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THE EXISTENCE AND THE CHALLENGES OF SUFİ LITERATURE IN INDONESIA

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Abstract

The article is aimed at elaborating on the challenges of Sufi literature in Indonesia. ²⁸ This research is library research using a historical approach to obtain data and conducting content analysis. This research shows that Sufi literary treasures are the largest and most important part of the Islamic literature treasury. Sufi poets are not only pioneers in the revival of national literature in their countries, but they are also pioneers of the rise of the Islamic world. Sufis did not write mystical and transcendental works which are individualistic in nature. Their works are also associated with a social life that appeared in political allegory and literary whit history patterns. Sufism has ³³ influenced Indonesian literature since the early era of the spread of Islam in the Archipelago, i.e., in the 13th century. The emergence and development of Sufi literature in Indonesia is a direct impact on the swift process of Islamization, in which among the main actors are saints, scholars, teachers, and Sufi scholars. The works of the 16th-18th centuries have their position in the overall history of Islamic intellectuals

in Indonesia. There are many important aspects in these works, especially those related to the way of life, the picture of the world (*weltanschauung*), and the value system of society. Even these Sufi works influence modern Indonesian literature. The existence of Sufi literature in Indonesia in this modern era is being challenged. The technical issues such as difficulty in obtaining theory and material resources, as well as references for Islamic aesthetics, literature, and culture, were often propounded as a reason for the less attention to the study of Sufi literature. In reality, the real reason is not purely technical; it is caused by the domination of Western theory in their minds, especially from the philosophy of neopositivism also there is an assumption that non-Western theory has never grown the relevant theory of literary and aesthetics.

Keywords: Sufi; literature; mystical; transcendental; Indonesia.

Khulasah

Makalah ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan cabaran sastera sufi di Indonesia. Penelitian ini berdasarkan kajian kepustakaan dengan menggunakan pendekatan sejarah untuk memperoleh data dan melakukan analisis kandungan. Kajian menunjukkan bahawa kesusasteraan sufi merupakan bahagian yang terbesar dan penting dalam perbendaharaan kesusasteraan Islam. Para penyair sufi bukan sahaja pelopor kebangkitan sastera nasional di negeri mereka masing-masing, bahkan sekaligus sebagai pelopor kebangkitan dunia Islam. Para sufi tidak hanya menulis karya-karya mistikal dan transendental yang bersifat individualistik, malah mereka juga menekankan aspek kehidupan sosial yang boleh dilihat dari sudut alegori politik dan sastera yang bercorak sejarah. Tasawuf telah mempengaruhi kesusasteraan Indonesia sejak awal penyebaran agama Islam di Nusantara, iaitu pada abad ke-13. Di Nusantara, kemunculan dan perkembangan sastera di

Indonesia merupakan kesan langsung dari derasnya proses Islamisasi dan penggerak utamanya adalah para ulama, guru, dan cendekiawan sufi. Karya-karya abad 16-18 memiliki kedudukan dalam keseluruhan sejarah intelektual Islam di Indonesia. Banyak aspek penting dalam karya-karya tersebut, terutama yang berkaitan dengan pandangan hidup, gambaran dunia (*weltanschauung*), dan sistem nilai masyarakat. Bahkan, karya-karya sufi ini mempengaruhi sastra modern Indonesia. Namun, eksistensi sastra sufi di Indonesia juga di era modern ini turut mempunyai cabaranya. Masalah teknis seperti sukarnya memperoleh teori dan sumber materi, serta rujukan terkait estetika Islam, sastra, dan budaya, sering dikemukakan sebagai alasan atas kurangnya perhatian terhadap kajian sastra sufi. Pada umumnya, cabaran tersebut bukan semata-mata bersifat teknis, malah ia disebabkan oleh dominasi teori Barat di dalam pemikiran mereka, terutama dari falsafah neo-positivisme, malah terdapat anggapan bahawa teori non-Barat ini tidak pernah mengembangkan teori sastra dan estetika yang relevan.

Kata kunci: Sufi; kesusasteraan, mistik; transendental; Indonesia.

Introduction

In the history of Islamic thought and civilization, it is not rare to emerge discussions and debates on Sufi literature as well as the role of poets among scholars. Some scholars underestimate and even reject the work of poets. That phenomenon brings the misunderstanding of the role and status of Sufi literature in our culture; due to the effort of orientalisks partly, and it needs an adequate explanation concerning some essential aspects of Sufi literature.¹ In fact, it cannot be denied that the Sufi poets have been paid

a significant contribution to the development of Islamic civilization especially in the field of literature.² In Sufism, literature employed as a medium on communicating the mystical experience of the Sufis such as experiences of enlightenment and mystical associations. Such an experience expressed in the form of anecdotes, allegorical stories, and poems.³

There is much evidence in history indicating the important role played by the Sufi writers in the spread of Islam. Zayn al-Dīn al-Ma'barī, a 15th century Muslim scholar and historian, in his *Tuhfah al-Mujāhidīn*, for example, argues that among the factor of the success of Islamic preaching in India and Southeast Asia was the reading of the stories of the Prophet's birthday through some poems such as *Qaṣīdah al-Burdah* and *Barzanji*. Islamic popular literary works such as *Alf Laylah wa al-Laylah (One Thousand and One Nights)*, *Hikayat Bayan Budiman*, *Khalīlah wa Dimnah*, *Hayy ibn Yaqzān* of Ibn Ṭufayl, *Mantiq al-Ṭayr* of Farīd al-Dīn 'Attar, *Gulistan of Sa'dī*, *Masnawī* of Rūmī, and others. The distinctive aesthetic shapes and patterns are certain, morally and culturally responsible.⁴

In pre-Arab Islamic times, there were Arabic poems, i.e., poems with sixteen meters in composite structure without rhyme, employed in severe poems. Meanwhile, the poems with the theme of love and affection were found in praise (*fakhr*), satire (*hija'*), elegi (*ritsa'*), description (*washf*) and love poem (*ghazal*).⁵ The

² *id.*, 62.

³ Abdul Hadi WM, *Tasawuf yang Tertindas: Kajian Hermeneutik Terhadap Karya-Karya Hamzah Fansuri* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 2001), 9.

⁴ Abdul Hadi WM, *Cakrawala Budaya Islam: Sastra, Hikmah, Sejarah dan Estetika* (Yogyakarta: IRCiSoD, n.d.), 14-15.

⁵ Fadlil Munawwar Manshur, "Sejarah Perkembangan Kesusastraan Arab Klasik Dan Modern," *Seminar Internasional Bahasa Arab dan Sastra Islam*, (Bandung, 2007): 3.

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emergence and development of Islamic literature cannot be separated from the main source of Islamic teaching i.e., the Qur'an. Despite it cannot be categorized as a work of literature, in the science of language perspective, the Qur'an has a high value of literary. It, in turn, inspired Muslims to produce various works of literature.

The beauty and poetic language of the Qur'an has inspired many Muslim writers to learn the secrets of the literary arts contained in this holy book. Among the work dedicated to this field was *Dalā'il al-I'jāz*. Many works produced by Muslim scholars such as Ibn 'Arabī, Rūmī, al-Ghazālī, and Iqbāl, to mentioned some of the prominent, which are interpretations and *ta'wīl* to verses of the Qur'ān. Besides that, the influence of the Qur'ān has also manifested in their poems and aesthetic expressions.⁶ As Sufi literature was an expression of the mystical experience, it was an expression of the reflection and philosophy aimed to improve the close relationship between the human soul and God.⁷

The emergence and development of Sufi literature in Indonesia is a direct impact on the swift process of Islamization which among the main actors are saints, scholars, teachers, and Sufi scholars. The works of the 16th-18th centuries have their position in the overall history of Islamic intellectuals in Indonesia. There are many important aspects in these works, especially those related to the way of life, the picture of the world (*weltanschauung*), and the value system of society. The evidence of the existence of Sufism literature since the early period of Islam in Indonesia can be seen in the oldest Malay and Javanese Islamic manuscripts that have been found. For example, the text *Hikayat Kejadian Nur Muhammad* contains a description of Sufi's cosmology about the creation of the world.

⁶ Abdul Hadi, "Cakrawala Budaya Islam", 28.

⁷ Abdul Hadi, "Tasawuf Yang Tertindas", 21.

Another Sufi text that is relatively early is the translation of *Baḥr al-Lāhūt*, by ‘Abd Allāh ‘Ārif, an Arab Sufi of the 13th century. In the history of Malay (1607) also reported that the Sultan of Malacca in the mid-15th century had asked a scholar from Pasai, ‘Abd Allāh Patakan to translate a book of Arabic Sufism, *Durr al-Manzūm* by Mawlānā Ishāq. The other texts are the translation of *Qaṣīdah al-Burdah* by al-Būṣīrī (d. 1213), *Ba‘d al-‘Amālī* by Sirāj al-Dīn ‘Uthmān al-‘Ushī (d. 1173), *Hikayat Burung Pingai* plated with Persian sufi allegory *Manṭiq al-Ṭayr* (*The Conversation of Birds*) by Farīd al-Dīn al-‘Aṭṭār; *Hikayat Yusuf*, plated from *Yusuf-i Zulaikha* by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jāmī. Also found the text of *Bunga Rampai Puisi Tasawuf* a translation of Arabic and Persian Sufi poems such as Abū Tammām, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Rūmī, ‘Umar Khayyām, and Muḥīḥ al-Dīn Sa‘dī.

At the end of the 16th century, the development of Sufi’s literature began to reach its peak in the Malay intellectual tradition. It was during this period that the prominent figure, Hamzah Fansuri emerged, followed by the emergence of many Sufi poets who were his students. Most of the works they produce do not bear the name of the author or are anonymous, except for those of Abdul Jamal and Hasan Fansuri. For example, *Syair Perahu* (three versions), *Syair Dagang*, *Ikat-ikatan Bahr al-Nisa’*, *Syair Alif*, and others.⁸ Through these works, the Indonesian Sufis formed their *madhhab* in the writing of spiritual poetry and used the medium of poetry, four-line poems that they created themselves by combining Malay poetry and Persian *rubā‘ī* poetry.⁹

The above exposition proved that there is a great contribution of Muslim writers on the effort of the spread of Islam throughout history. Through literature, historical

⁸ *Ibid.*, 171-179.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 206-207.

awareness and religious experiences contained values and worldviews (*weltanschauung*) were implanted deeply in the hearts of Muslims and spread to the Muslim community. In the global context, Islamic literature has an essential role in the development of world literature. Since the Renaissance era to the early of 20th century, Islamic literature constantly influenced European literary. On the other hand, the Qur'ān with its beautiful language, succeeded on creating Muslims' awareness of the importance of literature, language, art, and poetics. The Qur'ān was full of essential wisdom and stories that can be a source of inspiration and reference to literary creativity. It can be said that it is impossible to develop literature in Islam without being ignited by the spirit of poetic and aesthetics of the Qur'ān.

Some scholars have conducted the study of Sufi's literature. Julia Day Howell wrote about Sufism and the Indonesian Islamic Revival. In the article, she discusses representations of Indonesia's Islamic revival have featured forms of religious practice and political activity concerned with what in the Sufi tradition is called the "outer" (*lahir*) expression of Islam, support for and observance of religious law, including the practice of obligatory rituals.

Nile Green examines Sufism as a textual world composed of several overlapping genres of writing, arguing that the crucial interface between different kinds of writing, the world and the individual Muslim presents a major challenge for the study of Sufism. The co-existence of the embodied realities of powerful Sufi practitioners of South Asia's past and present with the alternative textual reality of the literary world of Sufi writings from the region is explored in depth. The article presents an

30 Julia Day Howel, "Sufism and the Indonesian Islamic Revival," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 60 (3) (2001), 701-729, doi:10.2307/2700107.

1 overview of the Sufi traditions of South Asia, emphasizing some emerging research angles on the problematic convergences between texts, territories and the transcendent elements in Sufism in four major sections.¹¹

The research wrote by Ekrem Demirli about the problem of periodization in Sufi studies and the struggle of Sufism to become a discipline between the religious sciences and metaphysics. He wrote that Sufi studies are fraught with serious challenges in the absence of that classification.¹² We have no clear-cut opinion about which Sufi and work should be handled in which framework. The periodization is one of the crucial tasks to be undertaken in order to obtain valid and scientific results in Sufi studies. Periodization would give us a point of view about the period independent from a Sufi and his text, and enable us to read the text from this perspective.

Lin Hongxuan traces the historical evolution of the publication and consumption of Sufi devotional literature in various media: in print, audio and video recordings, and digital media. It tracks how Sufi devotional literature has adopted new languages, such as English, while retaining its fundamental relationship with Arabic.¹³

Ridwan Arif and Fuad Mahbub Siraj wrote a significant role in advancing Islamic education by the early Malay Sufi. The article investigates the contribution

17 Nile Green, "Emerging Approaches to the Sufi Traditions of South Asia: Between Texts, Territories and the Transcendent," *South Asia Research* 24(2) (2004), 123–48, doi.org/10.1177/0262728004047908.

12 Ekrem Demirli, "The Problem of Periodization in Sufi Studies: The Struggle of Sufism to Become a Discipline Between the Religious Sciences and Metaphysics", *Nazariyat Journal for the History of Islamic Philosophy and Sciences* 2(4) (2016), 23–32, doi.org/10.12673/Nazariyat.2.4.M0030.

13 Hongxuan, Lin, "English as an Islamic Cosmopolitan Vernacular: English-Language Sufi Devotional Literature in Singapore," *Southeast Asian Studies* 6(3) (2017), 447-484.

of ⁸ Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Fansūrī in the effort to advance Islamic education in the archipelago in the context of Islamic educational institutions, the development of Islamic knowledge fields and literature, as well as the orientation of Islamic education.¹⁴

Therefore, ⁸ this research is library research and with using a historical approach to obtain data and conducting content analysis, this research aims to explain further the challenges of Sufi's literature in Indonesia.

History and Development of Sufistic Literature in Indonesia

In the 1960s, there was occurred a polemic in Indonesia concerning the exact date of the beginning of Indonesian literary. It was ignited by an opinion questioned the term of "modern Indonesian literature" which was widely used at the time. Although the term of "classical Indonesian literature" was not known, since in the classical context the well-known term was "classical Malay literature".

⁵⁵ Ajip Rosidi, for example, views that there is a different between "Malay literature" and "Indonesian literature". He states, Indonesian literature that is written in a language which is Malay origin was a manifestation of a society that cannot be said as a continuation of the Malay literary community. According to him, Malay literature has been developed in the region around of Malacca Straits, like Sumatera, Riau islands, Singapore and Malay Peninsula. Major works of Malay literature such as *Hang Tuah*, *Tajus Salatin*, *Sejarah Melayu*, *Hikayat Abdullah*, and others are a pride of the people of the area. These works have emerged and boasts for centuries, i.e., in the golden era of Islamic sultanates such

¹⁴ Ridwan Arif and Fuad Mahbub, ⁴ 'Abd al-Ra'uf al-Fansuri (1615-1693CE): A Study of His Contribution to the Development of Islamic Education In The Malay World," *Afkar: Journal Aqidah & Islamic Thought* 22(2) (2020), 205-23, ⁴ <https://doi.org/10.22452/afkar.vol22no2.6>

as Samudra Pasai, Riau, Johor, Langkat, Bintan and others. The literary work written in Malay has grown since the coming of Islam, as evidenced by the fact that the richness of Malay literature was written in Jawi. i.e., Arabic alphabet that adopted and employed for writing such a language.¹⁵

History notes that the coming of Islam to archipelago was begun around the 7th century CE, carried out by Arab, Persian and Indian Muslim traders. The preachers and scholars diligently taught Muslim community religious knowledge. The successful of Islamic preaching also influenced political life. It proved by the emergence of Islamic sultanates such as Peurlak, Samudra Pasai, Melaka, Demak, Ternate and so on. The effort of Sufi scholars on Islamization was not merely taught Islamic religious knowledge to indigenous people like jurisprudence (*fiqh*) but also treating and expressing wisdom in native language. Through many works written in Malay language, Islamic culture has acquired its definitive form in the history of archipelago, as Braginsky stated, "Things that succeeded on the forming of the heart of Malay culture were the literature, works of poets and Sufi scholars." Hence, Malay language has become a medium to cultural development and cultivation of Islamic values. It is spread to and well-known in Aceh, Mandailing, Minangkabau, Sunda, Java, Banjar, Madura, Bugis, Makassar, Bima, Ternate, Gorontalo and Ambon, especially Islamic literature that translated into Malay¹⁶

The presence of Islamic literature in the history of modern Indonesian literature did not depart from zero. It is based on an effort to understand the causal relationship between Islamic art and Islamic spirituality. Despite the question of understanding Islamic literature is still being

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¹⁵ Ajip Rosidi, *Kapankah Kesusastraan Indonesia Lahir* (Jakarta: CV. Haji Masagung, 1988), 50.

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¹⁶ Abdul Hadi, "Kembali ke Akar Kembali ke Sumber", 64-65.

debated by critics. Since literature generally expresses the matters of social critique, humanity, and refusal to other theories, Islamic literature refers to religious, spiritual, moral and social issues based on Islamic values. This is in line with the view of Ajip Rosidi as he wrote in *Islam in Indonesian Literature*, stating that Islamic-style works have flourished in the 1960 era, and have strengthened their presence in modern Indonesian literary history.¹⁷

Writers who are widely regarded as producing works in the kind of Islamic literature did not name their work as Islamic literature explicitly. Taufik Ismail for example called his works as "remembrance literature", Kuntowijoyo called it as "prophetic literary", and Danarto used the term of "enlightenment literary". Sutardji Calzoum Bachri called his works as "transcendent literature", while Abdul Hadi WM uses the term of "satirical literature". Many writers thought that it is need to redefine the concept of Islamic literature itself. Chavchay Syaifullah, for example, in his writings, "Islamic Literature: Why It Should be Rejected", published by one of the newspapers, asked the authors who have interest in Islamic literature studies to formulate the criteria of Islamic literature. Chavchay Syaifullah himself profound such a criterion of Islamic literature is a literary work in line with the universal values contained by the Qur'an. Meanwhile Taufik Ismail states that a literary work could be regarded as Islamic literature if it contains human values, although without citing the verses of Qur'an and *hadīth*.¹⁸

Sukron Kamil, in his book *The Classical and Modern Arabic Critical Theory*, argues that Islamic literature is a

¹² Abdul Hadi WM, *Hermeneutika, Estetika dan Religiusitas: Esai-Esai Sastra Sufistik dan Seni Rupa* (Jakarta: Sadra Press, 2016), 194.

¹⁵ Marwan Saridjo, *Sastra dan Agama: Tinjauan Kesusastraan Indonesia Modern Bercorak Islam* (Jakarta: Yayasan Ngali Aksara, 2006), xvi-xvii.

literature promotes the Islamic system of belief and teaching, praises and glorify figures in Islam, criticizes realities which are not confirm to Islamic values or; literature which is not contrary to Islamic values.¹⁹ Goenawan Muhammad states that Islamic literature is a literary work that focuses on religious life as the problem solver that facing by people in their lives. Sukron Kamil profound his concept of Islamic literature which is wider than Goenawan Muhammad's concept of Islamic literature. Other views states that Islamic literature should support Islamic values; it should be based on stories found in the Qur'an and ḥadīth and; should be based on *tawḥīd*.²⁰

According to Maman S. Mahayana, the emergence of the various terms in Islamic literature like satirical literature, transcendental literature, prophetic literature, and all concepts or terms related to the world of Sufism were not merely a fondness to the new phenomena emerged at that time. These terms did not emerge as "oil in the water" but united in the consciousness.

In the classical Malay literature, there is a poem expressed the world of eternity by a 17th century Malay poet, Hamzah Fansuri, in his poetry entitled *Syair Perahu*.²¹

19
*La ilaha illa Allah tempat menginai
Medan yang qadim (abadi) tempat berdamai
Wujud Allah terlalu bitai
Siang malam jangan bercerai*

Lā ilāha illa Allāh is the place to lurk
The eternal field is the place for peace

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Sukron Kamil, *Teori Kritik Sastra Arab: Klasik dan Modern* (Jakarta: Rajawali Press, 2012), 92.

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36
Liaw Yock Fang, *Sejarah Kesusastraan Melayu Klasik* (Jakarta: Pustaka Obor Indonesia, 2011), 236.

21
Abdul Hadi, "Hermeneutika, Estetika dan Religiusitas", 47.

Allah's existence is too real
Day and night do not divorce

The Islamic aesthetic tradition that has been established by philosophers, poets and Sufis in the past was continuously to be developed in modern times on different expressions, in accordance with current development and culture. Aesthetics, as an expression of modern human religion appear, for example, on the works of Muhammad Iqbal, Amir Hamzah, and contemporary Muslim writers in various countries. In Indonesia context, it was be represented by the works of Danarto, Kuntowijoyo, Sutardji Calzoum Bachri, and others.²²

Mangunwijaya differentiates the term of religious or religion with religiosity. If the term of "religion" refers to formal aspects related to rules and obligations, religiosity refers to one's religious experienced in his soul. In other words, religiosity refers to the level of individual attachment to his religion. It indicates that individuals have embraced and internalized their religious teachings and influenced all of their actions and worldview.²³

The re-emergence of consciousness to put tradition as departed point or a source of inspiration for literary works was considered by scholars and writers such as A. Teeuw, Ulrich Kratz, Subagio Sastrowardjo as symptoms of the rise of nationalist culture; although the source of inspiration were universal traditions such as mystical aspect of Hinduism and Islam. Generally, the pattern of approach and attitude concerning the tradition can be classified into three tendencies:²⁴ First, those who adopted traditional culture elements for the sake of innovation in speech. They saw there are elements and aspects in the

²² *Ibid.*, 49.

²³ B Mangunwijaya, *Sastra dan Religiusitas* (Jakarta: Sinar Harapan, 1982), 67.

²⁴ Abdul Hadi, "Kembali ke Akar Kembali ke Sumber", 4-6.

tradition that relevant to the view of modern human life, especially irrationalism that attracted the attention of existentialists and followers of school of absurd literary. Second, those who claim to concentrate on one regional culture such as Javanese, Minangkabau, Riau-Malay, Sundanese, and others that aimed to give a distinctive pattern to the development of Indonesian literature. Third, those who take the tradition directly from certain forms of spirituality and religion with a realization that tradition and culture of Indonesian society are formed by some religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam. This classification was merely occurred in the level of theory. In practical level, some authors did not employ one approach exclusively. In reality, sometimes they combine among two or three approaches at once.

The Existence of Sufi Literature in Indonesia

As a system of belief and worship, Islam was not merely being understood as a divine doctrine and theology but also as a system that encompasses all aspects of human life. Abdul Hadi, for example, argues that Islamic teaching contains the system of ontology, eschatology, cosmology, epistemology, ethics, aesthetics, psychology, anthropology and others that make Muslims capable to permeate every aspect of their life including art and literature.²⁵

In fact, like other literary works in the world, Malay satirical literature has grown and evolved as a result to the interaction between Malay writers with external sources over a long period. In Malay Sufi literature, the most important sources of foreign sources during the formation of Malay classical literature were Arabic and Persian literary. History recorded that the coming of Islam to the archipelago brought by the merchants, preachers, religious teachers, scholars, and Sufis from Arabia and Persia played a significance role on the spread of Islam. Their

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 13.

role continued¹⁴ and the process of Islamization in the archipelago was intensified in the 15th to 17th centuries. It is founded the evidences of the influence of Persian sources on the formation of Malay culture that manifested on religious ceremonies and the tendency of mystical thoughts including prayers, vocabulary, chronicles, poems, historical works, manners, canon law, and religious treatises which are so called "*sastra kitab*" (book literature). Another characteristic is Malay-Arabic characters that so called "*Jawi*" or "*Pegon*" which is based on Persian-Arabic writing. Similarly, the kind of *nashaliq* alphabet that used in the scriptures or writing of the verses of the Qur'an using *khat East-kufi* also to be founded⁵⁴ on the stone-tomb of ancient tombs like tomb of Sultan Malik al-Saleh, the founder of the earlier Islamic sultanate, Samudra Pasai (1272-1516 CE).

On the other hand, around 1920, there were views of some Western scholars who belittled the meaning of Malay Islamic literature, even dismissing it as a trivial work, as appears in the writings of Over beck and R.O Winstedt.²⁶ The old Islamic tradition that has been rooted in the Javanese culture was considered as having no significant role and was regarded as a side element. Even, it is not rare that Islamic tradition was being regarded as a foreign culture exceeds Hinduism culture which is India origin. This description was found in *Pengakuan Pariyem* of Linus Suryadi, *Para Priyayi* of Umar Kayam, *Bulan Ruwah* of Subagio Sastrowardojo, *Gatoloco* by Goenawan Mohamad, *Arus Balik* of Pramoedya Ananta Toer. These works claim Islam as the main factor of backwardness and disintegration of Indonesian nationalism pioneered by the kingdom of Majapahit. Even further, Islam was accused as the factor to the flourish of feudal culture, the decline of

²⁶ Abdul Hadi, "Hermeneutika, Estetika dan Religiusitas", 62.

Indonesia maritime culture as well as intellectual decline.²⁷

However, the influence of Islam was quite substantial on the development of Javanese culture especially in the presence of prominent sufi scholars such as Sunan Bonang, Sunan Kalijaga,²⁵ Hamzah Fansuri (*Sharab al-‘Ashiqīn*, *Asrār al-‘Arifīn* and *al-Muntahī*), Shams al-Dīn Pasai (*Mir’at al-Mu‘minīn*, *Mir’at al-‘Imān*, *Mir’at al-Muḥaqqiqīn* and others), Nūr al-Dīn al-Ranīrī (*Mā‘ al-Ḥayāt*, *Ḥill al-Zill*, *Tibyān fī Ma‘rifah al-Adyān*, *Ṣifat al-Qulūb*, *Hujjat al-Ṣiddīq*, *Jawhar al-Ulūm*) and others who have strengthened Islamic position and development through the Islamization process of language, literature and cultural intensively.

Their activity was not focused on preaching and teaching of jurisprudence (*fiqh*) exclusively, but their also sharpened their pen, spreading the skills of writing and expressing wisdom in native language, in this case Malay language.²⁸ Examples are as follows:

*Hamzah miskin orang`uryani
Seperti Ismail jadi qurbani
Bukan Arabi lagi Ajami
Senantiasa wasil dengan Yang Baqi*

*Hamzah Fansuri di negeri Melayu
Tempatnya kapur di dalam kayu
Asalnya manikam tiada `kan layu
Dengan ilmu dunia manakan payu*

*Hamzah Fansuri di dalam Mekkah
Mencari Tuhan di Bait al-Ka`bah
Di Barus ke Quds terlalu payah
Akhirnya jumpa di dalam rumah*

²⁵ Abdul Hadi, "Kembali ke Akar Kembali ke Sumber", 9-10.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 65.

2
*Hamzah Syahr Nawī terlalu hapus
Seperti kayu sekalian hangus
Asalnya laut tiada berarus
Menjadi kapur di dalam baru.*²⁹

In the history of Islamic literature, beside Būṣīrī and al-Barzanjī there are some poets and writers produced poems of praise of the Prophet such as Sana'ī, 'Aṭṭār, Rūmī, Yūnus Emre, Iqbāl, Ḥamzah Fansūrī, Ismā'īl, and others. However, the poems *Na'tiyah* especially *Qaṣīdah Burdah* and *Barzanjī* are among the popular of the poems of praising the prophet in the traditional Muslim community for the sake of raising collective consciousness of the *ummah* and instilling a sense of love to the prophet.³⁰

The emergence of certain art movements in Islam was influenced by a number factor. Among the main factor are religious ideas and thoughts which are dominant in the time the artist produced their works. In the era of 1950s to the 1960s while the thought of the reform movement (*tajdīd*), which emphasized on rationality, was began to develop, there is no work in the kind of Sufi literature emerge in Indonesian literature. Sufi literature began to emerge after the moment of revival of Sufism in Indonesia in 1970s to the 1980s. At this era, some interesting works appeared by some figures of literary like Danarto, Fudoli Zaini and, Kuntowijoyo. It can be concluded that Muslim artists work on a particular idea and concept of art which is related to the mainstream thought of other areas in their time.

The Sufi tendency in Indonesian literature in the 1970s era has shifted to a positivistic view that influences the emergence of realist tradition of art which maintains the concept "art is the mimesis or imitation of reality". It

²⁹ Abdul Hadi, "Tasawuf yang Tertindas", 401-402.

³⁰ Abdul Hadi, "Kembali ke Akar Kembali ke Sumber", 68.

was also challenged by philosophical thinking such as existentialism and later by postmodernism. At the same time, study on the various forms of mysticism and eastern spirituality developed among intellectuals in Europe, America, and Asia itself. At that era, in the literature, appeared novels which has streamed of consciousness tendency that emphasized the authorization of the author's inner consciousness on responding to the world, on contrary to realism that emphasized on the description of social reality. All of these affect the emergence of the concept "art is not a representation of an object or idea, but it is a symbolic expression of complex human experience including mystical experience".

Religious literary works have emerged in the 1950s as has been seen in the works of Taufik Ismail, A. A. Navis, and others. However, in these works, religion was viewed at its legal-formal level, in the sense of custom, by association, community behaviour, and morality. Since the time of emergence of the 'Class of 45' (*Angkatan* 1945) until the early of 1960s, the influence of Sufism decreased due to the distorted noise of realism, social realism, existentialism, and so forth. In the next era, i.e., post-1966 and 1970s emerged works with religious pattern as reaction to realism (formal realism or social realism) as has been seen in Danarto's works.

A literary critic, A. Teeuw for example, stated that the role of Javanese writers in this era was very prominent, while the main theme is also increasingly taken from Javanese social and cultural issues. Teeuw mentioned works of NH Dini, Omar Kayam, Danarto, Kuntowijoyo, YB Mangunwijaya, Linus Suryadi AG and Ahmad Tohari. Although two among the above authors, i.e. Danarto and Kuntowijoyo did not only taking traditional Javanese cultural phenomena as inspiration to their work but also from various eastern spiritual traditions such as Sufism. However, Teeuw's attention was focused

on the theme and motive of their works. This is for example when he commented on Danarto's works, he stated that "Danarto's works presented a sort of Javanese pantheistic in extraordinary manner in which readers from other ethnic could not understand it." Regarding Kuntowijoyo's works, Teeuw regarded that such a works less extreme but it was still occurred in Javanese style, as appeared in the *Khutbah di Atas Bukit* which is seems to suggest that, "at the end, any verbal message, either from the saints or other perfect-man cannot help people to discover their purpose of life. One thing we can do, either for good or bad, is to live for it". Like other scholars, Teeuw has no interest on seeing the symbolic elements of this work which is closely related to various forms of eastern spirituality like Hinduism and Sufism and therefore, could not uncover the hermeneutic messages contained in the Kuntowijoyo's work.³¹

In the decade of the 1970s and continued to the next decade, the discourse on Sufi literature was not just rooted in conceptual debates such as Sufi literary terms. Sufi literature was employed by Danarto, Nurcholis Madjid, Ali Audah, Fudoli Zaini, Sutardji in its relation to Sufi thought in literature. There were also emerged other terms such as 'prophetic literary' and 'transcendental literary' which were introduced by Kuntowijoyo in 1982 on an interview in Taman Ismail Marzuki and; 'remembrance literary' which introduced by Taufik Ismail. Indonesian literature performed a development that is not just a flurry of conceptual discourse, but it followed by the emergence of many works that inspired by the consciousness and passion of the aesthetic movement. This is marked by the emergence of various experimental works, polemics and debates on literary concepts and the spirit of change.

Some Indonesian poets spoke concerning God, either in his life or in his approach to Him, as has been seen in

³¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

the work of Amir Hamzah who is well-known with his divine poetry. Whereas, Ronggowarsito and Rabindranath Tagore spoke concerning God of all religions which is not bound by any dogma and is more universal. One thing distinguished poet such as Abdul Hadi, Sutardji, and Sapardi from Ronggowarsito and Tagore is in the poems of Abdul Hadi, Sutardji, and Sapardi there is a sense of doubt concerning God, who He is and where He is. Meanwhile, the poets of Amir Hamzah, Ronggowarsito, and Tagore impressed a close relationship between them, as holy men, with God they loved.

The Challenges of Sufi Literature in Indonesia

According to Abdul Hadi, Sufi literary treasures are the largest and most important part of the Islamic literature treasury. Sufis did not write mystical and transcendental works which are individualistic in nature. Their works are also associated with social life that appeared in political allegory and literary whit history pattern. Even, from their hands emerged books of jurisprudence, science of Qur'anic exegesis, science of hadith, grammatical, philology studies, poetics, aesthetics, metaphysic, psychology and so on.

This also applies in the archipelago, especially in the Malay Archipelago, where Islam was the earliest found and developed rapidly in Southeast Asia. The history of the spread of Islam here and the formation of its intellectual tradition involves Sufism experts as the main actors. Therefore, it is not surprising that since its early growth, Malay literature in the Islamic era was coloured by the aesthetic insights and thoughts of Sufism experts. The oldest Islamic manuscripts of the archipelago, both of which contain Malay and Javanese texts, show the strong influence of sufism in the minds of the Muslim writers of the archipelago. The best example is the text *Hikayat Kejadian Nur Muhammad*, which was written to present

the concepts of sufi ontology and cosmology as they live in the minds of adherents of *wujūdiyyah*.

In Javanese Islamic literature, there are also early dated manuscripts containing texts relating to Sufism and Sufi literature. For example, a manuscript of the 15th century, called *Kropak Ferrara* (because for more than four centuries it was kept in the Ferrara Museum, Italy). It contains a text in Middle Javanese whose author is attributed to Mawlana Mālik Ibrāhīm as the author. Part of the ancient text is a summary of the book *Bidāyah al-Hidāyah* al-Ghazālī (d.1111). Other Javanese Islamic texts that are also early in connection with the role of Sufism experts in the process of intellectualizing Islam in the archipelago are the texts attributed to Sunan Bonang as their composer. One of them is entitled *Admonitions of She Bari* by Drewes (1978), and is written in the form of a dialogue between a Sufi teacher named Sheikh Bari and his student Syaiful Rijal. The content of the dialogue is *wirasaning ilmu suluk* or the essence of Sufism teachings. The other texts are mostly *tembang suluk*, composed by the same guardian.

In subsequent developments, the treasures of Javanese literature were also enriched with works of mystical style influenced by the teachings of Sufism by al-Ghazālī, Ibn ‘Arabī and ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī, as well as the understanding of the dignity of the seven Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrānī and Muḥammad Faḍl Allāh al-Burhanpūrī. For example, the famous Sufi allegory *Dewa Ruci* by Yasadipura I and *Serat Wirid Hidayat Jati* by Ranggawarsita. As in Javanese literature, Malay literature is also rich in Sufism-style literary treasures, especially since the emergence of Hamzah Fansuri and his students in Aceh and Barus, who formed their *madhhab* in writing spiritual poetry through the medium of poetry, the four-line poem he created by combining Malay poetry and Persian *Rubā‘ī* poetry. However, it is unfortunate that until

now there has not been a classification or grouping of these Malay Sufi works, whose treasures are very rich and the various styles of presentation.

In the 1970s, Abdul Hadi WM, Danarto, Fudoli Zaini, Ikranegara, Sutardji Calzoum Bachri, Taufiq Ismail, and several other writers introduced their conception of Islamic literature to the public. Some of the Sufi-religious literary works are Danarto's short stories entitled *Setangkai Melati di Sayap Jibril*, AA Navis' short story entitled *Robohnya Surau Kami*, Sutardji in the introduction to the collection of poems *Amuk Kapak*, Amir Hamzah poetry *Nyanyian Sunyi*, and many other poets who create literary works with religious lines. According to Mangunwijaya,³² Danarto's short stories are religious parables, figurative stories of the Sufi, which have extraordinary dynamics and the power of imagination.

However, the term of Islamic literature did not represent the full meaning of Islam because, during the same time, there were other concepts of Sufism literature and prophetic literature that reflected Islamic tenets even without categorizing the collective writings as Islamic literature.

Another problem that comes faced, i.e., misunderstanding of the role and status of Sufi literature in our culture, due to the effort of orientalist partly, needs an adequate explanation concerning some essential aspects of sufi literature.³³ Sufi poets are not only pioneers to the revival of national literary in their countries, but they also the pioneers to the rise of Islamic world, as has been seen in Persian, Arabic, Turkish, Urdu, Hindi, Malay and others. Their position as a pioneer on literary and national languages of their country is in line with the role and position of European poets in the post-renaissance era which was generally associated with mysticism. This

³² YB Mangunwijaya, "Sastra dan Religiusitas", (144).

³³ *Ibid.*, 197.

statement shows that these Sufi poets are not only a link between religious tradition and literary tradition but also a link between religious spirit and the spirit of seeking the national identity, which is part of the spirit of self-discovery, a central feature of Sufi teaching.

As a link between religious tradition and literary tradition, this is not only caused by the fact that some of them are scholars, such as Rumi, Jami, Hamzah Fansuri and others, moreover it also caused by another factor, i.e., their experience and aesthetic appreciation which play an important role in their quest to reach God; and at the top of their religious and mystical quality, they touch the spiritual and transcendent world.³⁴

The development of Islamic literature in Indonesia has less attention rather than modern literature, even though Islamic literature in the archipelago plays an important role on civilizational building. Abdul Hadi states that technical issues such as difficulty on obtaining theory and material resources, as well as references for Islamic aesthetics, literature, and culture, were often propounded as reason to the less attention to the study of religious literature. In reality, the real reason is not purely technical; actually, it is caused by the domination of Western theory to their minds and the assumption that non-Western theory has never grown the relevant theory of literary and aesthetic. If it is not the reason, it may be the laziness to develop appropriate theories and methods on examining various tendencies that appeared in Indonesian literature.³⁵

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³⁴ Abdul Hadi WM, *Sastra Sufi: Sebuah Antologi* (Jakarta: Pustaka Dirauds, 1985), vi.

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³⁵ Abdul Hadi, "Kembali ke Akar Kembali ke Sumber", 203.

Abdul Hadi exposes that, from aesthetic point of view, there are four common tendencies on assess the objective of literary or poetry writing, as following³⁶:

First, the tendency views that the function of poetry is to learn or convey a response to reality, especially social reality. Poems that contain fully social criticism are included in this classification. Poets who adhere this view used words as a medium of expressing the reality in society or using words to convey learning. But those who produced quality works such as W.S. Rendra, Taufik Ismail, Emha Ainun Najib, eventually succeeded in his effort due to his mastery of the poetic language and did not cause by his aesthetic insight. Nevertheless, most people view writing such a poem as easy due to their way of viewing the function of literary works.

Second the tendency views literature as self-expression, both collective and individual expression. Poets who adhere such a view will treat reality and objects in life and nature as a medium of expressing their thoughts and personal feelings. Literature is no longer viewed as an imitation or representation of reality, but as a statement of the poet's experiences, ideas and subjective thoughts in responding to human life and circumstances. This tendency can be found in the poems of Amir Hamzah, Chairil Anwar, Sitor Situmorang, Subagio Sastrowardojo, Goenawan Mohamad, Sapardi Djoko Damono, and Sutardji Calzoum Bachri who achieve not only self-expression but also, reflections of universal value.

Third, the view states that actually poetry is mere wordplay or a way to make beautiful utterances. This view appeared in poetry that relies on its strength in wordplay or skill, including the engraving of words. This style of

³⁶ Abdul Hadi WM, *Puisi, Estetika dan Masyarakat* (Batola Marabahan: Arus Sastra Kalimantan Selatan, 2009).

poems could be found in Indonesia widely, such as works of Taufiq Ismail and others.

Fourth, the prevailing view that poetry is more than a play of words and self-expression, but it is also the result of the poet's reflection on the inner experience and human condition of his life either individual or social. Almost all of Indonesia's leading poets produced such poems even at different level.

In the tradition of neo-positivism, the school which was dominant until present day, literary works - that should be viewed based on their aesthetic aspects - have change to the object of study which have no relation to the nature of literary. We know that literary works, at first, was expression to the author's psychology or aesthetic experience. However, under the tendency of modern literary theory, which emphasized either the intrinsic formal aspect or extrinsic formal aspect. That is the phenomena in the scope or context of formalist and neo-positivist theories, including sociologists and historians. What they do search from literary work are things related to social issues, ideologies, and current trends occurred in the readers community, like taste and external factors made the literary work accepted widely. This, clearly, does not assist to the correct understanding of literature, which in its nature, it capable to perform its world, i.e., the inner experience of its author. Literary works are not merely representations or imitations to external reality and therefore, the effort that relates literary works with social reality should not be the main focus of literary criticism.

Based on these classifications, each of them requires a different way of understanding, in appreciating and evaluating. Certainly, on studying literature, we must employ a different theoretical foundation, method, and aesthetic rules. Abdul Hadi exposes that Sufism has influence Indonesian literature since the early era of the spread of Islam in the archipelago, i.e., in the 13th century.

In general, the earliest texts we founded (expressing the influence of Sufism) come from the 15th or 16th centuries. However, not all of these records can last for the next century because the manuscript material is easily damaged. Among the known texts were works of Hamzah Fansuri, Sunan Bonang, and others. Therefore, in every ethnic literature whose language users adhering Islam, there must be founded Sufi literature, such as the literature of Aceh, Minangkabau, Sundanese, Javanese, Madura, and others in line with the spread of Islam.

In Islamic literary theory, high aesthetic pleasure can be obtained if someone understands the deepest meaning of the work. One could be said to be understands if he gets the high aesthetic of pleasure. This is because Islamic literary works are neither *mimesis*, nor they are really creation. Therefore, Islamic literary works are symbolic or mythical of aesthetic ideas and experiences. The aesthetic experience was formed by combination between the reality experienced by the author and his understanding on religious teaching. Therefore, a correct study of Islamic literary works does not merely look at the aesthetic expressions such as symbolic images and classifications that is used, but on what is symbolized and expressed, i.e., its deepest meaning.

Conclusion

Treasure of Sufi literature was the largest and most important part of the treasury of Islamic literature. Sufi works were related to social life and even from Sufi's hands emerged the books of jurisprudence, the science of Qur'anic exegesis, the science of hadith, grammatical science, philological studies, poetry, aesthetics, metaphysics, psychology and so on.

Sufi poets were not just the pioneers of the rise of national literature in their countries, but at the same time they also pioneer of the revival of Islamic literature in the global context, as it has been seen on the writers of Persia,

Arab, Turkish, Urdu, Hindi, Malay, and others. These Sufi poets were not only a link between religious tradition and literary tradition but also as a link between religious tradition and the spirit of searching of national identity, which is a part of the spirit of self-search, a central thing in Sufi teaching. The existence of this extraordinary Sufi literature faced challenges of contemporary modern world, i.e., positivistic tendency affects Sufi literature and violates its nature.

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