Azyumardi Azra, *Islam Nusantara Global and Local Networks*, (Jakarta: Prenada Media Group, 2007), 31-32.

Sayyid al-Madanī → Syaikh Yusūf ibn Uthman al-Kharbūtī → Syaikh Fath Allah al-Sumaidasī → al-Allāmah al-Amīr → Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Saqqath (d. 1183) → Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥajj → Abū al-Barākat ‘Abd al-Qadīr ibn ‘Alī al-Fāsī → ‘Alī ibn Yūsuf al-Fāsī → Yusūf ibn Muḥammad al-Fāsī → Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī al-Munjawir and Imām Muḥammad ibn Qāsim al-Qassar → Abū ‘Abd Allah Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Yusaitanī → Abū Zakāriyya Yaḥyā al-Sanūsī (d. 927) → Imām al-Sanūsī (d. 895).⁵⁵

Meanwhile, the scholarly chain of Umm al-Barāhīn through Syaikh Yāsīn ibn ‘Īsā al-Fadānī is as follows: Kyai Mansūr ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Falakī al-Jakartāwī → Kyai ‘Abd al-Ḥamid ibn Muḥammad Damīrī ibn Habīb al-Jakartāwī → Zainuddīn ibn Badawī al-Shumbawī → al-Muammar Kyai Nawawī ibn ‘Umar al-Bantānī → Syaikh ‘Abd al-Samad al-Palimbānī → al-Muammar ‘Aqīb ibn Hasanuddīn al-Palimbānī al-Madanī → Hasanuddīn ibn Ja’far al-Palimbānī → ‘Īd ibn ‘Alī al-Narasī → ‘Abd Allah ibn Sālim al-Bashrī → Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī al-Maktabī → Syihāb Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Maqarrī al-Tilimsānī → Abū Uthmān Sa’īd ibn Aḥmad al-Maqarrī al-Tilimsānī → ‘Abd Allah Muḥammad ibn Jalāl al-Tilimsānī → Sa’īd al-Kafīf al-Manawī al-Tilimsānī → Imām al-Sanūsī.⁵⁶

An intriguing aspect of these two transmission schemes of Umm al-Barāhīn is that the name of Syaikh Muḥammad Zain does not appear in either chain. This raises questions that require further research. However, it is possible to trace Muḥammad Zain's lineage further to identify his teachers. Based on preliminary information, Muḥammad Zain likely received the transmission of Umm al-Barāhīn from his teacher, Babā Daūd ibn ‘Ismā’īl al-Jāwī ibn Aghā Muṣṭafā al-Rūmī, who was a disciple of Sheikh ‘Abd al-Raūf al-Singkilī. As known, Sheikh ‘Abd al-Raūf himself authored theological works such as ‘Umdah al-Muttaqīn

⁵⁵ Maḥfūz al-Tarmasī, *Kifāyah al-Mustafīd limā ‘Alā al-Asānīd*, (Mecca: Dār al-Baṣāir al-Islāmiyyah, n.d.)

⁵⁶ Yāsīn al-Fadānī, *al-‘Iqd al-Farīd Min Jawāhir al-Asānīd*, (Surabaya: Dār al-Saqqāf, n.d.), 49-50.

and Sullam al-Mustafidīn, which were likely influenced by the content of Umm al-Barāhīn concerning the attributes of God.⁵⁷

Response to the Teachings of "The Seven Stages"

As part of the concept of Sufi teachings, the doctrine of the seven stages initially received responses from scholars in Nusantara. This doctrine, often associated with the Syattāriyah sufi order, entered the Nusantara through disciples of Sheikh Fadl Allah al-Burhanpūrī, the author of the book "Tuḥfat al-Mursalah ilā Rūḥ al-Nabī," such as Shams al-ddīn al-Sumatra'ī.⁵⁸ Through "Tuḥfat al-Mursalah," the doctrine of the seven stages spread to nearly all regions in the Nusantara. The channels of the Syattāriyah sufi order, with Syaikh 'Abd al-Raūf al-Fansūrī al-Singkilī as a pivotal figure, facilitated the rapid expansion of the doctrine of the seven stages. This is evidenced by manuscript copies of "Tuḥfat al-Mursalah" and its commentaries written by 'Abd al-Raūf al-Fansūrī's disciples, such as Syaikh 'Abd al-Muhyī Pamijahan. The latter is known for writing manuscripts on the seven stages, preserved in the Leiden Library under codes Or. 7527 and 7705.⁵⁹ Its manuscript copy, preserved in Leiden University's library, has become proof of spreading the seven teaching stages in multiple regional places. Additionally, copies of the book are preserved in several public libraries worldwide and are part of a private collection.

The concept of the seven stages fundamentally involves the process of human creation, emphasizing that humans, as creatures, are distinct from Allah, the Creator. However, scholars have found this concept's explanations problematic and controversial due to

⁵⁷ Syaifudin, "Theological Understanding in Java in the 18th-19th Centuries: A Study on the Manuscript Bayan at-Tasdiq," *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan*, vol. 11, no. 1, (2013): 1–26.

⁵⁸ Masmedia Pinem, "The Doctrine of Seven Stages in the Manuscript Asrar al-Khafi by Sheikh Abd al-Mutalib," *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan*, vol. 10, no. 1, (2012): 121-146.

⁵⁹ Abdillah, Ali M., "Aspek Ontologi dan Kosmologi Dalam Ajaran Tasawuf Martabat Tujuh Shaykh Abdul Muhyi Pamijahan". *ISLAM NUSANTARA: Journal for the Study of Islamic History and Culture*, vol. 4, no.2 (2022):63-82.

its philosophical nature. Muḥammad Zain used the book "Bidāyah al-Hidāyah" to respond to the controversy surrounding the doctrine of the seven stages in Aceh. As widely known, the "seven stages" was a Sufi theme that sparked discourse in the Nusantara, especially after disseminating Fadh Allah al-Burhanpūrī's "Tuḥfat al-Mursalāh" in the region.⁶⁰

Polemics of the seven stages are on the graduation of existence, which in the end is the unity of the Being and the God, as many of its adherents believe. That belief has triggered polemics among scholars through their responses and critiques. In commenting on this theme, Muḥammad Zain expressed:

ادافون فدا برلاجر مرتبة توجه تيدا واجب منونتوت دي لاي فولا
تيا ادا اهل يا فدا مسا اي. (مك) سكالين دي تعلكن كارنا تيدا
ديكتهوئي اكن ارتي يا دان تركادع ميالاهي اكن شرع مك جادي ممباوا
كفدا ممبناسكن كرنا ببرافا كتاب اورع اورع داهولو دي تعلكن كرنا
تيدا اهل يا فدا معاجرکن دي دان معورثيکن معنای دي دلام تاناہ
عرب سفرتي مکه دان لائين درفدا کدوويا سبب علمو سوداه مات

*"As for learning the 'seven stages,' there is no obligation to seek it further, nor are there any qualified individuals today. Thus, it is all abandoned because we do not understand its meaning. It likely contradicts Sharia, leading to destruction, as evidenced by the books left by early scholars who abandoned them, as no one today can explain the words of those from the past in Arab lands like Mecca and Medina and elsewhere because that knowledge has died."*⁶¹

Muḥammad Zain's explanation explicitly aims to guide his readers in responding to the "seven stages," which had been a common topic of discussion among Nusantara scholars for centuries. At least a century before Muḥammad Zain's time, the rejection of Sufi teachings, deemed deviant from mainstream

⁶⁰ Oman Fathurahman, "Ithaf Al-Dhaki by Ibrāhīm Al-Kurānī: A Commentary of Wahdat Al-Wujud for Jawi Audience," *Archipel*, 81 (2011), 177–98.

⁶¹ Muḥammad Zain ibn Jalāl al-Dīn al-Āsyī, *Bidāyah al-Hidāyah*, (Patani: Mathba'ah ibn Halabi, nd), 41.

teachings, occurred in Aceh. Figures like Ḥamzah Fansūrī (1527-1620s) and Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatra'ī (d. 1658) were sufi figures whose teachings generated controversy among scholars.⁶²

At this point, Muḥammad Zain rejected the "seven stages" doctrine and the controversial figures mentioned above. Furthermore, he prohibited using their books and any sufi works with philosophical dimensions, such as those by Ibn 'Arabī. He stated:

(برمولا) دي كلوركن درفرد علماء علماء دمولو ايتو تیکا اورع يائيت حمزة فنصوري دان شمس الدين شمطري دان سيف الرجال کرن ياع تیکا ايتو سوده دي سالهکن اوليه سکالا علماء دي اجيه دان کتاب مرکا سوده دي تنون مليئنکن ياع ترسمبوني اوليه ستعه اورع مک يائيت ادا تعکل فدا مرکا ايتو لاکي مک سکارع فون جاعن دي فکي اکن کتاب ايتو کرنا تيادا سیاف سیاف ياع معتهوئي فرکتانيا مرکا ايتو سبب جاؤه فعمبيلن مرکا ايتو تيادا ادا فدا زمن سکارع ايبي يع بروله معوريکن اکن فرکتان اورع-اورع دمولو دمولو دي دلام تانه عرب فد کتاب عرب سفرتي فتوحات کرعان شيخ ابن عربي ياع دينامي اکن دي فدا نکري مصر دان شام دان عراق دان لائين ي الشيخ الأكبر دان جواهر الخمس ياع ترسبوت دي دلام ي دائرة دان لائين ي کراعن قطب الدين السیدي محمد الغوث دان لائين درفد کدواي درفد سکالا کتاب صوفي ياع بسر-بسر دان دمکیان فولاً دي باوه اعين فد کتاب ياع بهاس ملايو کرنا انيله معکفرکن اوليه سيدي علوي بافقيه دي دلام کتاب نور المبين اکن اورع ياع معملکن عملم رهاسيا ياع دي نامائي دي نکري اجيه اکن علم مکري کرنا سکلين ياع ترسبوت دي دلام نور

⁶² Jajang Rohmana, "Discourse on Nusantara Sufism in Mecca: Mukhtar 'Atarid al-Bughuri's Response to the Doctrine of Seven Stages," *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan*, vol. 19, no. 1, (2021): 1-36.

المبين ستعه ي درفد كتاب اتو اورع ياع تيكا ايتو دان ستعه ي درفد
علم مكري دان ببراف بايك ياع سوده دي تنوه دي نكري اجيه اكن
معملكن علم مكر. والله اعلم

*"Excluded from the scholars of the past are three individuals: Hamzah Fansūrī, Shams al-Dīn Sumatrāī, and Saif al-Rijāl because these three have been condemned by all scholars in Aceh and their books have been rejected except by a few who hide them. Therefore, their books should not be used now because no one understands their words. Their acquisition has been distant in this era, as no one now can explain the words of those in Arab lands from books like Futuhat by Syaikh Ibn 'Arabī, known in Egypt, Syria, and Iraq as the great Sheikh al-Akbar and Jawāhir al-Khams, including in the Dairah and others authored by Quthb al-Dīn Sayyidī Muḥammad al-Ghauts, and likewise under the wind in Malay language books because it was from this, that Sayyidī 'Alawī Bā faqīh declared someone holding on to the books of those three individuals and those practicing the secret knowledge known in Aceh as Mekri knowledge. Because all that is stated in Nūr al-Mubīn, half of it is from those three books or individuals and half from Mekri knowledge, and much has been woven into the fabric of Aceh for those practicing Mekri knowledge. Moreover, Allah knows best."*⁶³

Essentially, as presented above, Muḥammad Zain's view on the *wujūdīyyah* doctrine is not particularly surprising. Considering that during that time, the Nusantara region was at the peak of Islamic orthodoxy, represented by the Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah group, on the one hand. On the other hand, Muḥammad Zain served as the Qādī (judge) for the Sultanate of Aceh, which was then led by Sultan 'Alauddīn (1139 H/1727 CE – 1147 H/1760 CE)⁶⁴. His significant position as Qādī in the Sultanate of Aceh undeniably influenced Syaikh Muḥammad Zain's views, expressed in his work.

Muhammad's Zain response to the seven stages concept has marked that the surrounding polemics still continuously evolved after the 17th century and polarized society. As it is widely known,

⁶³ Muḥammad Zain ibn Jalāl al-Dīn al-Āsyī, *Bidāyah al-Hidāyah*, (Patani: Mathba'ah ibn Halabi, nd), 41-42

⁶⁴ Wan Mohd. Shaghir Abdullah, "Syeikh Muhammad Zain Al-Asyi Kesinambungan Aktiviti Ulama Aceh", *Surat Kabar "Utusan" Malaysia*, edition 04/12/2006.

shattariyah, as the Sufism order, which is believed to teach the seven stages doctrine still, has many adherences, not only limited to Acehnese but also spread to other regions. Therefore, scholars still respond to it in the subsequent centuries. For instance, Syaikh Zain al-‘Ābid al-Dīn al-Fatānī's (d. 1817) work *‘Aqīdah al-Nājīn fī ‘Ilm Uṣūl al-Dīn* expressed his position on the seven stages similar to Muḥammad Zain's stance.⁶⁵

Criticism of Misguidance among Scholars

Although he fundamentally opposed teaching the doctrine of the seven stages (*martabat tujuh*), Muḥammad Zain defended several figures who have long been transmitters within the Syattāriyah sufi order. It is known that this order, attributed to Syaikh ‘Abd Allah al-Sattār as its founder, has close associations with the doctrine of *wujūdīyah* Sufism. This is evident in various manuscripts of this order that strongly emphasize the doctrine of the seven stages.

In another part of his book, *Bidāyah al-Hidāyah*, Muḥammad Zain staunchly defended several scholars who were condemned by people of his time. These scholars include Syaikh ‘Abd al-Raūf al-Fansūrī, who was the teacher of Muḥammad Zain's teacher, Bābā Daūd ibn ‘Ismā‘il al-Jāwī ibn Aghā Muṣṭafā al-Rūmī⁶⁶ and later Syaikh Aḥmad al-Qushāshī and Sheikh Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī. Regarding the issue, Muḥammad Zain wrote:

افابيل اएको كتاهوئي ياع دمكيان ايتو مك فليهارله اوله مو اكن
ديريمو درفدا سبسر بسر فتنه ايبي دان اداله فدا ماس ايبي اوراع ياع
باهارو معاجي انتارا دووا تيكا تامون معكفركن أي اكن ببراف درفدا
تعالی قطب الدنيا والدين يائيت سفرتي احمد القشاسي المدينة
المنورة، (دان) ستعه داري مريكا ايتو سفرتي والي الله ياع تيادا دي

⁶⁵ See Zain al-‘Ābid al-Dīn al-Fatānī, *‘Aqīdah al-Nājīn fī ‘Ilm Uṣūl al-Dīn*, (Singapore: Al-Haramain, nd).

⁶⁶ Wan Mohd. Shaghbir Abdullah, "Syeikh Muhammad Zain Al-Asyi", *Surat Kabar "Utusan" Malaysia*, edition 04/12/2006.

فرتنهكن يائيت ملا إبراهيم درفدا اورا كردي، (دان) شيخ عبد الرؤوف
الفنصوري درفدا اورع اجيه

"If you know this, then safeguard yourself from the greatest of trials, for in this era, people who have studied for merely two or three years may declare some of the knowers of Allah, the Pole of the World and Religion, such as Aḥmad al-Qushāshī from Madīnah al-Munawwarah, and some among them are like saints of Allah beyond dispute, such as Mullā Ibrāhīm from the Kurds, and Sheikh 'Abd al-Raūf Faṣṣūrī from the people of Aceh." ⁶⁷

Muḥammad Zain's views on the world of Sufism became more apparent when he emphatically stated that Imām Junaid al-Baghdādī was a Sufi who imparted this knowledge. Junaid al-Baghdādī is likened to Imām Abū Ḥasan al-Asy'arī as the progenitor of the creed of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah. From this, it can be understood that Sheikh Muḥammad Zain's views on Sufism were firmly rooted within the mainstream Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah school.

This reinforces that Syaikh Muḥammad Zain's perspectives and responses reflected the core teachings of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah at that time, which rigorously emphasized the aspects of Sharia in Sufism. This teaching continues to be followed by most Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah Muslims worldwide, including in various regions of Indonesia.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the discourse of Sufism, especially the doctrine of the "seven stages of being" (*martabat tujuh*), continued into the 18th century CE. This topic was discussed within Sufi works and creedal (theological base) texts. This is evident in how Muḥammad Zain ibn Faqīh Jalāluddīn al-Āsyī inserted his responses and viewpoints in his work *Bidāyah al-Hidāyah*. This book serves as a translation and commentary in Malay Jawi script on the creedal work *Umm al-Barāhīn* by Imām al-Sanūsī. Muḥammad Zain's response to the doctrine of the seven

⁶⁷ Muḥammad Zain ibn Jalāl al-Dīn al-Āsyī, *Bidāyah al-Hidāyah*, (Patani: Mathba'ah ibn Halabi, nd), 32.

stages indicates that it remained a significant topic in the Nusantara region at that time.

Furthermore, this study illustrates that Syaikh Muḥammad ibn Faqīh Jalāl al-Dīn reflected the strengthening orthodoxy of Islam in the region during that period. The increasing influence of Ash'arī theology in the Nusantara region marginalized teachings associated with the philosophical aspects of Sufism, tracing back to figures like Sheikh Ibn 'Arabī and Sheikh 'Abd Karīm al-Jīlī. However, Syaikh Muḥammad Zain appeared cautious in his assessments of Sufi proponents of philosophical Sufism. He also defended sufi masters and leaders of the Syattāriyah order, such as Sheikh Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī, Syaikh Aḥmad al-Qusāsī, and Syaikh 'Abd al-Raūf al-Fansūrī, who were often linked to the doctrine of the seven stages. Syaikh Muḥammad Zain's cautious approach demonstrates his wisdom as a scholar and a Qadi, refraining from hastily labeling those with differing views and beliefs as deviant, especially when these judgments come from individuals lacking comprehensive knowledge of the topics they critique.

This research illuminated that translated works by Nusantara scholars in the past are highly valuable intellectual references. They are not treated as mere translations but also contain valuable insights into local updates that should not be overlooked. The translation can add micro and macro information on the history of Islam's presence in this archipelago.

Finally, there is a need for continuous research based on the findings of the seven stages and their significant essence in the illuminating dynamics of Islam's presence in Indonesia. There is still a lack of findings and unexplored expressions of the Nusantara scholars at the *Martabat Tujuh*, as well as a comparison of their expressions on the concept. Thus, it is hoped through those efforts that further research will illuminate a broader explanation of *Martabat Tujuh* discourse among Muslim scholars.

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