



**Islam Nusantara: Jurnal for the Study of Islamic History and Culture**, 04 (2), 2023: 27-42  
E-ISSN: 2722-8975  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47776/islamnusantara.v4i2.700>

## The Role of Sufis in Connecting Aceh to the Global Islamic Network in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century

**Muhammad Affan**

*Independent Researcher, Jakarta, Indonesia*

*email: [mehmed.affan@gmail.com](mailto:mehmed.affan@gmail.com)*

*\*corresponding author*

**Article history:** Received: September 30, 2022; Accepted: June 04, 2023;  
Published: July 31, 2023

### Abstract

This study explains the roles played by Sufi scholars in building Aceh's interconnectivity with global Islamic networks in the seventeenth century. It responds to a gap in earlier scholarship, which has often discussed the transmission of Sufi scholars in overly broad terms without specifying the concrete mechanisms through which Aceh was connected to the wider Islamic world. The study employs the historical method, drawing on source-based library research. The analysis focuses on tracing patterns of mobility, scholarly transmission, and correspondence undertaken by Acehnese Sufi scholars during the apex of the Aceh Sultanate. The findings demonstrate that Acehnese Sufi figures such as Hamzah Fansuri, Shaykh 'Abd al-Ra'ūf, and Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrānī played central roles as agents linking Aceh to international Islamic networks. This connectivity was constructed through intellectual travel, the delegation of students to study in major Middle Eastern centers of Sufism, and correspondence with prominent figures in other parts of the Islamic world. These networks extended from Southeast Asia to North Africa, reinforcing Aceh's position as a key node in the circulation of knowledge and religious authority. This article contributes to scholarship on the history of Islam in the Malay–Indonesian world and Islamic intellectual networks by offering a more specific mapping of Sufis as transnational actors in shaping Aceh's relationship with the global Islamic world in the seventeenth century.

### Keywords:

Global Islamic network, Islamic history, Islamic interconnectivity, Sufism, Sultanate of Aceh



Author correspondence email: [mehmed.affan@gmail.com](mailto:mehmed.affan@gmail.com)

Available online at:

Copyright (c) 2023 by **Islam Nusantara: Jurnal for the Study of Islamic History and Culture**



### Abstrak

Studi ini menjelaskan peran yang dimainkan oleh para cendekiawan Sufi dalam membangun konektivitas Aceh dengan jaringan Islam global pada abad ke-17. Studi ini menjawab kesenjangan dalam kajian sebelumnya, yang sering membahas transmisi para cendekiawan Sufi secara terlalu luas tanpa menentukan mekanisme konkret yang menghubungkan Aceh dengan dunia Islam yang lebih luas. Studi ini menggunakan metode historis, berdasarkan riset pustaka berbasis sumber. Analisis berfokus pada penelusuran pola mobilitas, transmisi keilmuan, dan korespondensi yang dilakukan oleh para cendekiawan Sufi Aceh selama puncak kejayaan Kesultanan Aceh. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa tokoh-tokoh Sufi Aceh seperti Hamzah Fansuri, Syekh 'Abd al-Ra'ūf, dan Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrānī memainkan peran sentral sebagai agen yang menghubungkan Aceh dengan jaringan Islam internasional. Konektivitas ini dibangun melalui perjalanan intelektual, delegasi siswa untuk belajar di pusat-pusat Sufisme utama di Timur Tengah, dan korespondensi dengan tokoh-tokoh terkemuka di bagian lain dunia Islam. Jaringan-jaringan ini membentang dari Asia Tenggara hingga Afrika Utara, memperkuat posisi Aceh sebagai simpul kunci dalam peredaran pengetahuan dan otoritas keagamaan. Artikel ini berkontribusi pada kajian sejarah Islam di dunia Melayu-Indonesia dan jaringan intelektual Islam dengan menawarkan pemetaan yang lebih spesifik tentang kaum Sufi sebagai aktor transnasional dalam membentuk hubungan Aceh dengan dunia Islam global pada abad ketujuh belas.

### Kata Kunci:

Interkonektivitas Islam, Jaringan Islam global, Kesultanan Aceh, Sejarah Islam, Sufi

### 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 (Ricklefs et al, 2013).

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. 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 (Garaudy, 1981). 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 17<sup>th</sup> 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 (Ricklefs, 2007). 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 (Yatim, 2016). 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 (1966), Mahbub Siraj (2020), Braginsky (2004), Vakily (1997), Johns (2011), Wormser (2012), Nuraini (2019), Muchsin (2021), Manan (2021), Herimawar (2020), and Fakhriati (2020). Other researchers, such as Harun (2004), Nasution (2018), Fathurahman (1999), Birchok (2016), dan Shadiqin (2017), 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 (Azra, 2002). 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 17<sup>th</sup> 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

Fansury and other Acehese Sufis in connecting Aceh to the global Islamic network in the 17<sup>th</sup> 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.

### **Methods**

This study employs the historical method to reconstruct the role of Sufi figures in connecting the Aceh Sultanate with global Islamic networks in the seventeenth century. This methodological choice is grounded in the nature of the inquiry, which focuses on past events as well as the intellectual and spiritual dynamics that developed across the Malay-Indonesian world. The research process follows four key stages: heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography.

Data were collected through library-based research by examining both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources consist of works produced by prominent Acehese Sufi scholars, including Hamzah Fansuri, Shaykh Abdurrauf as-Sinkili, and Shamsuddin as-Sumatrani. In addition, the study closely engages with relevant manuscripts, letters, and religious writings. Secondary sources include academic journal articles and previous studies addressing themes such as scholarly networks, Sufism, and the history of the seventeenth-century Aceh Sultanate.

The collected materials were analyzed qualitatively using a descriptive-analytical approach. The analysis concentrates on tracing Sufi orders (*tarīqa*) networks, patterns of intellectual mobility, teacher–disciple relationships, and inter-scholarly correspondence—elements that collectively indicate the formation of global connectivity. Internal and external source criticism was applied to assess the validity and reliability of the data. The findings are then systematically organized to explain how Sufi scholars functioned as key agents linking Aceh to major centers of Islamic learning in the Middle East.

### **Result and Discussion**

#### ***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. 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 (Pakar, 2016).

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 (al Qushayri, 2004). 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 (Park, 2012). 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 13<sup>th</sup> 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 (Yatim and Nasir, 1990). Some epitaphs found on Acehnese gravestones do contain messages that imply Sufism. The messages usually concern the Sufi worldview, death, and the spiritual journey to the "throne of God" (Tjandrasasmita, 2009). 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 (Johns, 1993). This also means that by the 13<sup>th</sup> 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 Bruinesen's, although his claim about the conversion of the local population to Islam is slightly later than that of Johns, in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century. Martin van Bruinesen himself argues that the first century of Islamization of Southeast Asia coincided with a period of growth and development of Sufism (Bruinessen, 1994). According to van Bruinesen, foreign Muslim merchant settlements had been present in Southeast Asia for centuries, but it was not until the 14<sup>th</sup> Century that the local population began to adopt Islam in a significant way. In this transitional period, van Bruinesen claims that Sufism developed from an elite religious movement into the dominant mode of religion (Bruinessen, 2018). From this, we can assume that Sufism has at least been present in the Aceh region and the East Coast of Sumatra since the 13<sup>th</sup> 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 (Azra, 2002). 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 17<sup>th</sup> 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 Al Baghdady in around 1627 AD (Al Fairusy, 2014). 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 Baghdady, 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 (Damanhuri, 2013). 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 (A. Hasmy, n.d).

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 (Aceh, 1971). 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 (Kinnon and Nurdin A.R, 2020). 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 16<sup>th</sup> 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 17<sup>th</sup>-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 (Burhanudin, 2017). There is archaeological evidence for the presence of Sufism in Barus in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, which is known from the inscription of one of the gravestones in the Mahligai Grave complex. The gravestone belongs to a disciple of Shaykh Syamsuddin as Sumatrani named Shaykh Zainal Abidin al Fas (Pinem, 2018). 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 (Bruinessen, 2018). The Qadiriyyah Order followed by Hamzah Fansuri himself was obtained when he visited Baghdad (Azra, 2002). 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 Aidarusiyah Order (Azra, 2002). 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 Naqsyabandiyah (Arif, 2020). This shows that the aforementioned Sufi orders were already present in Aceh in the 17<sup>th</sup> 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 17<sup>th</sup> 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 (Lombard, 1991). 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 (Casale, 2018). On the economic front, Aceh has been connected to the Muslim world since at least the 16<sup>th</sup> 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 (Reid, 2011). Then in the 1585 AD, exports from Aceh to Jeddah had reached 40,000-50,000 quintals of spices (Boxer, 1969). 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 (Azra, 2002).

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 16<sup>th</sup> to the early 17<sup>th</sup> Century. His poetry is suffused with Sufi imagery that echoes the maritime world of the Malay nation (Laffan, 2015). 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 (Djamaris and Prijanto, 1996). 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 Guillot and Kalus who said that Hamzah Fansuri died in 1527 AD and was buried in the Bab Ma' la cemetery in Mecca (Guillot and Kalus,, 2007). 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 (Azra, 2002). 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 (Johns, 1961). 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 (Abdullah and Ramli, 2015). His important role in the sultan's court is reflected in reports that during the period 1600 AD to 1630 AD, many Western explorers dealt with him (Lombard, n.d). He is also believed to have been a student of Hamzah Fansuri. 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 (Azra, 2002). 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* (Djajadiningrat, 1984). He later returned to Ranir and died there around 1658 AD.

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 (Azra, 2002). 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 17<sup>th</sup> 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 (Abdullah, 2009). However, some other researchers mention a smaller number. Oman Fathurahman said that Shaykh Abdurrauf bin Ali al Fansuri wrote 36 works (Fathurahman, 1999). Wan Mohammad Shagir Abdullah mentioned 25 works (Abdullah, 1991). While Azyumardi Azra mentioned 22 works (Azra, 2001).

Shaykh Abdurrauf bin Ali al Fansuri himself was born in Singkil which in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century was included in the territory of the Sultanate of Aceh (Arif, 2020). At first, he studied religion in his hometown before continuing his education at Barus. 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 17<sup>th</sup> 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 17<sup>th</sup> Century (Azra, 2002). 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 (Azra, 2002). 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 (Abdullah, 2009). 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 (Abdullah, 2009).

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 (Azra, 2002). 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 Yarahu 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 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 17<sup>th</sup> 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 13<sup>th</sup> 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 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> 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 17<sup>th</sup> 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.

### **Bibliography**

- Abdullah, M. S. Y. (2009). Zawiyah Shaykhkuala: Pusat penyebaran Islam di Alam Melayu abad ke-17 Masihi. *Sari: International Journal of the Malay World and Civilisation*, 27(2), 87-118.
- Abdullah, W. M. S. (1991). *Khazanah karya pusaka Asia Tenggara (Vol. 1). Khazanah Fathaniyah.*
- Aceh, A. B. (1971). *Sekitar masuknya Islam ke Indonesia. Ramadhani.*
- Al-Attas, S. M. N. (1966). *The mysticism of Hamzah Fansuri (Doctoral dissertation, University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies).*
- Al-Fairusy, M. (2014). *Retrospeksi budaya hemispheric Islam di Zawiyah Tanoh Abee, Aceh Besar. Pustaka Larasan.*
- Al-Qushayri. (2004). *Principles of Sufism (B. R. von Schlegell, Trans.). Islamic Book Trust.*
- Arif, R. (2020). *Syekh Abd al-Rauf al-Fansuri: Rekonsiliasi tasawuf dan syariat abad ke-17 di Nusantara. Penerbit Buku Kompas.*
- Azra, A. (2002). *Jaringan global dan lokal Islam Nusantara. Mizan Media Utama.*
- Azra, A. (2013). *Jaringan ulama Timur Tengah dan Kepulauan Nusantara abad XVII & XVIII: Akar pembaruan Islam Indonesia. Kencana Prenada Media.*
- Birchok, D. A. (2016). Women, genealogical inheritance and Sufi authority: The female saints of Seunagan, Indonesia. *Asian Studies Review*, 40(4), 583-599. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357823.2016.1224999>
- Boxer, C. R. (1969). *The Portuguese seaborne empire 1415-1825. Hutchinson.*
- Braginsky, V. (2004). The science of women and the jewel: The synthesis of tantrism and Sufism in a corpus of mystical texts from Aceh. *Indonesia and the Malay World*, 32(93), 141-175. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1363981042000320116>
- Burhanudin, J. (2017). *Islam dalam arus sejarah Indonesia. Kencana Prenada Media.*
- Casale, G. (2010). *The Ottoman age of exploration. Oxford University Press.* <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195377828.001.0001>
- Damanhuri. (2013). Umdah al Muhtajin: Rujukan tarekat Syattariyah Nusantara. *Ulumuna*, 17(2), 303-322. <https://doi.org/10.20414/ujis.v17i2.164>
- Djajadiningrat, R. H. (1984). *Kesultanan Aceh: Suatu pembahasan tentang sejarah Kesultanan Aceh berdasarkan bahan-bahan yang terdapat dalam karya Melayu. Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan.*
- Djamaris, E., & Prijanto, S. (1996). *Hamzah Fansuri dan Nuruddin Ar Raniri. Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan.*

- Fakhriati. (2020). From Konya to Nusantara: Rumi's Sufi diaspora in Pidie, Aceh, Indonesia. *Jurnal Ilmiah Islam Futura*, 20(2), 153-165. <https://doi.org/10.22373/jiif.v0i0.5841>
- Fathurahman, O. (1999). *Tanbih al Masyi: Menyoal wahdatul wujud kasus Abdurrauf Singkel di Aceh abad 17*. Mizan.
- Garaudy, R. (1981). *Janji-janji Islam* (H. M. Rasjidy, Trans.). Bulan Bintang.
- Guillot, C., & Kalus, L. (2007). *Batu nisan Hamzah Fansuri* (R. Parasman, Trans.). Departemen Kebudayaan dan Pariwisata.
- Harun, J. (2004). Bustan al Salatin, the garden of kings: A universal history and adab work from seventeenth-century Aceh. *Indonesia and the Malay World*, 32(92), 21-52. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1363981042000263444>
- Hasmy, A. (n.d.). *Hamzah Fansuri sastrawan sufi abad XVII*. In Hamzah Fansuri penyair sufi Aceh.
- Herimawar, Y. (2020). *Diskursus ajaran tasawuf Abu Peuleukung: Salik, puasa dan haji* (Doctoral dissertation, UIN Ar Raniry).
- Johns, A. H. (1961). Sufism as a category in Indonesian literature and history. *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, 2(1), 10-23. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0217781100000260>
- Johns, A. H. (1993). Islamization in Southeast Asia: Reflections and reconsiderations with special reference to the role of Sufism. *Southeast Asian Studies*, 31(1), 43-61.
- Johns, A. H. (2011). Reflections on the mysticism of Shams al-Din al-Samatra'i (1550?-1630). *Studia Islamika*, 18(2), 227-248. <https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v18i2.433>
- Laffan, M. (2015). *Sejarah Islam di Nusantara* (I. Aunullah & R. N. Badariah, Trans.). Bentang.
- Lombard, D. (1991). *Kerajaan Aceh: Jaman Sultan Iskandar Muda (1607-1636)* (W. Arifin, Trans.). Balai Pustaka.
- Manan, A. (2021). The role of Tauhid Tasawuf study council in preaching the Tawhîd and Tashawwuf in Aceh, Indonesia. *Journal of Contemporary Islam and Muslim Societies*, 5(1), 104-133. <https://doi.org/10.30821/jcims.v5i1.8708>
- McKinnon, E. E., & Nurdin, A. R. (2020). Fansur sebagai kota tua Islam. *Indonesian Journal of Islamic History and Culture*, 1(1), 21-31. <https://doi.org/10.22373/ijihc.v1i1.502>
- Muchsin, M. A. (2004). Salik buta: Aliran tasawuf Aceh abad XX. *Al Jamiah*, 42(1), 177-198. <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2004.421.177-198>
- Muchsin, M. A., Hadi, A., Manan, A., & Putra, R. S. (2021). The disputes of Ratéb Siribèe in Aceh. *Miqot*, 45(1), 127-141. <https://doi.org/10.30821/miqot.v45i1.798>

- Nasution, I. F. A. (2018). Buku panduan pengkafiran: Evaluasi kritis Tibyan fi ma'rifat al-Adyan karya Nur al-Din Ar-Raniri. *Theologia*, 29(1), 59-84. <https://doi.org/10.21580/teo.2018.29.1.2313>
- Nuraini, N. (2019). Al-Simth al-Majid: Melacak pengaruh Syaikh Ahmad al-Qusyaisyi terhadap tradisi sufi di Aceh (Pendekatan analisis tekstual hadits). *Substantia*, 21(2), 104-124. <https://doi.org/10.22373/substantia.v21i2.3792>
- Pakar, S. I. (2016). *Tasawuf di Nusantara: Tadarus tasawuf dan tarekat*. Aksara Satu.
- Park, H. (2012). *Mapping the Chinese and Islamic worlds: Cross-cultural exchange in pre-modern Asia*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139088329>
- Pinem, M. (2018). Inkripsi Islam pada makam-makam kuno Barus. *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan*, 16(1), 101-126. <https://doi.org/10.31291/jlka.v16i1.484>
- Rastam, R., Abdullah, M. S. Y., & Ramli, Y. M. (2015). Analisis salasilah tarekat Shaykh Shams al-Din al-Sumatra'i. *International Journal of Islamic Thought*, 8, 61-79. <https://doi.org/10.24035/ijit.08.2015.007>
- Reid, A. (2011). *Menuju sejarah Sumatra: Antara Indonesia dan dunia*. Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia.
- Ricklefs, M. C. (2007). *Sejarah Indonesia modern 1200-2004* (S. Wahono et al., Trans.). Serambi Ilmu Semesta.
- Ricklefs, M. C., Lockhart, B., Lau, A., Reyes, P., & Aung-Thwin, M. (2013). *Sejarah Asia Tenggara, dari masa prasejarah sampai kontemporer*. Komunitas Bambu.
- Shadiqin, S. I. (2017). Di bawah payung Habib: Sejarah, ritual dan politik tarekat Syattariyah di Pantai Barat Aceh. *Substantia*, 19(1), 75-98.
- Siraj, F. M. (2020). Islamic theology in the seventeenth century Aceh: A study on Abd al-Rauf al-Sinkili's concept on tawhid. *Episteme*, 15(1), 121-143. <https://doi.org/10.21274/epis.2020.15.1.121-143>
- Tjandrasmita, U. (2009). *Arkeologi Islam Nusantara*. Direktorat Jenderal Sejarah dan Purbakala.
- Vakily, A. (1997). Sufism, power politics, and reform: Al-Raniri's opposition to Hamzah al-Fansuri's teachings reconsidered. *Studia Islamika*, 4(1), 113-135. <https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v4i1.788>
- van Bruinessen, M. (1994). The origins and development of Sufi orders (tarekat) in Southeast Asia. *Studia Islamika*, 1(1), 1-23. <https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v1i1.864>
- van Bruinessen, M. (2018). Sufi orders in Southeast Asia: From private devotions to social network and corporate action. In *Buddhist and*

- Islamic orders in Southeast Asia: Comparative perspective. University of Hawai'i Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvsrgsm.9>
- Wormser, P. (2012). The religious debates of Aceh in the sixteenth and seventeenth century: An invisible cultural dialogue? *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 55, 369-382. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15685209-12341239>
- Yatim, B. (2016). *Sejarah peradaban Islam: Dirasah Islamiyah II*. Rajawali Press.
- Yatim, O. M., & Nasir, A. H. (1990). *Epigrafi Islam terawal di Nusantara*. Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.