



The Integration of Islamic Theology, Sharia, and Sufism in a Classical Malay Manuscript: A Philological Study of the Spiritual Education Tradition in the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago

Rifka Haida Rahma^{1*}, Nunu Burhanuddin², Hayati², Septika Rudiamon³, Ramadhoni Aulia Gusli²

¹ Institut Darul Qur'an Payakumbuh, Indonesia

² Universitas Islam Negeri Sjech M. Djamil Djambek Bukittinggi, Indonesia

³ Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Al-Hikmah Pariangan Batusangkar, Indonesia

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: July, 2026

Received in revised from: August, 2026

Accepted: September, 2026

Available online: September, 28, 2026

Keywords: *Classical Malay manuscript; Ash'arite theology; Sharia; Sufism; ma'rifatullāh; spiritual education; philology.*

ABSTRACT

This study examines a classical Malay Islamic manuscript to investigate how Islamic theology, Sharia, and Sufism are integrated within a single model of spiritual education in the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago. Using a qualitative philological approach combined with content analysis and intellectual history, the study describes the manuscript, presents its transliteration and translation, and analyzes its religious teachings. The findings demonstrate that the manuscript is a didactic religious text (*ta'lim al-dīn*) that systematically integrates Ash'arite theology, Shafi'ite jurisprudence, and Sufi spirituality into a coherent pedagogical framework. Within this model, ma'rifatullāh (knowledge of God) is positioned as the ultimate educational objective, while the authority of the teacher (*murshid*) is embedded in the construction of faith and religious obedience as the principal medium of spiritual formation. These findings highlight the manuscript's significance as evidence of the intellectual and educational traditions of Islam in the Malay-Indonesian world and contribute to philological studies, Islamic intellectual history, and contemporary Islamic education.

1. Introduction

Classical Malay Islamic manuscripts constitute an important intellectual heritage for understanding the historical development of Islamic thought in the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago. These manuscripts preserve valuable insights into various dimensions of Muslim religious life, including Islamic creed (*'aqidah*), Islamic law (*fiqh*), Sufism (*taṣawwuf*), and the educational traditions that shaped Islamic learning in their respective historical contexts. As intellectual artifacts, these manuscripts function not only as media for the transmission of religious knowledge but also as historical evidence of the religious orientations and intellectual traditions that flourished among Muslim communities in the Malay-Indonesian world (Fathurahman, 2016; National Library of Indonesia, 2021).

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: rifkahaidarahma@gmail.com

<https://doi.org/10.56806/jh.v7i3.475>

Over the past decade, philological studies of Islamic manuscripts from the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago have developed considerably in terms of both methodological approaches and research scope. Scholars such as Ronit Ricci, Vladimir Braginsky, and Oman Fathurahman have laid important foundations for the global study of Malay manuscripts. In Indonesia, large-scale manuscript digitization initiatives undertaken by the National Library of Indonesia (2021) and several Islamic higher education institutions have significantly expanded access to the region's manuscript collections. Nevertheless, detailed studies of didactic religious manuscripts (*ta'lim al-dīn*) that integrate Islamic creed, Sharia, and Sufism remain relatively limited, particularly from the perspectives of content analysis and intellectual history (Azra et al., 2023; Riddell, 2001).

The manuscript examined in this article is a Classical Malay religious text that begins with the phrase *Bismillāh al-Rahmān al-Rahīm* and discusses the essence of religion by introducing *ma'rifatullāh* (knowledge of God) as the foundational basis for recognizing Allah. The text presents four fundamental components of religion—faith (*īmān*), Islam, divine unity (*tawhīd*), and spiritual knowledge (*ma'rifah*)—which are subsequently elaborated through discussions of the six pillars of faith, the divine attributes, angels, revealed scriptures, prophets and messengers, the Last Day, and divine decree (*qaḍā'* and *qadar*). As a whole, the manuscript reflects the integration of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah theology grounded in the Ash'arite tradition with the Sufi teachings that developed throughout the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago (Azra, 2023; Fathurahman, 2008; van Bruinessen, 1995).

Methodologically, this study employs a philological approach encompassing manuscript inventory, codicological description, transliteration, and translation of the text, combined with qualitative content analysis and an intellectual history approach. Philology was selected because it enables a comprehensive examination of the manuscript's linguistic, textual, and contextual dimensions (Badruzaman & Kosasih, 2018; Fathurahman, 2016; Supriadi, 2026). Meanwhile, the intellectual history approach facilitates an exploration of the scholarly networks, theological influences, and socio-religious contexts surrounding the production of the manuscript. Accordingly, this article aims to: (1) describe the physical characteristics and textual contents of the manuscript; (2) present its transliteration and English translation; and (3) analyze its religious teachings within the broader framework of the intellectual history of Islam in the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago.

The primary data source consists of the single manuscript under investigation, while secondary data are drawn from relevant scholarship on philology, Ash'arite theology, and Sufism in the Malay-Indonesian tradition. The data were analyzed qualitatively using content analysis, enabling an in-depth, contextual, and comparative interpretation of the theological and spiritual meanings embedded in the text in relation to both the classical Sunni intellectual tradition and the Sufi orders (*ṭuruq*) that developed across the Malay-Indonesian world.

This article contributes to filling an important research gap concerning didactic Islamic manuscripts that integrate the three fundamental dimensions of Islam—Islamic creed (*'aqidah*), Sharia, and Sufism—within a single textual framework. Furthermore, it contributes to ongoing efforts to preserve, reinterpret, and contextualize the intellectual legacy of Malay-Indonesian Islamic manuscripts for the development of contemporary Islamic religious education (Al-Attas, 1999; Halstead, 2004; Wan Daud, 1998).

2. Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research approach using philological methods combined with content analysis and an intellectual history approach. Philology was selected because the research object consists of a handwritten manuscript that requires specialized scholarly procedures to reproduce, understand, and accurately interpret the text. The study follows the modern philological tradition, which distinguishes manuscript studies into two principal dimensions: codicology, focusing on the physical characteristics of manuscripts, and textology, concerned with the reconstruction and interpretation of textual content (Luthfi, 2016). The philological procedures adopted in this study were based on the methodological frameworks proposed by Fathurahman (2016) and Robson (1994), both of whom emphasize rigorous manuscript description, accurate textual reproduction, and critical interpretation of manuscript contents.

The research was conducted through several sequential stages. First, the research object was identified, namely a Classical Malay religious manuscript containing fundamental Islamic teachings. Second, the manuscript was inventoried and examined to determine its existence, physical condition, and codicological characteristics. Third, a codicological description was prepared, including the identification of script, language, writing material, dimensions, layout, physical condition, and other relevant codicological features. Fourth, the text was transliterated from the Arabic-Malay (Jawi) script into the Latin alphabet while preserving the original textual form as faithfully as possible. Fifth, the manuscript was translated into Indonesian to facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of its contents. Sixth, a philological critical edition (textual editing) was prepared to produce a reliable text suitable for scholarly analysis. These stages represent the standard procedures commonly applied in philological research on Islamic manuscripts in Indonesia (Adiguna & Mustafa, 2023; Khair et al., 2024).

The data were analyzed qualitatively using content analysis to identify, classify, and interpret the religious concepts embedded in the manuscript. The analytical categories included: (1) theological concepts, particularly the doctrines of Ash'arite theology; (2) aspects of Sharia and Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh); (3) elements of Sufism and spirituality; and (4) pedagogical models, including the construction of teacher authority within Islamic education. These categories were interpreted within the theoretical framework of Malay-Indonesian Islamic studies, particularly scholarship on intellectual networks, the transmission of Islamic knowledge, and Islamic educational traditions (Azra, 2023; Riddell, 2001).

Furthermore, an intellectual history approach was employed to situate the manuscript within the broader development of Islamic thought in the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago. This approach was used to trace the historical context of the manuscript's production, the scholarly networks that influenced its composition, and its position within the Islamic intellectual tradition, particularly in relation to the development of Sunni theology, Sufi traditions, and *ṭarīqah* (Sufi order) networks in the region. The primary data source consisted of the manuscript under investigation, while secondary data were obtained from relevant scholarship on philology, Malay-Indonesian Islamic manuscripts, Islamic theology, Sufism, and recent academic studies. To enhance the validity of the interpretation, comparative textual analysis was conducted by comparing the findings of this manuscript with similar manuscripts and previous scholarly studies, including Malay Islamic manuscript collections that have been described and examined by philologists (Supriadi, 2026). This methodological framework enabled a more in-depth, contextual, and historically grounded interpretation of the manuscript, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of its intellectual characteristics.

3. Results

3.1 Manuscript Description

The manuscript examined in this study comprises nine folios selected from a total of 58 folios. Physically, the manuscript has no cover and is bound with cloth fibers adhered using adhesive. Its overall condition shows signs of deterioration, particularly on the outer edges, where portions of the manuscript have been torn. The upper and lower margins remain relatively well preserved, while the left margin is still largely legible despite damage to several corners caused by tearing. In addition, several small holes are visible in the central areas of some folios, most likely resulting from insect activity, such as bookworms or other paper-boring insects.

The manuscript measures approximately 17.3 cm in length, 11.2 cm in width, and 0.9 cm in thickness. It is written in two scripts: Arabic-Malay (Jawi) for the Malay text and Arabic script for passages in Arabic. The writing medium is European paper, identifiable by the presence of characteristic vertical and horizontal laid lines, a common feature of handmade European paper. Structurally, the manuscript consists of four quires sewn together with thread. The text block on each folio measures approximately 8.2 × 8.0 cm, with an average of 13 lines per page. Black ink is used throughout the manuscript, while red ink is employed selectively to highlight particular words or textual elements.

Based on its linguistic characteristics and textual content, the manuscript is tentatively dated to the eighteenth or nineteenth century, a period marked by the rapid development of Islamic religious writing in the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago (Fathurahman, 2016). The physical condition of the manuscript exhibits signs of age and frequent use, including worn or illegible sections. In the present transliteration, these damaged or missing portions are indicated by an ellipsis (...) to reflect textual loss or unreadable passages.

Table 1 The First Folio of the Manuscript with Transliteration and Translation

	Transliteration: (...) Allāhu wa salāmun `alā al-`ālam (...) min `ibādi alfa sanah qāla al-nabiy ṣallallāhu `alaihi wa sallam `ālim wa (...) al-ṣayitān min (...) qāla al-nabiy ṣallallāhu `alaihi wa sallam afḍalu (...) (...) (...) qāla al-nabiy ṣallallāhu `alaihi wa sallam man (...) (...) (...) qāla al-nabiy ṣallallāhu `alaihi wa sallam (...) (...) qāla al-nabiy ṣallallāhu `alaihi wa sallam (...) (...) al-ṭālib al-ṭāb wa huwa ṭalab al-fi`li (...) (...) bi Allāh ta`ālā wa bi rusulihi wa qawā`id (...) (...) wa huwa ṭalab al-fi`li (...) (...) al-fajr wa naḥw humā wa (...) wa huwa (...) (...)
	Translation: (...) Allah and peace be upon all creation (...) from the servant (...) The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: "The learned person and (...) Satan from (...)." The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) also said: "The most excellent (...)." (...) (...) The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Whoever (...)." (...) (...) The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: "(...)." (...) (...) The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: "(...)." (...) (...) whoever asks, it will be granted, and this refers to seeking righteous deeds (...) (...) through Allah the Exalted and through His Messenger, and all the foundations (...) (...) and this refers to seeking righteous deeds (...) (...) at dawn, and both (...) and he is (...) (...).

3.2 Manuscript Transliteration

To facilitate textual analysis and improve accessibility for readers who are not familiar with the Arabic-Malay (Jawi) script, the entire manuscript was transliterated into the Latin alphabet following established philological conventions. The transliteration preserves the original orthography, vocabulary, and textual structure of the manuscript as faithfully as possible while minimizing editorial intervention. Illegible or damaged sections of the manuscript are indicated by an ellipsis (...) to represent textual lacunae. The complete transliteration of the manuscript, comprising eight folios analyzed in this study, is presented in Tables 2. This transliterated text serves as the primary basis for the subsequent translation and content analysis.

Table 2 Facsimile Images and Transliteration of the Manuscript Text

	<i>Bismillāhi al-raḥmān al-raḥīm. Ini kitab pada menyatakan agama, artinya mengata akan Allah. Adapun awal agama itu yaitu <i>ma`rifatullāh</i>. <i>Bermula</i> rukun agama itu yaitu empat perkara, pertama iman, kedua Islam, ketiga tauhid, keempat <i>ma`rifat</i>. Arti iman yaitu percaya akan Allah dan akan Nabi dan akan guru. Dan arti Islam itu menjunjung <i>titah</i> Allah dan <i>titah</i> Nabi dan <i>titah</i> guru dan menjauhi <i>tagah</i> Allah dan <i>tagah</i> Nabi dan <i>tagah</i> guru. Arti tauhid tahu akan keesaan hak <i>ta`ālā</i>. Arti <i>ma`rifat</i> mengenal Allah. <i>Bermula</i> rukun iman itu enam perkara, pertama <i>āmantu billāh</i> artinya percaya aku akan Allah, kedua</i>
	<i>Malā`ikatihi</i> artinya percaya aku akan segala malaikat, ketiga <i>wa kutubihi</i> artinya percaya aku akan sekalian kitab-Nya, keempat <i>wa rusulihi</i> artinya percaya aku akan sekalian rasul Allah, kelima <i>wa al-yaum al-ākhir</i> artinya percaya aku akan hari yang kemudian, keenam <i>wa al-qadr khair wa syarrih min Allāh ta`ālā</i> artinya percaya aku akan <i>untung</i> baik dan jahat daripada Allah <i>ta`ālā</i> jua adanya. <i>Dan manapulah murād</i> kita percaya akan Allah <i>diiqrarkan</i> dengan lidah dan <i>ditaṣḍiqkan</i> dengan hati bahwa sesungguhnya Allah <i>ta`ālā</i> ada. Ia tiada <i>permulaan</i> dan tiada <i>berkesudahan</i>, dan tiada serupa dengan segala makhluk hidup, tahu, kuasa, berbuat sekehendaknya, <i>menengar</i>, melihat, berkata, <i>mehidupkan</i> mematikan <i>memeri</i> rizki
	mengadakan sekalian alam. <i>Dan manapulah murād</i> kita percaya akan segala malaikat, <i>diiqrarkan</i> dengan dengan lidah dan <i>ditaṣḍiqkan</i> dengan hati bahwa <i>sungguhnya</i> Allah <i>ta`ālā</i> menjadikan malaikat daripada cahaya, tubuhnya halus, <i>bangsanya</i> tinggi, tiada ia minum dan tiada ia makan, dan bukan ia si laki2 dan bukan ia perempuan, dan tiada ia beranak dan tiada ia diperanakkan, dan tiada ia <i>enggan</i> dan tiada ia lalai, dan suci ia daripada dosa besar dan dosa kecil. <i>Bermula</i> perbuatannya berbagai-bagai, setengahnya berdiri dengan <i>titah</i> Allah, dan setengahnya rukuk dengan <i>titah</i> Allah, dan setengahnya sujud dengan <i>titah</i> Allah, dan setengahnya <i>tasbīh</i> dengan <i>titah</i> Allah, dan setengahnya <i>taḥmīd</i> dengan <i>titah</i> Allah, dan setengahnya <i>taḥlīl</i> dengan
	<i>titah</i> Allah, dan setengahnya takbir dengan <i>titah</i> Allah, dan setengahnya <i>menyuratkan</i> dosa dan pahala dengan <i>titah</i> Allah. Dan lain daripada itu penghulunya empat orang, pertama Jibrail kerjanya membawa kitab yang seratus empat kepada nabi yang <i>dualapan</i> orang, kedua Mikail kerjanya <i>memantakan</i> rezki segala makhluk, dan menurunkan hujan dan panas dan <i>memagang</i> (...), ketiga Israfil kerjanya meniup sangkakala, keempat `Izrail kerjanya mengambil nyawa segala makhluk. <i>Dan manapulah murād</i> kita percaya akan kitab, <i>diiqrarkan</i> dengan lidah dan <i>ditaṣḍiqkan</i> dengan hati bahwa <i>sungguhnya</i> Allah <i>ta`ālā</i> menurunkan kitab kepada Nabi yang <i>dualapan</i> orang, akan menyatakan halal
	dan haram, sunat dan farḍu, ṣah dan baṭal, barang siapa syak akan kitab, kafir. <i>Dan manapulah murād</i> kita percaya akan segala Rasul Allah dan segala Nabi <i>diiqrarkan</i> dengan hati dan <i>ditaṣḍiqkan</i> dengan lidah bahwa <i>sungguhnya</i> Allah <i>ta`ālā</i> menjadikan Nabi dan segala Rasul seratus ribu dua puluh ribu empat orang. Pertama2 Nabi, Nabi Adam, dan <i>kesudahan</i> Nabi, Nabi Muhammad. <i>Bermula</i> jadi Rasul tiga ratus tiga belas orang dan yang keturunan kitab <i>dualapan</i> orang, yaitu Adam, (...) Idris, Ibrahim, Musa, `Isa, Daud, Muhammad, dan yang memegang syariat <i>anam</i> orang, pertama Adam, dan kedua Nuh, ketiga Ibrahim, keempat

	Musa, kelima `Isa, Keenam Muhammad. <b>Bermula</b> sekali nabi benar menyampaikan segala <i>suruh</i> Allah, dan kepercayaan Allah, dan <i>menceritakan</i> yang ghaib2 seperti zat Allah, dan sifat Allah, dan <i>af`āl</i> Allah, dan hari kiamat, dan syurga, dan neraka. Bermula terlebih <i>martabat</i>2 pada Allah, pada Allah daripada segala Nabi, Nabi Muhammad, ada ia seorang laki2 orang Arab, <i>bangsanya</i> Hasyim lagi Quraisy, <i>bapanya</i> Abdullah, ibunya Aminah, <i>adanya</i> di Makkah, keturunan Jibrail pun di Makkah, wafatnya di masjid di Madinah, kuburnya pun di Madinah, menyusukan dia Halimah. Dan manapulah <i>murād</i> kita percaya akan hari yang kemudian, yaitu di<i>q</i>rarkan
	dengan lidah dan di<i>ta</i>ṣ<i>di</i>qkan dengan hati, yaitu hari yang dimatikan Allah segala makhluk karena sangat siksanya melainkan yang dikehendaki Allah, yang tiada mati seperti syurga, dan neraka, dan nyawa, dan `Arasy, dan Kursi, dan Lauḥ, dan Qalam, dan tanya dalamnya, dan timbang dosa dan pahala, dan barangsiapa berat `amal kejahatan, masuk neraka, dan barangsiapa berat `amal kebajikan, masuk syurga, dan barangsiapa dan barangsiapa tiada takut akan siksa Allah, dan tiada harap akan ni`mat syurga, yaitu kafir. Dan manapulah <i>murād</i> kita percaya akan <i>untung</i> baik dan jahat, yaitu di<i>q</i>rarkan dengan lidah dan di<i>ta</i>ṣ<i>di</i>qkan dengan hati bahwa <i>sungguhnya</i>
	<i>untung</i> baik dan jahat, siksa dan senang, hidup dan mati, miskin dan kaya, hina dan mulia <i>semhanya</i> itu didatangkan Allah dan dikehendaki-Nya, dan dijadikan-Nya dan dihukumkan-Nya. Bermula <i>untung</i> baik itu iman dan ta`at, yaitu di<i>u</i>ntungkan Allah dan dikehendaki-Nya, dan dijadikan-Nya, dan dihukumkan-Nya, dan di<i>ri</i>ḍakan-Nya, dan dikasihi-Nya, dan <i>untung</i> jahat itu yaitu kafir, dan <i>ma`ṣiyāt</i>, yaitu di<i>u</i>ntungkan Allah dan dikehendaki-Nya, dan dijadikan-Nya, dan dihukumkan-Nya, tetapi dengan <i>sarah</i>-Nya dan di<i>ta</i>gahkan-Nya dan di (...). Bermula pun iman dan kesempurnaannya tiga perkara, pertama di<i>q</i>rarkan dengan lidah, kedua di<i>ta</i>ṣ<i>di</i>qkan dengan hati, ketiga diperbuat dengan anggota, serta ijma` imam yang empat.

3.2 Analysis of Religious Teachings

3.2.1. The Conceptual Structure of Religious Teachings: The Integration of Islamic Creed, Sharia, and Sufism

The analysis of the manuscript reveals a distinctive and integrative conceptual structure. The text opens with the statement, “The beginning of religion is ma`rifatullāh (knowledge of God).” This formulation is highly significant because it places ma`rifatullāh—the profound knowledge and recognition of Allah—as the primary point of orientation for the entire religious system. Unlike most normative theological texts, which typically begin with discussions of īmān (faith) and the shahādah (profession of faith), this manuscript explicitly positions the spiritual-esoteric dimension (ma`rifah) as both the foundation and ultimate goal of religious life. Such an approach is consistent with the Sufi educational tradition in the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago, which emphasizes that adherence to the Shari`ah must be accompanied by inner spiritual realization (Azra, 2023; Fathurahman, 2008; van Bruinessen, 1995).

The manuscript further states that religion consists of four fundamental elements: īmān (faith), Islam, tawḥīd (the affirmation of divine unity), and ma`rifah (spiritual knowledge of God). This conceptual framework extends the conventional understanding of religion, which generally encompasses only īmān and Islam. By incorporating tawḥīd and ma`rifah as integral components, the manuscript unifies the theological dimension (‘aqidah), the normative dimension (Shari`ah), and the spiritual dimension (taṣawwuf) within a single framework of religious understanding. This integration is consistent with Azra’s (2023) argument that the classical Islamic tradition of the Malay-Indonesian

Archipelago was characterized by a harmonious synthesis of the exoteric and esoteric dimensions of Islam.

Conceptually, the manuscript presents the four elements in a progressive sequence: (1) Islam as the outward manifestation of religious obedience through the observance of the Sharī'ah; (2) īmān as the inner conviction that serves as the foundation of righteous action; (3) tawhīd as the purification of one's consciousness of the transcendental oneness of Allah; and (4) ma'rifah as the culmination of the spiritual journey through profound knowledge of God. This sequence reflects a process of spiritual transformation that progresses from the exoteric to the esoteric dimensions of religion, a defining characteristic of Sufi pedagogy within the Islamic educational tradition of the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago (Fathurahman, 2008; van Bruinessen, 1995).

3.2.2. Teacher Authority in the Tradition of Spiritual Education

One of the most significant findings of this study is the prominent position of the teacher, which is explicitly integrated into the theological framework of the manuscript. The text defines īmān (faith) as "believing in Allah, the Prophet, and the teacher," while Islam is defined as "obeying the commands of Allah, the commands of the Prophet, and the commands of the teacher." The consistent placement of the teacher alongside Allah and the Prophet within these fundamental religious definitions strongly indicates that the manuscript originated from a Sufi educational milieu, in which the teacher (murshid) occupies a central role in spiritual formation and the transmission of religious knowledge. This characteristic is consistent with Fathurahman's (2008) study of the Shattariyah tradition in Minangkabau, which demonstrates that the teacher–disciple relationship constituted the primary foundation for the transmission of religious knowledge, spiritual authority, and mystical experience.

This conception has deep roots in the Islamic intellectual tradition. Its normative basis can be traced to the well-known prophetic tradition stating that "the scholars are the heirs of the prophets" (al-ʿulamā' warathat al-anbiyā'). Within the Sufi tradition, this ḥadīth provides the theological justification for the scholarly and spiritual authority of the teacher (murshid). van Bruinessen (1995) argues that the teacher–disciple relationship—whether expressed as shaykh–murīd or kiai–santri—constitutes the core mechanism for the transmission of Islamic knowledge throughout the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago. In this tradition, the continuity of scholarly lineage (sanad) and the cultivation of proper ethical conduct (adab) are regarded as equally important as the mastery of religious knowledge itself. Similarly, Azra (2023) demonstrates that the development of the scholarly networks connecting Southeast Asia with the Middle East since the seventeenth century depended fundamentally upon sustained teacher–disciple relationships that ensured the continuity of religious learning across generations. Consequently, the authority attributed to the teacher in this manuscript should not be interpreted as a form of personal veneration but rather as a reflection of the epistemological and spiritual structure characteristic of the Islamic intellectual tradition of the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago, in which the teacher functions as the principal link in the transmission of knowledge, ethical discipline, and religious experience (Al-Attas, 1999; Halstead, 2004; Wan Daud, 1998).

The elevated status accorded to the teacher in this manuscript further reinforces its close association with the educational traditions of Sufi orders (ṭuruq). Such formulations are relatively uncommon in concise theological treatises concerned solely with doctrinal orthodoxy but occur more frequently in Sufi literature, where spiritual guidance under the supervision of a murshid is regarded as indispensable to the path of spiritual realization. Accordingly, the expressions "believing in Allah, the Prophet, and the teacher" and "obeying the commands of Allah, the Prophet, and the teacher" signify not only the manuscript's theological orientation but also its pedagogical function. They

indicate that the text was intended to cultivate adab, intellectual obedience, and spiritual commitment among novice disciples before they advanced to more specialized instruction within a Sufi order.

3.2.3. The Representation of Ash'arite Theology

The manuscript consistently reflects the theological principles of the Ash'arite tradition through its exposition of the divine attributes (*ṣifāt Allāh*). It affirms that Allah “has neither beginning nor end,” expressing the concepts of *qīdam* (pre-eternity) and *baqā'* (everlastingness). Furthermore, the manuscript states that Allah “is unlike all created beings,” thereby articulating the principle of *mukhālafatuhu li al-ḥawādith*, namely, the absolute transcendence of God over all contingent and created entities. These principles constitute fundamental attributes of God within the Ash'arite theological system and have long formed the core of Sunni theological instruction (Nakamura, 2021).

The divine attributes enumerated in the manuscript—including life, knowledge, power, hearing, sight, speech, giving life, causing death, and providing sustenance—correspond closely to the essential divine attributes (*ṣifāt al-wājib*) commonly presented in classical Ash'arite theological works, particularly *Umm al-Barāhīn* by Muḥammad al-Sanūsī. Their inclusion serves not only to introduce orthodox theological doctrine but also to safeguard believers against anthropomorphic interpretations (*tashbīh*), as the manuscript explicitly emphasizes that these attributes must not be understood in the same manner as the attributes possessed by created beings (Nakamura, 2021; Wan Daud, 1998). Accordingly, the manuscript functioned not merely as an introductory theological text but also as a pedagogical and apologetic instrument designed to preserve the doctrinal integrity of Sunni Islam while reinforcing a proper understanding of divine transcendence.

3.2.4. The Concept of Divine Decree and the Perfection of Faith

The manuscript's discussion of divine decree (*qadar*) reflects a distinctively Ash'arite theological position. It asserts that all events—“fortune and misfortune, punishment and happiness, life and death, poverty and wealth, humiliation and honor”—are brought into existence, willed, and created by Allah. This formulation corresponds closely to the Ash'arite doctrine of *qadar*, which affirms God's absolute sovereignty over all existence, including human actions, while maintaining His unrestricted will and creative power (Nakamura, 2021).

At the same time, the manuscript does not advocate absolute determinism. It distinguishes between “good fortune,” identified as faith (*īmān*) and obedience (*ṭā'ah*), which are loved and approved by Allah, and “evil fortune,” identified as disbelief (*kufr*) and sinful acts (*ma'āṣī*), which, although occurring by Allah's will, are neither approved nor commanded by Him. This distinction demonstrates the manuscript's effort to preserve human moral responsibility while simultaneously affirming the absolute sovereignty of God's will. Such a theological position is characteristic of the Ash'arite tradition, which occupies a mediating position between the rationalist theology of the Mu'tazilah and the strict determinism traditionally associated with the Jabariyyah (Nakamura, 2021; Riddell, 2001).

The manuscript further defines the perfection of faith (*kamāl al-īmān*) through three interrelated components: confession by the tongue (*iqrār*), affirmation by the heart (*taṣdīq*), and righteous action performed by the limbs (*'amal*). This tripartite formulation reflects a comprehensive understanding of faith that encompasses cognitive, verbal, and practical dimensions. Such a conception is consistent with the mainstream Sunni theological tradition, which regards faith as an inseparable unity of belief, verbal confession, and righteous conduct (Al-Sanusi, n.d.; Riddell, 2001). Significantly, the manuscript further adds the phrase “together with the consensus of the four imams” (*ijmā' al-a'imma al-arba'ah*), indicating the author's recognition of the juridical authority of the four Sunni schools of law

in defining the boundaries of orthodox faith. This addition further demonstrates the manuscript's attempt to integrate theology, jurisprudence, and scholarly authority within a coherent framework of Islamic religious education.

3.2.5. Islamic Cosmology and Eschatology in the Manuscript

The manuscript's discussion of angels reflects the cosmological framework of classical Islam, in which angels function as cosmic agents mediating Allah's will within the created universe. The text identifies the four principal angels together with their respective roles: Jibrīl (the transmitter of divine revelation), Mikā'il (the administrator of sustenance and natural phenomena), Isrāfīl (the blower of the Trumpet on the Day of Resurrection), and 'Izrā'il (the angel responsible for taking human souls at death). This description serves not only as doctrinal instruction concerning belief in angels but also introduces an Islamic conception of the cosmic order as being entirely governed by the will of Allah (Ikhwan, 2025).

Regarding eschatology, the manuscript refers to a series of elements associated with the afterlife, including Paradise (Jannah), Hell (Jahannam), the Throne ('Arsh), the Footstool (Kursī), the Preserved Tablet (Lawḥ al-Maḥfūz), the Pen (Qalam), and the Scale of Deeds (Mīzān). The inclusion of these concepts demonstrates that the manuscript's understanding of the hereafter extends beyond life after death to encompass the entire eschatological system concerning divine judgment and accountability for human actions. This strong eschatological orientation is characteristic of religious texts produced within the educational traditions of surau and pesantren, where awareness of the Day of Judgment served as a primary motivation for religious devotion and moral conduct (Halstead, 2004; Wan Daud, 1998).

3.2.6. Indications of the Sufi Order (Ṭarīqah) Tradition in the Manuscript

A comprehensive analysis of the manuscript reveals several strong indicators linking the text to the traditions of Sufism and ṭarīqah. First, its emphasis on ma'rifatullāh (knowledge of God) as the ultimate goal of religion demonstrates that the manuscript is concerned not only with the normative dimensions of Islam but also with spiritual realization, a defining characteristic of Sufi teachings. Second, the explicit incorporation of the teacher's authority into the fundamental definitions of īmān (faith) and Islam reflects the distinctive epistemological and spiritual structure of Sufi educational traditions. Third, the close relationship established between tawḥīd and ma'rifah, presented as successive stages of religious development, corresponds to the concept of the spiritual journey (sulūk) commonly found in Sufi literature (Bruinessen, 1990).

Fourth, the manuscript's emphasis on the inner (esoteric) dimension of religion alongside its outward (exoteric) practices indicates a spiritual orientation rarely encountered in normative legal (fiqh) texts. Fifth, the systematic progression from Islam (Sharī'ah) to īmān, tawḥīd, and finally ma'rifah closely resembles the well-established Sufi stages of Sharī'ah, Ṭarīqah, Ḥaqīqah, and Ma'rifah. Finally, the concise and systematic presentation suggests that the manuscript was intended as an introductory instructional text for novice disciples embarking upon spiritual education (Marsuki et al., 2024).

Taken together, these indicators strongly suggest that the manuscript most likely originated within the educational milieu of a Sufi order operating in the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago, particularly the Shattariyyah, whose scholarly networks were especially influential in Minangkabau and other parts of Sumatra. This interpretation is reinforced by the presence of key concepts such as ma'rifatullāh, the central authority of the murshid, and the sequential relationship between Sharī'ah and Ḥaqīqah, all of which constitute defining features of the Shattariyyah pedagogical tradition in the Malay-Indonesian world (Azra, 2023; Riddell, 2001).

4. Conclusions

Based on the philological analysis and content analysis of the Classical Malay Islamic manuscript examined in this study, it can be concluded that the manuscript constitutes a didactic religious text (ta'lim al-dīn) that integrates Ash'arite theology, Shāfi'ī jurisprudence, and Sufi spirituality within a unified pedagogical framework. This integration reflects a distinctive model of Islamic education in the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago that regards the exoteric and esoteric dimensions of religion as inseparable components of religious life and practice.

The manuscript further exhibits a distinctive conceptual structure by positioning ma'rifatullāh (knowledge of God) as the highest objective of religious life while explicitly incorporating the authority of the teacher into the fundamental constructions of īmān (faith) and Islam. These characteristics strongly suggest that the manuscript originated within the educational milieu of Sufi learning and ṭarīqah networks, particularly the Shattariyyah tradition, which flourished in Minangkabau and other parts of the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

One of the principal findings of this study is that the representation of Ash'arite theology in the manuscript functions not merely as the transmission of theological doctrine but also as a pedagogical instrument for cultivating tawhīd (belief in divine unity), ethical discipline toward the teacher (adab), and spiritual orientation toward ma'rifatullāh. The manuscript therefore represents a traditional model of Islamic education that integrates theology, pedagogy, and Sufism into a coherent educational system.

Academically, this study contributes to the growing scholarship on the intellectual traditions of Islam in the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago by demonstrating that Classical Malay Islamic manuscripts served not only as vehicles for preserving theological knowledge but also as instruments for shaping the spiritual identity and religious culture of Muslim communities. Practically, the educational model embodied in this manuscript offers valuable insights for the development of contemporary Islamic education by illustrating how doctrinal instruction can be balanced with spiritual formation within a holistic educational framework.

Future research should undertake systematic comparative studies with similar manuscripts from other regions of the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago, investigate the manuscript's transmission networks through approaches drawn from intellectual and social history, and further explore the relevance of its model of spiritual education for the development of contemporary Islamic education curricula.

References

- Adiguna, R. S., & Mustafa, H. R. (2023). Naskah Kuno Kabuyutan Ciburuy dalam Perspektif Historiografi Indonesia. *Siginjai: Jurnal Sejarah*, 3(2), 144–155.
- Al-Attas, S. M. N. (1999). *The concept of education in Islam: A framework for an Islamic philosophy of education*. ISTAC.
- Al-Sanusi, M. ibn Y. (n.d.). Umm al-Barahin. In M. A. Al-Zuhaili (Ed.), *Sharh Umm al-Barahin*. Dar Al-Kotob Al-Ilmiyah.
- Azra, A. (2023). *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad XVII dan XVIII: Akar Pembaruan Islam Indonesia* (Edisi Revisi). Kencana (PrenadaMedia Group).
- Azra, A., Afrianty, D., & Hefner, R. W. (2023). Pesantren and Madrasa: Muslim Schools and National Ideals in Indonesia. In R. W. Hefner & M. Q. Zaman (Eds.), *Schooling Islam: The Culture and Politics of Modern Muslim Education* (pp. 172–198). Princeton University Press.
- Badruzaman, A. I., & Kosasih, A. (2018). Teori Filologi dan Penerapannya: Masalah Naskah-Teks

- dalam Filologi. *Jumantara: Jurnal Manuskrip Nusantara*, 9(2).
<https://doi.org/10.37014/jumantara.v9i2.241>
- Braginsky, V. (2004). *The Heritage of Traditional Malay Literature: A Historical Survey of Genres, Writings and Literary Views*. KITLV Press.
- Bruinessen, M. van. (1990). Kitab kuning: Books in Arabic script used in the pesantren milieu. *Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land- En Volkenkunde*, 146(2/3), 226–269.
https://dspace.library.uu.nl/bitstream/handle/1874/20587/bruinessen_90_kitab_kuning.pdf
- Fathurahman, O. (2008). *Tarekat Syattariyah di Minangkabau: Teks dan Konteks*. Prenada Media Group; EFEO; PPIM UIN Jakarta; KITLV.
- Fathurahman, O. (2016). *Filologi Indonesia: Teori dan Metode*. Prenadamedia Group.
- Halstead, J. M. (2004). An Islamic concept of education. *Comparative Education*, 40(4), 517–529.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0305006042000284510>
- Ikhwan, A. (2025). Islamic Eschatology, the Soul's Journey, and the Ontology of Personhood. *GNOSI: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Human Theory and Praxis*, 8(2), 46–54.
<http://www.gnosijournal.com/index.php/gnosi/article/view/294>
- Indonesia, P. N. R. (2021). *Katalog Manuskrip Digital Nusantara*. Perpustakaan Nasional RI.
<https://www.perpusnas.go.id/digital-manuscripts>
- Khair, N., Hanafi, A., Jodi, J., Maulana, I., & Jamaludin, F. (2024). Identification Manuscript and Content of Community Knowledge in the East Coast of Java 18-21st Centuries. *Journal Civics and Social Studies (CIVICOS)*, 8(2). <https://doi.org/10.31980/journalcss.v8i2.2194>
- Luthfi, K. M. (2016). Kontekstualisasi Filologi dalam Teks-teks Islam Nusantara. *IBDA': Jurnal Kajian Islam dan Budaya*, 14(1), 114–128. <https://doi.org/10.24090/ibda.v14i1>
- Marsuki, Sumbulah, U., & Syaifuddin, H. (2024). The Network of Middle Eastern and Archipelagic Sufi Scholars: Tracing the Dynamics of Sufism Development in Indonesia. *Teosofia: Indonesian Journal of Islamic Mysticism*, 13(2), 355–376. <https://doi.org/10.21580/tos.v13i2.19064>
- Nakamura, M. (2021). *The Crescent Arises over the Banyan Tree: A Study of the Muhammadiyah Movement in a Central Javanese Town* (2nd ed.). Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- Ricci, R. (2011). Islam Translated: Literature, Conversion, and the Arabic Cosmopolis of South and Southeast Asia. In *South Asia Across the Disciplines* (Issue Hardcover). The University of Chicago Press.
- Riddell, P. G. (2001). *Islam and the Malay-Indonesian World: Transmission and Responses*. University of Hawai'i Press.
- Robson, S. O. (1994). *Prinsip-prinsip Filologi Indonesia* (K. Gunawan (ed.)). RUL.
- Supriadi, D. (2026). *Filologi: Teori dan Metode* (R. S. Nugraha (ed.)). Penerbit Dikara.
- van Bruinessen, M. (1995). *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren, dan Tarekat: Tradisi-Tradisi Islam di Indonesia*. Mizan.
- Wan Daud, W. M. N. W. (1998). *The Educational Philosophy and Practice of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas: An Exposition of the Original Concept of Islamization*. International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC).