

The Orientation of Turjuman al-Mustafid Abd al-Rauf al-Sinkili's Mediative Tafsir in the Sociohistorical Context of 17th Century Aceh

Orientasi Tafsir Mediatif Turjuman al-Mustafid Abd al-Rauf al-Sinkili dalam Konteks Sosiohistoris Aceh Abad Ke-17



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Abstract

Background and Objectives: This article starts from the view that Turjuman al-Mustafid was born not as a mere textual transmission, but as an intellectual response to the doctrinal tensions of 17th-century Aceh, especially the debate on wahdat al-wujūd and the need of the Malay-Acehnese community for accessible interpretation. This study aims to identify the orientation of Turjuman al-Mustafid's interpretation as the direction of Abd al-Rauf al-Sinkili's mediative, adaptive, and non-polemical intellectual tendencies.

Method: This research uses a qualitative approach with socio-historical and textual analysis of key verses related to the relationship between God and creatures, divine togetherness, the limitations of human knowledge, and *tajalli* symbols, especially QS al- Ḥadīd [57]:4, al-Baqarah [2]:115, al-Isrā' [17]:85, and al-Furqān [25]:45.

Main Results: The results of the analysis show that al-Sinkili affirms the unity of God with creatures through the principle of ghayriyyah, limits human knowledge to the awareness of al- ḥ ayrah, and interprets *al-zill* as wujūd that marks God's *tajalli*. This pattern shows that Turjuman al-Mustafid was not constructed as a polemical interpretation, but rather as an attempt at theological reconciliation that maintains the ontological distance between al-Ḥ aqq and creatures.

Contribution: This study confirms that the orientation of interpretation can be read as ittijāh al-mufassir which is formed from the interaction between

the objectives of interpretation, the intellectual background of the interpreter, and the socio-historical context of Aceh.

Conclusion: Turjuman al-Mustafid is a communicative, mediative, and non-polemical Malay commentary, as well as an intellectual response to the wahdat al-wujūd debate in 17th-century Aceh.

Keywords: Abd al-Rauf al-Sinkili, Turjuman al-Mustafid, tafsir orientation, wahdat al-wujūd, 17th century Aceh.

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Abstrak

Latar Belakang dan Tujuan: Artikel ini berangkat dari pandangan bahwa Turjuman al-Mustafid lahir bukan sebagai transmisi tekstual belaka, melainkan sebagai respons intelektual atas ketegangan doktrinal Aceh abad ke-17, khususnya perdebatan wahdat al-wujūd dan kebutuhan masyarakat Melayu-Aceh akan penafsiran yang mudah diakses. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengidentifikasi orientasi tafsir Turjuman al-Mustafid sebagai arah kecenderungan intelektual Abd al-Rauf al-Sinkili yang mediatif, adaptif, dan non-polemik.

Metode: Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan analisis sosio-historis dan tekstual atas ayat-ayat kunci yang berkaitan dengan relasi Tuhan-makhluk, kebersamaan Ilahi, keterbatasan pengetahuan manusia, dan simbol *tajallī*, terutama QS al-Ḥadīd [57]:4, al-Baqarah [2]:115, al-Isrā' [17]:85, dan al-Furqān [25]:45.

Hasil Utama: Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa al-Sinkili menegaskan kebersamaan Tuhan dengan makhluk melalui prinsip *ghayriyyah*, membatasi pengetahuan manusia dengan kesadaran *al-ḥayrah*, dan menafsirkan *al-zill* sebagai wujud yang menandai *tajallī* Tuhan. Pola ini memperlihatkan bahwa Turjuman al-Mustafid tidak dibangun sebagai tafsir polemis, melainkan sebagai upaya rekonsiliasi teologis yang menjaga jarak ontologis antara al-Ḥaqq dan makhluk.

Kontribusi: Studi ini menegaskan bahwa orientasi tafsir dapat dibaca sebagai *ittijāh* al-mufassir yang terbentuk dari interaksi antara tujuan penafsiran, latar intelektual mufassir, dan konteks sosial-historis Aceh.

Kesimpulan: Turjuman al-Mustafid merupakan tafsir Melayu yang komunikatif, mediatif, dan non-polemik, sekaligus respons intelektual terhadap perdebatan wahdat al-wujūd di Aceh abad ke-17.

Kata kunci: Abd al-Rauf al-Sinkili, Turjuman al-Mustafid, orientasi tafsir, wahdat al-wujūd, Aceh abad ke-17.

A. INTRODUCTION

The emergence of Qur'anic interpretation in the Indonesian archipelago cannot be understood simply as the transmission of Islamic textual traditions from the Middle East. Rather, it represents a dynamic intellectual process in which Qur'anic interpretations developed through ongoing interaction with local linguistic, cultural, and social realities. As Islam gradually expanded across the archipelago, Muslim scholars encountered diverse communities with vastly different cultural backgrounds, languages, and educational capacities. This gradual expansion of Islam across the Indonesian archipelago was facilitated by diverse networks of scholars and missionaries who adapted Islamic teachings to local cultural contexts. In Java, for example, the educational and missionary activities of the Wali Songo played a crucial role in introducing Qur'anic teachings and establishing a lasting tradition of Islamic learning, while other regions developed their own scholarly paths in response to local historical circumstances (Rosyadi et al., 2021) . This situation encouraged the production of interpretive works that were not simply translations of Arabic scholarship but also intellectual responses designed to bridge the Qur'an's universal message with the lived experiences of local Muslim communities. As a result, the development of interpretation in the Malay-Indonesian world reflects a process of contextualization in which exegetical activity becomes closely linked to the historical circumstances and needs of the society it seeks to guide (Wardani & Mahfuz, 2020) .

One of the most significant manifestations of this contextualization is the increasing use of local languages as a means of Quranic interpretation. Although Arabic remains the primary language of Islamic study, its accessibility is largely limited to religious elites who have received formal training. For the broader Muslim population, linguistic barriers limit direct engagement with classical exegetical literature. This situation encourages scholars across the archipelago to communicate Quranic teachings through languages more familiar to local audiences. (Fikri Ys, 2021) Among these languages, Malay occupies a particularly strategic position, serving not only as a lingua franca of trade and diplomacy but also as a primary medium of intellectual exchange in the Malay-Islamic world. Therefore, the adoption of Malay for religious literature represents more than a practical linguistic choice; it signifies an effort to broaden public access to Islamic knowledge

while simultaneously encouraging the emergence of distinct regional traditions in Quranic interpretation (Saifuddin & Wardani, 2017) .

In the intellectual landscape of 17th-century Aceh, *Turjuman al-Mustafid* cannot be understood simply as the earliest and most comprehensive work of Malay commentary, but rather as an intellectual product born amidst significant doctrinal tensions. Several studies indicate that this work was composed when Abd al-Rauf al-Sinkili held a prominent religious position in the Aceh Sultanate during the reign of the four sultans, amidst a still-strong debate surrounding the concept of *wahdat al-wujūd* and the ulama's responses to it (Marzuki & Masithoh, 2025) . Thus, al-Sinkili's intellectual position needs to be read as a mediative one: he does not appear as a polemicist who attacks head-on, but as a ulama who seeks to harmonize the authority of the text, the socio-religious needs of the community, and the demands for stability of Islamic discourse in Aceh (Rohmanudin & Yunus, 2023).

The relationship between *the wahdat al-wujūd controversy* , al-Sinkili's position, and character interpretation *Turjuman al-Mustafid* looks on pattern its interpretation is concise, general, adaptive, and tends to be non-polemical. Choice Language Malay Ox show orientation clear education, namely expand access public to understanding the Qur'an without lock interpretation on elite Arabic -speaking circles. On at the same time, style interpretation that is not confrontational hinting that *Turjuman al-Mustafid* present No just as reproduction Arabic text, but rather as response intellectual to the current situation in Aceh filled tug-of-war between authority Sufism, criticism orthodox, and need will guidelines religious that can accepted in a way wide (Rahman, 2018) With Thus , the problem main study This No just "what" content interpretation that, but "why" interpretation That come on stage with orientation certain in context socio-religious Aceh in the 17th century.

Studies on *Turjuman al-Mustafid* have produced a number of important readings related to its historical position as an early Malay exegesis, its dependence on the Arabic exegetical tradition, its translation techniques, and its methodological characteristics. However, these reviews generally still place *Turjuman al-Mustafid* at the descriptive-textual level, thus not fully explaining how its interpretive orientation was formed in relation to the socio-religious situation of 17th-century Aceh. In this study, the interpretive orientation is

understood within the framework of *ittijah al-mufasssir*, namely the direction of intellectual tendencies that influence the way interpreters read and convey the meaning of the Qur'an. Departing from this framework, the categories of "general", "adaptive", and "non-polemical" are not treated as standard theories that have been established in themselves, but rather as analytical-inductive categories that researchers have compiled based on textual indicators and the historical context surrounding the compilation of the work. This reading aligns with the findings of previous studies that portray al-Sinkili as a moderate scholar, attempting to reconcile sharia and Sufism, and responding to theological contestations without a confrontational attitude; at the same time, *Turjuman al-Mustafid* is also understood as an adaptive, contextual, and communicative work in responding to the needs of the Malay-Acehnese community at the time (Saifuddin & Wardani, 2017) .

These limitations reveal important analytical space worthy of further investigation. Interpretive orientation should not be understood simply as a methodological preference or stylistic characteristic, but as an intellectual position reflecting the interaction between an interpreter and the historical reality in which that interpreter lives. Each tafsir is produced in a particular social environment, responds to particular religious challenges, and embodies particular scholarly priorities that shape its interpretive choices. (Bruinessen, 1995) From this perspective, *the Turjuman al-Mustafid* should be approached not simply as the oldest Malay commentary, but as a historical document that articulates a specific response to the theological, social, and political dynamics of 17th-century Aceh. Therefore, rather than revisiting questions about the source or composition of the text, this study directs its attention to the fundamental orientation of the tafsir and investigates how that orientation is constructed through the interaction between Qur'anic interpretation and its socio-historical context.

Understanding the orientation of an interpretation requires a broader understanding than simply examining its sources, methods, or linguistic features. Interpretive orientation refers to the broader intellectual direction that shapes an interpreter's engagement with the Qur'an, encompassing the goals, priorities, and contextual considerations that shape the interpretation itself. (Marzuki & Masithoh, 2025) In this sense, an interpretation is not

merely a compilation of explanations for Qur'anic verses, but also a reflection of the social environment, intellectual traditions, and religious concerns that surrounded its production. Understanding the orientation of the interpretation in *Turjuman al-Mustafid* needs to be done through verses that are directly related to *the wahdat al-wujūd debate* such as verses about the relationship between God, creatures, and the more relevant verses of attributes to show how this interpretation subtly responds to the wujūdiyyah controversy that developed in 17th-century Aceh.

Thus, the main sample in this discussion is directed at QS al- Ḥ ad ī d [57]: 4, QS al-Baqarah [2]: 115, Al-Isra' [17]: 85, Al-Furqān [25]: 45, because in these verses al-Singkili's interpretive tendencies appear more clearly in negotiating God's closeness to creatures without eliminating the principle of His transcendence. In one of the readings quoted from *Tarjuman al-Mustafid*, QS al-Hadid [57] : 4, "And He is with you, wherever you are" is used as a basis for explaining God's togetherness with creatures, but this togetherness is still limited by the principle of *ghayriyyah*, so that God is not melted into nature and nature does not rise to become God, this shows that the orientation of his interpretation is not polemic, but rather adaptive and controlled theological mediation.

Based on this conceptual framework, this study argues that the orientation of *Turjuman al-Mustafid* should be understood as an adaptive intellectual response to the socio-religious realities of 17th-century Aceh. Unlike previous studies that generally emphasize textual genealogy, translation techniques, or exegetical methodology, this article situates the tafsir within the broader configuration of religious discourses that characterized the Aceh Sultanate. Therefore, the novelty of this study lies not only in discussing *Turjuman al-Mustafid* as an important historical work, but also in demonstrating that its interpretive orientation was actively shaped by the interaction between theological contestation, political authority, and the educational needs of Muslim society. By integrating textual analysis with socio-historical interpretation, this study offers a more comprehensive explanation of why the tafsir took its particular form and how it functioned within its historical context.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to examine *the orientation of interpretation. Turjuman al-Mustafid* through the socio-historical

context of 17th-century Aceh. In this study, the orientation of interpretation is not understood as a synonym for *the style of interpretation*, *manhaj*, or *method*, but rather as the direction of intellectual tendencies that shape the goals, priorities, and ways in which an interpreter interacts with the Qur'an. In line with the standardization of terms proposed in the study of the science of interpretation, *al-ittijâh* is used to indicate the style or direction of the tendency of interpretation, while *al-manhaj* or *al-tharîqah* is used to indicate the method of interpretation in general, and *al-uslûb* for more specific interpretation techniques. Thus, the focus of this study is not on the discussion of the method of interpretation in the technical sense, but on the orientation that underlies the interpretative choices of Abd al-Rauf al-Sinkili. This framework is also in line with studies that place the orientation of interpretation as a realm related to *the hadaf of interpretation* and *the tsaqafah of the mufasssir*, namely the purpose of interpretation and the intellectual background of the mufasssir which together contribute to shaping the tendencies of an interpretation. Based on that, this study aims to explain how the religious dynamics of Aceh, the intellectual position of al-Sinkili, and the polemic context of *wahdat al-wujūd* contributed to the formation of Turjuman al-Mustafid's interpretive orientation as a mediative, adaptive, and non-polemical interpretation.

B. Results and Discussion

1. Intellectual Biography of Abd al-Rauf al-Sinkili

The intellectual biography of Abd al-Rauf al-Sinkili cannot be understood merely as the life story of a scholar, but must be placed within the socio-historical context of 17th-century Aceh, which was experiencing a contestation of religious authority. (Amelda, 2025) During this period, the Aceh Sultanate was the most important Islamic intellectual center in Southeast Asia, closely connected to a network of scholars in Mecca, Medina, Yemen, and other Middle Eastern regions. Along with the development of this scientific network, Aceh also faced sharp theological debates regarding the doctrine of *wahdat al-wujūd*, especially after the development of the thoughts of Hamzah Fansuri and Syamsuddin al-Sumatrani, followed by Nuruddin al-Raniri's harsh criticism of the teaching. (Rahman, 2018) This situation formed an intellectual landscape that not only brought together various Islamic

scientific traditions, but also gave rise to the need for a scholar figure capable of bridging the tension between the authority of sharia, Sufism, and the socio-religious stability of the kingdom.

In this context, Abd al-Rauf al-Sinkili emerged as a figure possessing both intellectual legitimacy and political-religious authority. Born in Singkel around 1615 CE and died in 1693 CE, he received his early education in Aceh before undertaking nearly two decades of *riḥlah 'ilmiyyah* to various centers of Islamic scholarship in Yemen, Jeddah, Mecca, and Medina. (Afrianti, 2016) This experience brought him into contact with a network of international scholars, particularly Ahmad al-Qusyashi and Ibrahim al-Kurani, who were known to develop a synthesis between sharia and Sufism. From these two teachers, al-Sinkili acquired a scientific framework that did not contrast the exoteric and esoteric dimensions of Islam, but placed them in a complementary relationship. This intellectual tradition later became an important foundation in shaping his perspective when he returned to Aceh and was appointed mufti of the Aceh Sultanate. (Zainuddin et al., 2024)

Al-Sinkili's position as a mufti put him directly in contact with the social impact of *the Wahdat al-wujūd polemic*. Unlike Hamzah Fansuri, who openly articulated metaphysical doctrines, or al-Raniri, who carried out confrontational rejections, al-Sinkili occupied a more moderate and reconciliatory position. Several studies show that he did not reject the concept of *Wahdat al-wujūd* absolutely, but reinterpreted it by asserting that God is the only *al-wujūd al-ḥaqīqī*, while nature is only a manifestation (*tajallī*) that remains ontologically distinct from God. Thus, al-Sinkili's intellectual orientation was not directed at winning one side in the polemic, but rather at presenting an acceptable theological formulation without sacrificing the principles of the faith of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah. (Ali & Faruqi, 2025).

This intellectual position later found its textual expression in *Turjuman al-Mustafid*. Although this work largely adopts classical tafsir traditions such as *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, *Anwār al-Tanzīl* by al-Bay ḍ ā w ī, and *Lubāb al-Ta'wīl* by al-Khāzin, al-Sinkili's interpretive choices show a different tendency. In verses related to the relationship between God and creatures, such as QS al-Ḥadīd [57]:4, QS al-Baqarah [2]:115, and a number of verses on attributes, he does not develop speculative metaphysical explanations as in the philosophical wujūdiyyah tradition, but delivers a concise, communicative

interpretation, avoiding language that could trigger theological controversy. (Nabilata, 2022) This choice shows that his interpretive strategy is not solely determined by the classical sources he uses, but also by the socio-religious context of Aceh which demands stability after the long debate regarding *wahdat al-wujūd*.

Therefore, the intellectual biography of Abd al-Rauf al-Sinkili in this study is understood not as a stand-alone historical description, but rather as a basis for explaining the formation of *Turjuman al-Mustafid's tafsir orientation*. The interaction between the Middle Eastern ulama network, his academic experience, his position as mufti of the Aceh Sultanate, and the dynamics of the *wahdat al-wujūd* polemic shaped his interpretive direction which tended to be mediative, adaptive, and non-polemical. Thus, the tafsir orientation found in this study is a consequence of the dialectic between the historical context, the intellectual authority of the exegete, and the interpretive strategy chosen to answer the needs of 17th-century Acehnese society.

2. Socio-Historical Conditions of Society

The social conditions of a society are a crucial factor in determining the direction in which a work of interpretation emerges. In the context of 17th-century Aceh, *Turjuman al-Mustafid* did not exist in a vacuum, but rather amidst a society undergoing religious consolidation, a struggle for scholarly authority, and intense doctrinal debate. During the reigns of four sultans: Shafiyyah al-Din, Nur al-Alam Naqiyyah al-Din, Zakiyyah al-Din, and Kamalat al-Din, Aceh remained a political and intellectual center of Islam, connected to a network of Middle Eastern scholars. (Arifin, 2015) In such a situation, the interpretations born in Aceh served not only as explanations of the meaning of the Qur'an, but also as a response to the socio-religious needs that were developing within its society. (Siraj, 2020)

The existence of the Sufi order network in Aceh strengthens the influence of Sufism in the religious life of the community. This Sufi tradition cannot be separated from the history of the entry of Islam into the archipelago, because the spread of Islam in this archipelago occurred through various channels, including trade, marriage, politics, and especially Sufism. (Johns, 1993) In many studies, the Sufi path is seen as one of the most effective factors because its disseminators were also scholars who brought spiritual authority,

experience of the Sufi order, and a high ability to adapt to culture. (Tjandrasasmita, 2009) Therefore, it is reasonable that Aceh later developed as a very fertile region for mystical thought and traditions of religious knowledge with a Sufi character.

In its development, Aceh became one of the main centers of discourse on *wahdat al-wujūd* in the archipelago. The thoughts of Ibn 'Arabi and al-Jili strongly influenced the spiritual landscape in this region, especially through figures such as Hamzah Fansuri and Syamsuddin al-Sumatrani. (Solihin, 2005) The teachings of wujūdiyyah that they brought emphasized the unity of the existence of God, nature, and humanity, and created tension between the dimensions of sharia and mystical reality. This tension did not stop as a theoretical debate, but developed into a real intellectual conflict, even leading to the condemnation of some of their works and followers. (Lintang et al., 2025) Thus, the historical context of Aceh at that time was not a neutral context, but rather a field of contestation that greatly determined the direction of subsequent religious thought.

This polemic was significant because it shaped the intellectual space that Abd al-Rauf al-Sinkili later encountered when he returned to Aceh and assumed the position of mufti. Unlike his harsh polemical stance, al-Sinkili displayed a mediative and reconciliatory bent. Several studies indicate that he did not reject *wahdat al-wujūd* outright, but rather reconstructed it more carefully while still affirming God's transcendence. (Nabilata, 2022)

He did not seek to win over either side directly, but rather sought a formulation that could mitigate the conflict and maintain socio-religious stability. This position is important because it shows that al-Sinkili was not merely a witness to the history of the wujūdiyyah polemic, but an intellectual actor who actively responded to it through more moderate religious choices. (Affan, 2023) This response is also evident in the way al-Sinkili constructed a religious discourse that was more acceptable to the wider community. On the one hand, he utilized a Sufi framework familiar in the Acehese tradition, including the discourse of the seven dignities and the idea of emanation; on the other hand, he did not allow that framework to drift too far into metaphysical speculation.

Therefore, *Turjuman al-Mustafid* does not appear as a polemical interpretation, but rather as an interpretation that combines religious education, easy-to-understand explanations, and theological prudence. The choice of Jawi Malay, the conciseness of the explanations, and the tendency not to open up space for sharp debates show an interpretative orientation that is general, adaptive, and non-polemical. This pattern is in line with the observation that al-Sinkili's interpretation was built to answer the needs of the Acehnese people who needed religious guidance that could bridge sharia, Sufism, and social stability. (Huda, 2016) Thus, the socio-historical conditions of 17th-century Acehnese society not only became the general background for the birth of *Turjuman al-Mustafid*, but also became a determining factor in the formation of its interpretative orientation.

The political-religious dynamics, the power of the Sufi tradition, the wujūdiyyah polemic, and the public's need for accessible Islamic teachings shaped the space in which al-Sinkili worked as a scholar, mufti, and interpreter. (Daudi, 1978) From this perspective, *Turjuman al-Mustafid* must be read as a product of the interaction between historical context and intellectual strategy. This interpretation does not merely explain the verses of the Qur'an, but also carries out the function of socio-religious mediation: presenting a communicative interpretation, maintaining distance from doctrinal confrontation, and still providing an adequate theological basis for the Acehnese society of his time.

3. Orientation of Tafsir Turjuman al-Mustafid

The study of *Turjuman al-Mustafid* must begin with its understanding as a work of interpretation born from the socio-religious needs of the 17th-century Acehnese society. A number of recent studies emphasize that this work is not merely a translation of Arabic interpretations, but rather a creative synthesis-compilation of various classical sources, especially *the Tafsir al-Khāzin*, *al-Bayḍāwī*, and *al-Jalālayn*. On the other hand, *Turjuman al-Mustafid* is also recognized as the first complete Qur'anic commentary in Malay, thus occupying an important position in the intellectual history of Islam in the Indonesian archipelago. (Nurkholilah et al., 2024) Therefore, this work needs to be read not only as an explanatory text of verses, but as an intellectual

response that seeks to transfer the authority of interpretation into the language and cultural horizon of the local community.

It is within this framework that the orientation of *Turjuman al-Mustafid's interpretation* must be understood. Research on the orientation of interpretation emphasizes that orientation is not identical to the method, style, or technique of interpretation, but rather is related to *the hadaf of interpretation* and *tsaqāfah al-mufasssir*; namely the purpose of interpretation and the intellectual background of the interpreter that shape the direction of the interpretation. Thus, when al-Sinkili chose Malay, composed a concise explanation, and directed his interpretation to the general public, these actions did not merely demonstrate the *ijmālī* or *tahlīlī* method, but showed the basic orientation of his interpretation: facilitating access to understanding the Qur'an, maintaining a connection with the authority of classical interpretation, and adapting the explanation to the socio-religious situation of Aceh.

a. Interpretation Pattern

Judging from his interpretive style, *Turjuman al-Mustafid* exhibits a general style *that* is not tied to a single pattern. Recent studies have shown that this style encompasses discussions of Ash'ari theology, Shafi'i jurisprudence, and elements of ethical Sufism simultaneously. In the manuscript itself, al-Sinkili displays an interpretation that can adapt to the content of the verse: when the verse relates to law, he provides a legal explanation; when the verse touches on faith, he pays attention to the theological side; and when the verse relates to stories, he explains the story's aspects sufficiently. (Rohmanudin & Yunus, 2023) In other words, this general pattern does not mean that his interpretation is directionless, but rather indicates that his interpretive orientation is communicative, adaptive, and not confined to a single discipline.

It is important to note that the breadth of this model should not be equated with complete neutrality. In fact, behind this breadth lies a clear orientation: positioning the Qur'an as a guide that can be read by Malay readers without losing the scholarly legitimacy of the classical tradition. Therefore, the "general" nature of *Turjuman al-Mustafid* should be read as an orientation strategy: al-Sinkili was not developing a specialized, sectoral interpretation, but rather constructing an interpretation broad enough to

meet the needs of the community's religious education while maintaining the depth of his inherited scholarship.

b. Interpretation Method

In terms of method, *Turjuman al-Mustafid* shows a combination of tahlilī and ijāmī approaches. The tahlilī method appears from the sequential interpretation of verse by verse, while the ijāmī element emerges from concise, concise and easy-to-understand explanations. Al-Sinkili also opens each surah with a short introduction which includes the name of the surah, number of verses, Makkiyah or Madaniyah status, as well as other initial information that guides the reader into the meaning of the surah. In addition, he includes an explanation of qiraat and asbāb al-nuzūl with special signs such as “*faidah*” and “*al-qisah*”, so that lay readers can still follow the flow of interpretation without missing important scientific markers. (Yusoff & Abdullah, 2005) All of this shows that the exegetical method is designed not to build polemical arguments, but rather to direct readers towards practical, orderly and educative understanding.

Al-Sinkili's method cannot be considered a definitive explanation of his interpretational orientation. Method only explains the formal workings, while orientation explains the direction, goals, and social objectives of interpretation. This is where *Turjuman al-Mustafid* demonstrates his unique character: he uses classical methodological tools but directs them toward a different goal: to broaden interpretational knowledge and make it more accessible to the people of Aceh and beyond.

c. Source of Interpretation

The debate over the sources of *Turjuman al-Mustafid* has been quite long. Some researchers see it as a translation of *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, while others consider it an adaptation of *Tafsīr al-Bayḍawī* with additions from other works. However, recent studies tend to move beyond the “translation” versus “origin” dichotomy. *Turjuman al-Mustafid* is now better understood as a compilative-vernacular work: it absorbs a number of authoritative sources, but recasts them in Malay and within a framework of religious communication appropriate to a local audience. (Azyumardi, 1994) Therefore, the issue of sources is not sufficient as a basis for assessing the quality of this commentary, because what is more important is how these sources are contextualized and directed towards the specific goals of the commentary.

Al-Sinkili's engagement with classical sources also demonstrates that he worked as a selective interpreter, not simply a copyist. He drew on the authority of the great exegetical tradition, but he did not allow that authority to stand apart from the context of 17th-century Aceh. In this way, classical sources served as legitimating material, while his interpretive orientation remained guided by local needs, socio-religious dynamics, and the intellectual situation he faced.

d. Writing system

Systematically, *Turjuman al-Mustafid* follows the order of the Mushafi, but with a distinctive format of introduction to the surah. Before interpreting the verse, al-Sinkili first explains the identity of the surah and basic information that allows the reader to understand the context of the text. After that, he interprets the verses sequentially, with concise, structured explanations and accompanied by special markers for qiraat and the reasons for the revelation of the verses. (Rahman, 2018) This pattern shows that the systematic writing in the commentary is not merely a technical matter, but part of a pedagogical strategy that supports the orientation of the commentary: communicating the meaning of the Qur'an easily, maintaining readability, and remaining within the corridor of scholarly authority.

Therefore, the writing system of *Turjuman al-Mustafid* must be understood as an instrument for realizing his interpretive orientation. This system facilitates the lay reader, but also emphasizes that al-Sinkili is not writing a polemical interpretation that emphasizes contestation, but rather an interpretation that educates, organizes knowledge, and expands public access to the Qur'an. This is in line with research that presents al-Sinkili as a moderate figure who does not make accusations when faced with mystical debates, but still positions himself in a different position from al-Raniri and directs the interpretation towards a calmer theological compromise.

Overall, the study of *Turjuman al-Mustafid* shows that the orientation of al-Sinkili's interpretation is general, adaptive, and non-polemical. This work does use the tahlili method and ijma'i elements, utilizes classical tafsir sources, and is structured with an orderly systematic; however, all of these formal elements are directed towards a more fundamental goal, namely presenting the Qur'an as religious knowledge that can be understood by the Malay-Acehnese community in a socio-religious context that is currently

shrouded in tensions over the discourse of *wahdat al-wujūd*. Thus, the discussion of the structure, sources, methods, and systematics of *Turjuman al-Mustafid* shows that the orientation of al-Sinkili's interpretation does not stop at the technical level of interpretation, but is directed towards a broader goal: presenting the Qur'an in a form that is communicative, mediative, and relevant to the Acehnese community in the 17th century.

Within the framework of the orientation of interpretation as *ittijâh al-mufasssir*, which links the purpose of interpretation with the intellectual background of the interpreter, the reading of *Turjuman al-Mustafid* needs to be continued to the verses that directly show how al-Sinkili negotiates the relationship between God and nature. Therefore, the following section no longer reviews the general character of interpretation globally, but focuses on key verses that in the discourse of *wahdat al-wujūd* function as the clearest place for the emergence of al-Sinkili's reconciliatory attitude, especially QS al-Ḥadid [57]:4, QS al-Baqarah [2]:115, Al-Isra' [17]:85, Al-Furqān [25]:45. These verses become the entry point to read how al-Sinkili affirms the togetherness of God with creatures, but still maintains the principle of transcendence through the concept of *ghayriyyah* and non-polemical interpretation.

4. Key Verses as Traces of Interpretive Orientation

This section presents several key verses as entry points for reading *Turjuman al-Mustafid's tafsir orientation*. These verses were not chosen randomly, but rather because they all relate to the relationship between God and nature, divine unity, and the affirmation of the limits of God's transcendence. Within this framework, al-Sinkili's reading is not intended to construct open-ended metaphysical speculation, but to reorganize the meaning of the Qur'anic verses so that they remain on a reconciliatory, communicative, and non-polemical path. Thus, the following verses demonstrate how al-Sinkili's tafsir orientation works practically: affirming monotheism, maintaining an ontological distance between al-Ḥaqq and creatures, while simultaneously opening up a space of understanding that is acceptable to Malay-Acehnese readers.

a. QS al-Ḥadīd [57]:4

The text used in this reading is:

وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ

“And He is with you wherever you are.”

This verse is used as a basis for explaining God's unity with creatures, but this unity is not understood as God's merging into nature. The relation used is *ghayriyyah*, namely unity that maintains the ontological distinction between God and creatures. (Fathurrahman, 1999) This is in line with his statement.

وهو بالنسبة الى الحق كالظل وليس هو شيئا زائد . فالانسان على هذا ظل الحق او ظل ظله
(Fathurrahman, 1999)

Al-Sinkili asserted that true existence belongs only to God, while the universe is merely an existence dependent on Him. This view rejects the unification of God's essence with creation, as understood in some teachings of *wahdat al-wujūd*. Thus, humans remain in their position as creatures, even though they have attained the highest spiritual station. Therefore, al-Sinkili does not interpret this verse as proof of absolute immanence, but rather as an affirmation that Divine nearness does not nullify His transcendence.

b. QS al-Baqarah [2]:115

The text of this verse reads:

وَاللَّهُ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ فَأَيْنَمَا تُولُّوا فَتَمَّ وَجْهُ اللَّهِ

“And to Allah belongs the east and the west. So wherever you [might] turn, there is the Face of Allah.”

Regarding this verse, he has the following opinion:

لأن المراد بها ان العالم ليس موجودا ثانيا مع الحق مستقلا وان الله سبحانه وتعالى هو الواحد الأحد ليس معه كل شيء وهو مع كل شيء أولا وآخرا (Fathurrahman, 1999)

According to al-Sinkili, only God possesses true being, while nature and all creatures do not have an independent existence, but are entirely dependent on Him. Therefore, God's closeness to creatures cannot be understood as a union of essences or an ontological fusion, because God remains essentially distinct from His creation. This understanding is the basis for al-Sinkili's interpretation of verses concerning the relationship between God and nature,

thus he tends to avoid metaphysical interpretations that could potentially lead to the concept of the unification of being.

c. Al-Isra' [17]:85

The text used is:

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الرُّوحِ قُلِ الرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّي وَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا

They asked you (Prophet Muhammad) about spirits. Say, "The Spirit is part of the affairs of my Lord, whereas you have not been given knowledge except a little."

Regarding this verse, he has the following opinion:

من عرف بأنه أجل من أن يعرف بالإحاطة فقد عرفه... وغاية القصوى في معرفة الحق حيرة (Musadad, 2015)

In his discussion of "*wahdat al-wujūd*", Abd al-Rauf asserted that God encompasses all things, yet His essence remains beyond human comprehension. He stated that God is known through recognition (*ta'rif*), but remains obscure in terms of establishing His essence and ways (*takyīf*). Therefore, anyone who truly knows God comes to the realization that He is too great to be fully understood by reason. For al-Sinkili, the pinnacle of معرفه regarding al-Ḥaqq is not speculative certainty, but rather confusion (*al-ḥayrah*) before His holiness. This view demonstrates the tendency of negative theology in understanding God, namely when language and reason reach their limits in reaching the reality of divinity. Within this framework, al-Sinkili's ideas align with the tradition of Ibn 'Arabī who positions God as al-Ilāh al-Majhūl, that is, the Being whose essence is not fully knowable.

d. Al-Furqān [25]:45

In QS al-Furqān [25]:45, al-Singkili reads the section

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى رَبِّكَ كَيْفَ مَدَّ الظِّلَّ

"Do you not pay attention to (the creation of) your Lord? How does He lengthen (and shorten) the shadows?"

From this verse, he argues as follows:

عبارة عن انبساط النقطة الوجودية وتعيينها بتعينات الحروف والكلمات الألهية و الكونية (Fathurrahman, 1999)

In this reading, the term *al-zill* is not understood merely as a literal “shadow,” but rather as a *wujūd* that marks the process of the appearance of divine reality into the universal order. Therefore, nature is positioned as a form of *tajallī*, namely the manifestation of *wujūd*, and not as a reality that stands parallel to al-Ḥaqq. With more explicit language, al-Singkili utilizes the symbol of the shadow to show that nature has existence, but that existence is derivative, not autonomous, and completely dependent on its source. At this point, the relationship between God and creatures is maintained through the concept of *ghayriyyah*, so that the unity of *wujūd* does not turn into absolute equality or ontological fusion. (Nurkholilah et al., 2024) This reading shows that al-Singkili is not constructing wild metaphysical speculation, but rather reorganizing the meaning of the verse to remain in line with God’s transcendence and be acceptable within the horizon of the Malay-Acehnese reader.

When these four verses are read together, it is apparent that *Turjuman al-Mustafid* operates with a distinctive interpretive logic: the verses of *wahdatul wujūd* are not directed towards a harsh anthropomorphic reading, but are instead managed into theological language that maintains a balance between God’s closeness and His transcendence. This is where al-Singkili’s tafsir orientation is most clearly apparent, namely as a general, adaptive, and non-polemical interpretation. He does not construct tafsir as an open arena for metaphysical debate, but rather as a means of mediation so that the Malay-Acehnese community can understand the Qur’an easily without losing the firmness of tauhid. Thus, these key verses are not merely examples of tafsir, but the most concrete evidence of *Turjuman al-Mustafid*’s interpretive orientation itself.

C. CONCLUSION

This study shows that *Turjuman al-Mustafid*’s orientation cannot be understood solely as a result of the choice of methods or sources of interpretation, but rather as an intellectual trend shaped by the socio-historical context of 17th-century Aceh and Abd al-Rauf al-Singkili’s position as a mufti in an intellectual situation fraught with theological tension. In this context, al-Singkili does not present a polemical interpretation, but rather a mediative, adaptive, and general interpretation, with the main aim of

expanding the access of the Malay-Acehnese community to understanding the Qur'an without sacrificing the principle of God's transcendence. This orientation is clearly evident from the choice of Jawi Malay language, the conciseness of the explanation, and the tendency to direct the reader to an understanding that is easily accepted socio-religiously.

Read through key verses, this orientation shows a very clear relationship with the discourse of *wahdat al-wujūd*. In QS al-Ḥadīd [57]:4 and QS al-Baqarah [2]:115, al-Sinkili affirms God's togetherness with creatures but limits it through the principle of *ghayriyyah*, so that togetherness does not turn into ontological fusion. In QS al-Isrā' [17]:85, he emphasizes the limitations of human knowledge and the peak of معرفه as *al-ḥayrah* before God. Meanwhile in QS al-Furqān [25]:45, he reads *al-zill* as *wujūd* that marks God's *tajallī* in the universe, but still emphasizes that nature is only a shadow, not a stand-alone *wujūd*. These patterns show that *Turjuman al-Mustafid* does indeed interact with the major arguments about *wahdat al-wujūd*, but does so not in the form of polemics, but rather in the form of theological reconciliation that maintains a distance between al-Ḥaqq and creatures.

Thus, the findings of this study answer the main question of the study, namely that the orientation of *Turjuman al-Mustafid's* interpretation was shaped by the confluence of the 17th-century Acehnese context, al-Sinkili's intellectual authority, and the need to respond to the *wahdat al-wujūd* debate in a more calm and measured manner. Therefore, *Turjuman al-Mustafid* can be understood not only as the oldest complete Malay commentary, but also as a work of socio-religious mediation that presents the Qur'an in an accessible language while maintaining the foundations of monotheism and God's transcendence.

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