

# METAPHYSICAL SUFISM OF *AL-DURR AL-NAFĪS*: BETWEEN CONTROVERSY OF THE SCHOLARS AND INTEREST OF THE PUBLIC

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**Abstract:** This article discusses the controversy on the Sufi metaphysics contained in a treatise called *al-Durr al-Nafis* written by Muhammad Nafis al-Banjari, and the interest of the public in it. This study analyses a number of studies of this treatise, and it is enriched by interviews with some relevant Islamic scholars. Some Islamic scholars reject the Sufi doctrines of Muhammad Nafis on the ground that they are not in line with Islamic orthodox teachings. There are some Islamic scholars who simply say that the doctrines of the treatise are not included in the Ahl al-Sunnah camp, while others say that they are misguided and misleading. On the other hand, there are some Islamic scholars who say that the doctrines are actually orthodox, but they are only for intellectually and spiritually gifted people. Although most of the scholars suggest that the treatise should not be freely taught to, or circulated among, common people, thanks to print technology and the rise of interest in Sufism, this treatise has been more widely read in religious gatherings and circulated not only in different parts of Indonesia but also in Southeast Asia.

**Keywords:** Nafis al-Banjari; *waḥdat al-wujūd*; seven stages of being.

## Introduction

The tension between body and mind, form and content, *ḥaqīqah* and *sharīʿah*, individual and community, is a dialectic that has continuously occurred throughout Islamic history. On the one hand, this tension can lead to violent and bloody conflicts, but on the other hand, it also triggers the dynamics of Islamic thought and movement. Social, cultural, and political changes at certain times

clearly contributed to this pattern of tension. However, it is no exaggeration to say that the broad framework and issues arising from these tensions are relatively continuous.

In the field of Islamic studies, this tension is usually represented by Islamic law (*fiqh*) which places more emphasis on formal legal aspects, as opposed to Sufism which places more emphasis on substantial spiritual aspects. In addition, Sufism, which is more concerned with personal spiritual experience, is often confronted with theology (*kalām*) and philosophy, which rely more on reason and logic. The belief in metaphysical experience in Sufism is also inconsistent with the epistemology of the studies of the prophetic tradition (*ḥadīth*) which prefers more or less verifiable historical evidence. The long history of Islam provides many examples of tensions between *fiqh*, *kalām*, and *ḥadīth* scholars on the one hand, and Sufi scholars and philosophers on the other. The first party is trying to maintain the integrity of the *shari'a* as a set of orthodox teachings and practices (which are considered genuine, true, and in accordance with what was taught by the Prophet), while the second party is concerned that religion will lose its soul if it is always seen from the point of view of formal *shari'a* laws.

Perhaps the work of the Andalusian philosopher, Ibn Ṭufayl (1105-1185) entitled *Ḥayy b. Yaqẓhān* can provide an illustration of how this tension occurred. In this philosophical fiction, Ḥayy is described as a solitary human who lives in the forest alone from infancy to adulthood in a deer's care. However, by using his mind, Ḥayy was finally able to find a belief in the existence of God and the existence of a spiritual realm. Then Ḥayy meets Asal, a Sufi who happens to be secluded in the forest, where Ḥayy lives. The two met, and after a long interaction, finally realized that the truth discovered by Ḥayy was in line with the truth discovered by Asal. The two of them then agreed to leave the forest to preach to the community. They met with Salaman, a prominent *fiqh* scholar. They fight, and there was no common ground. Finally, Ḥayy and Asal returned to the forest, spending the rest of their lives.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Ibn Ṭufayl, *Ḥayy b. Yaqẓhān*, ed. 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Banānī, 1982).

About two centuries earlier, the Eastern Muslims, had experienced more serious tensions and actually happened in history, not just fictional stories. It is narrated that a Sufi named Ḥusayn b. Maṣṣūr al-Ḥallāj (858-922) said, “Ana al-Haqq” (I am the Truth) so that he was accused of having *ḥulul*, believing that God can occupy human beings (incarnation), or *ittiḥād*, believing in the unification of God and human. History records that al-Ḥallāj was sentenced to death for his ‘arrogance.’ However, not a few scholars regretted the incident because they considered that al-Ḥallāj was not heretical. His words must be seen as an unconscious expression (*shataḥāt*) when he was intoxicated with God, and therefore his words cannot be taken literally.<sup>2</sup> Apart from the figure of al-Ḥallāj, a figure who caused a lot of controversies, especially after his death, was Muḥy al-Dīn b. ‘Arabī (1165-1240). To his admirers, he is the ‘Great Teacher’ (*al-shaykh al-akbar*), sultan of saints (*sultān al-awliyā*), and seal of saints (*khātām al-awliyā*). On the other hand, for those who oppose him, he is accused of heresy and even infidel and *ẓindīq*. Ibn ‘Arabī’s controversial teaching, called *waḥdat al-wujūd*, is believed by his supporters to be a high level of monotheism, while his opponents consider it to be counter to the true teachings of monotheism.<sup>3</sup>

As it is well understood, Islam entered the archipelago mainly through the hands of the Sufis, and this coincided with the intensification of the Sufi movement in the Islamic world, namely around the 13th century. It is therefore not surprising that controversies regarding Sufi teachings also occur in the archipelago. In the oral tradition in Java, we know of a character named Syekh Siti Jenar who, like al-Ḥallāj, was convicted by Walisongo, the nine saints. In the Banjar community, there is also information from the oral tradition that Abdul Hamid Abulung

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<sup>2</sup> For an overview of al-Ḥallāj, see Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, 1975), 62-77. For debates on Sufism issues in modern times, see Elizabeth Sirriyeh, *Sufis and Anti-Sufis: The Defense, Rethinking and Rejection of Sufism in the Modern World* (London: Routledge, 1999).

<sup>3</sup> For a review of the polemic about the teachings of Ibn ‘Arabī in the Middle Ages, see Alexander D. Knysh, *Ibn ‘Arabī in the Later Islamic Tradition: The Making of a Polemical Image in Medieval Islam* (Albany: State University of New York, 1999).

was also convicted of heresy by Muhammad Arsyad al-Banjari (1710-1812) because of his views similar to that of al-Ḥallāj. Even though written historical data about all this information is very difficult to trace, we cannot regard the information that is circulated orally in the community as a passing wind without any meaning at all. Moreover, history shows that in Aceh in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Nūr al-Dīn al-Rānirī (d. 1658) attacked the teachings of Hamzah Fansuri, a 16<sup>th</sup>-century Sufi, whom he criticized as heretical and even *ẓindīq*.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the controversial discourse on the metaphysics of Sufism, especially the teachings of *waḥdat al-wujūd* also spread to the archipelago, at least since the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

In the Banjar community, who formally embraced Islam in the 16<sup>th</sup> century through Sultan Suriansyah, there are also Sufi writings that follow the *waḥdat al-wujūd*, one of them is the work of Muhammad Nafis al-Banjari entitled *al-Durr al-Nafis*. It is difficult to trace the life history of Muhammad Nafis except through this work alone. From this work, it is concluded, among other things, that his teachers were partly the same as those of Arsyad al-Banjari and ‘Abd al-Ṣamad al-Palimbānī, but he does not mention Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Karīm Sammān al-Madanī (1719-1775) except as ‘teacher of our teachers’ or ‘*al-marḥūm*’.<sup>5</sup> This shows that he is younger than Arsyad al-Banjari because he did not have the opportunity to meet ‘Abd al-Karīm Sammān in person, but had studied with the caliph of Muḥammad Sammān, namely Ṣiddīq ‘Umar b. Khān. Moreover, we do not know how far the influence of Muhammad Nafis al-Banjari in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Banjar society, and whether he was one of the figures behind the *Baratib Baamal* movement that helped Prince Antasari in the Banjar War or

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<sup>4</sup> Sayyid Muhammad Naquib al-Attas has devoted attention to studying this issue in his MA thesis at McGill University, “Rānirī and the Wujūdiyyah of 17<sup>th</sup> Century: A Critical Study of Nūr al-Dīn al-Rānirī’s Refutation of Hamzah Fansuri’s Mystical Philosophy based on Rānirī’s Ḥujjat al-Ṣiddīq li Daʿ al-Zindīq and Tibyān fī Maʿrifat al-Adyān and Other Malay Sources” (Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, 1962), and his PhD thesis at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London in 1966, which was later published entitled *The Mysticism of Hamzah Fansuri* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya, 1970).

<sup>5</sup> Abdul Muthalib, “The Mystical Thought of Muhammad Nafis al-Banjari: An Indonesian Sufi of the Eighteenth Century (MA Thesis, Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, 1995), 20-21.

not.<sup>6</sup> Even whether he was in the land of Banjar at that time or not, we cannot say for sure.

However, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the existence of the Sufi treatise, *al-Durr al-Nafis*, seems to have received quite serious scrutiny from various circles of scholars. In his paper at a seminar on “Strengthening the Study of Sunni Sufism in South Kalimantan,” H. Djanawi (1922-2004), a prominent Islamic scholar in Amuntai, noted that in the Dutch period, *al-Durr al-Nafis* was forbidden to study. This was also stated by Hawasy Abdullah, a scholar from West Kalimantan.<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, neither Hawasy Abdullah nor H. Djanawi mentioned the source of this information and the exact time of the ban. More specifically, H. Djanawi stated that Tuan Guru H. Muhammad Khalid (1858-1963), Tangga Ulin, Amuntai, told him that *al-Durr al-Nafis* contained errors. In fact, it is said that Tuan Guru H. Muhammad Khalid once seized the treatise when a religious gathering was studying it at the Muara Tapus Mosque, Alabio, in 1937.<sup>8</sup>

Perhaps, the pros and cons regarding the teachings of Sufism contained in *al-Durr al-Nafis* among scholars began at the beginning of the 20th century as mentioned by H. Djanawi above. Hawash Abdullah himself mentioned that when he was preaching around in West Kalimantan in 1972, he met an Islamic scholar who forbade people to study *al-Durr al-Nafis*. The scholar has actually never read *al-Durr al-Nafis*, but holds the fatwa of a group of Islamic scholars who accuse the book of being heretical.<sup>9</sup> In addition, at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, two scholars from

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<sup>6</sup> Martin van Bruinessen estimates that Nafis was the first to spread the Samaniyah Order in South Kalimantan, and the *Baratib Baamal* movement during the Banjar War was the Samaniyah Order based on the argument that Prince Antasari's son was named Gusti Muhammad Seman. See Martin van Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren dan Tarekat* (Yogyakarta: Gading, 2012), 380-382.

<sup>7</sup> Hawasy Abdullah, *Perkembangan Ilmu Tasawuf dan Tokoh-Tokohnya di Nusantara* (Surabaya: Al-Ikhlâs, 1980), 110.

<sup>8</sup> Djanawi, “Beberapa Ajaran Kitab Tasawuf Wahdatul Wujud yang Tidak Sejalan dengan Ajaran Tasawuf Ahlussunnah,” in the Report on Stenghtening Sunni Sufism in South Kalimantan, 26-27 March (Banjarmasin: IAIN Antasari, 1986), 6.

<sup>9</sup> Abdullah, *Perkembangan Ilmu Tasawuf*, 110.

Hulu Sungai Utara, H.M. Hamdan Khalid (1936-2019)<sup>10</sup> and H. Abdullah Hanafiah or known as ‘Abdullah Anggut’ or ‘Abdullah Gawang’ also wrote a critical review of this treatise.<sup>11</sup>

On the other hand, the positive view of this book, and the interest in studying it, never fades. The proof is the result of research by the IAIN Antasari Team in 1984/85, which showed that *al-Durr al-Nafis* is still used by some scholars in teaching Sufism in the Banjar community.<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, scholarly studies of *al-Durr al-Nafis* also continued to be carried out by scholars who in public life also played the role of ulama and community leaders such as the thesis of M. Laily Mansur (1937-1998),<sup>13</sup> the scholar who had been the Dean of Ushuluddin Faculty of IAIN Antasari and Head of the Regional Office of the Ministry of Religion of South Kalimantan Province; thesis of M. Ilham Masykuri Hamdi,<sup>14</sup> a religious preacher and interfaith activist who is the son of a prominent scholar, Rafi’ie Hamdie (1940-1990), the founder of the Cadre Education Institute for Practical Da’wah (LPKDP) in Banjarmasin; the MA and PhD theses of Ahmadi Isa (1948-2015) who served as Chairman of the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI) of Central Kalimantan Province from 2013 to 2015,<sup>15</sup> as

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<sup>10</sup> Hamdan Khalid, “Pertemuan Ulama Kab HSU Agenda Khusus Dialog Kitab Ad-Durrun Nafis.” A paper, dated 12 September 2000.

<sup>11</sup> Abdullah Hanafiah, “Kerancuan Isi Kitab Ad-Durrun Nafis,” a papar dated 28 Mei 2001. I have not found the biography of this man yet. Nevertheless, it is clear that he was a contemporary of Hamdan Khalid.

<sup>12</sup> Tim Peneliti Fakultas Ushuluddin, “Misticisme di Kalimantan Selatan,” Proyek Pembinaan Perguruan Tinggi Agama Islam (Banjarmasin: IAIN Antasari, 1984/1985). Likewise, interest in a treatise containing similar teachings, which was written by a descendant of Muhammad Arsyad al-Banjari, namely Abdurrahman Siddiq (1859-1939) entitled *Risalah Amal Ma’rifah*, also did not subside. A fairly early study of this treatise was Jamhari Arsyad’s thesis entitled “Risalah Amal Ma’rifah, Tinjauan atas Satu Ajaran Tasawuf” (Fakultas Ushuluddin IAIN Antasari, Banjarmasin, 1985).

<sup>13</sup> Laily Mansur, *Kitab Ad Durrun Nafis: Tinjauan Atas Suatu Ajaran Tasawuf* (Banjarmasin: Hasanu, 1982).

<sup>14</sup> M. Ilham Masykuri, “Ajaran Tasawuf Syekh Muhammad Nafis al-Banjari” (Skripsi Fakultas Ushuluddin IAIN Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta, 1989).

<sup>15</sup> Ahmadi Isa, “Ajaran Tasawuf Syekh Muhammad Nafis al-Banjari dan Pendapat Ulama di Kabupaten Hulu Sungai Utara” (Master’s Thesis–IAIN Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta, 1990); and his PhD thesis at IAIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta in 1996 which was published as a book entitled *Ajaran Tasawuf Muhammad Nafis dalam Perbandingan* (Jakarta: Srigunting, 2001).

well as the theses of two academics namely Hadariansyah,<sup>16</sup> lecturer at UIN Antasari, and Abdul Muthalib,<sup>17</sup> lecturer at UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta.

As we will see, since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the use of *al-Durr al-Nafis* as a text to be studied in religious gatherings seems to have increased, especially after the publishing process became easier thanks to computer and internet technology. Apart from that, the transliteration into the Roman alphabet also seems to have helped spread this book more widely, not only in Kalimantan but also in Java, Sumatra, Malaysia, and Singapore. The social, economic, political, and cultural crises as well as the opening of space for local identity in Indonesia in the Reformation Era after the fall of Suharto in 1998 seem to have prompted greater attention to the character of Muhammad Nafis as a saint as well as the author of the treatise of Sufism that needs to be studied.

There are at least two previous studies regarding the controversy of the teachings of Muhammad Nafis among scholars. The first is the MA thesis of Ahmadi Isa at IAIN Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta entitled “Teachings of Sufism of Syeikh Muhammad Nafis al-Banjari and Opinions of Ulama in Hulu Sungai Utara” in 1990.<sup>18</sup> The second is research carried out by three of us, namely Bahran Noor Haira, Murjani Sani, and myself entitled “Pros and Cons of the Teachings of Sufism of *al-Durr al-Nafis* among Banjar Ulama” in 2013.<sup>19</sup> This article is a second representation of the study, with additional data enrichment that I found, both from written sources and interviews. I also enrich our previous studies by looking at the presence of *al-Durr al-Nafis* in the public sphere, from the problem of the absence of a critical edition to the circulation of this treatise in the present century and the location of Nafis’ grave in Kelua, Tabalong Regency. All of this ultimately shows how classical religious discourse can continue

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<sup>16</sup> Hadariansyah, “Hakikat Tauhid dalam Tasawuf Syeikh Muhammad Nafis al-Banjari: Studi Terhadap Kitab al-Durr al-Nafis” (MA Thesis--IAIN Arraniry, Banda Aceh, 1993).

<sup>17</sup> Muthalib, “The Mystical Thought.”

<sup>18</sup> Isa, “Ajaran Tasawuf.”

<sup>19</sup> Bahran Noor Haira, Murjani Sani and Mujiburrahman, “Pro Kontra Ajaran Tasawuf Kitab al-Durr al-Nafis di Kalangan Ulama Banjar” (Research Report--IAIN Antasari Banjarmasin, 2013).

to exist through tradition as discourse, which, as Talal Asad said, continues to be maintained, developed, and transmitted in a network of power relations.<sup>20</sup>

### No Critical Edition Yet, and So How to Read It?

One of the targets of people's criticism of *al-Durr al-Nafis* is a number of mistakes in quoting verses from the Qur'ān. Critics do not seem to understand that the printed edition of a classic book is based on a handwritten alias manuscript, which in Arabic is called *nuṣṣḥah*, and in Indonesian, it becomes 'naskah.' It is quite possible that a work was copied by different people, so the results are partly different. Especially if the copy did not have time to be checked by the author directly. This seems to have happened to *al-Durr al-Nafis*. As a solution, usually an expert conducts a critical study of existing manuscripts, compares them with one another, then determines which copy is considered appropriate.<sup>21</sup> Unfortunately, until now, as far as I know, no one has conducted this study. Therefore, this is a challenge as well as an opportunity for scholars to track down existing manuscripts to study and publish a critical edition.

In my search for print editions, I came across an 'oldest' edition that appeared in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which is kept and well preserved in the library of the University of Leiden, The Netherlands. On the cover is written *Legaat Prof. Dr. Snouck Hurgronje* (grant of Prof. Dr. Snouck Hurgronje). This edition was published by al-Mīriyah publisher, Bulāq, Egypt in 1302 H or 1885 CE. If we compare it with Muhammad Nafis' statement that he finished writing this treatise in 1200 H which means 1785 CE, then this edition was published exactly one hundred years later after the work was completed by the author.

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<sup>20</sup> Talal Asad, *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam* (Washington: CCAS Georgetown University, 1986).

<sup>21</sup> I only found one photo of the manuscript of this treatise, which is kept by the Jambi State Museum with Registration Number 07.032 which consists of 120 pages with 19 lines per page. There are very likely other manuscripts that can be used as study materials to publish a critical edition.



One of the highlights is the statement on the front of this edition, which clearly illustrates that the *al-Durr al-Nafis* manuscripts that existed at that time partly contradict each other.

Let me tell you, O you who are concerned with this treatise, that all the manuscripts of this treatise partly contradict one another, and I do not know which one is in line with the original text of the author. So I enclose in this text that I have stamped for things that are more beautiful and compatible (*munāsabah*), and I will not reduce anything from one of the several manuscripts out of caution (*iḥtiyāt*). God knows best.<sup>22</sup>

The statement above shows that before going to print, the printer had made *taṣḥīḥ* or *taḥqīq* (editing) efforts by studying the manuscripts in his hands. Unfortunately, the print edition did not show, as in modern studies, the differences in the copies, origins, and ages of the manuscripts in the editor's hands. On page four of this text, a marginal note is found, which gives a little idea of how the editor stuck to the existing manuscript, even though he himself suspected that there was an error there.

He said *ahl al-minnah*, that's the case with all the manuscripts that are in my hands, and hopefully, it is an alteration of the term '*ahl al-sunnah*' because that is reasonable, and the same is said in the translation below, that is, having sunnah.<sup>23</sup>

The next question is, who is the person who edited the manuscript? In this text, I did not find the name of that person. However, coincidentally, clues were found in Hawasy Abdullah's book, which stated that it was Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Zayn b. Muṣṭafā al-Fatanī who edited it. He got this information from a person named Syamsuddin from Trengganu of Patani descent, who wrote a thesis on *al-Durr al-Nafis* at the University of Malaya.<sup>24</sup> Who is Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Zayn? Hawasy Abdullah mentioned that he was the person who was entrusted with editing Malay Islamic books in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which were published in the al-Miriyyah Publisher in Mecca, Egypt, and Turkey, which were

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<sup>22</sup> See the title page of Muhammad Nafis al-Banjari, *al-Durr al-Nafis fī Bayan Waḥdat al-Af'āl, wa al-Asmā', wa al-Ṣifāt, wa al-Dhāt, Dhāt al-Taqdīs* (Bulāq: Maktabah al-Miriyyah, 1302 H/1885 CE).

<sup>23</sup> Nafis, *al-Durr al-Nafis* (al-Miriyyah edition, 1302 H/1885 CE), 4.

<sup>24</sup> Abdullah, *Perkembangan Ilmu Tasawwuf*, 111-112.

fully supported by the Turkish Sultanate at that time. Hawash Abdullah, who is also known as Wan Muhammad Shaghir Abdullah, is one of the grandchildren of Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Zayn, who still keeps a number of manuscripts by Indonesian scholars, which he inherited.<sup>25</sup>

In contrast, if we look at the text published by al-Haramain, which was also used by Ahmadi Isa in his dissertation, we will find that the front page of this edition also mentions a statement similar to that of al-Mīriyah's:

Warning. The manuscripts of this treatise are different, not all the same. Because we did not get the original version (handwritten by the author himself), then we print this treatise according to the manuscripts that we have, and it is well-guarded when we print it.<sup>26</sup>

I have not investigated further, whether the al-Haramain edition is actually exactly the same as the al-Mīriyah edition, or is it different, and if there is a difference, whether the difference is significant or not. This study is certainly important because this treatise continues to be studied by Muslims, especially in Southeast Asia. Thus, philological studies of *al-Durr al-Nafis* are still wide open.

How do we react to the print edition that has been circulating, even though it is not a critical edition? Both the pros and cons realized that the print edition that was circulating contained some errors. The difference is, for those who are against these errors show that this treatise cannot be held, some even doubt the competence of the author. For example, Islamic scholars of Hulu Sungai Utara (HSU) district clearly state that their rejection of *al-Durr al-Nafis* is solely based on the text that has been printed and circulated in the community, and "rules out the possibilities of misprint, wrong language, the connotative meaning, or it is just the

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<sup>25</sup> Abdullah, *Perkembangan Ilmu Tasawuf*, iii-iv.

<sup>26</sup> Isa, "Ajaran Tasawuf," 34. See also Muhammad Nafis al-Banjari, *al-Durr al-Nafis fi Bayān Waḥdat al-Af'āl, wa al-Asmā', wa al-Ṣifāt, wa al-Dhāt, Dhāt al-Taqdīs* (Singapore: al-Haramain, n.d.), title page.

language that is wrong/erroneous.”<sup>27</sup> I will discuss their criticisms of *al-Durr al-Nafis* further in the following sections below.

While the pros, they choose a cautious attitude based on the benefits of the doubt and the possibility of mistakes not being made by the author but by the copyist. For example, Ahmadi Isa stated:

Based on the presumption of innocence or the benefits of the doubt towards Sheikh Muhammad Nafis al-Banjari, the errors contained in the arguments presented, such as inaccurate or incomplete verse writing, and even Sufi words are considered Hadith, perhaps due to printing errors or errors when copying from the original manuscript, and it is recognized by the printer/publisher that what they print is not the original handwriting of the author.<sup>28</sup>

In line with Ahmadi Isa is the view of the charismatic Islamic Banjar scholar, Tuan Guru H. Zuhdiannor (1972-2020), fondly called ‘Guru Zuhdi.’ He emphasized that we should be kind to the author, but at the same time, he went into more detail about what he meant by being kind. First, if there is an error in the copying of a verse of the Qur’ān, then we should assume that it is not the author's fault, but the copyist's. It is sufficient to correct this error by returning to the text of the Qur’ān which we all hold together. For example, a verse of the Qur’ān quoted in one of the printouts of the treatise reads *wallāh bi kulli shay’in muḥīṭ*, whereas the correct one in the Qur’ān is *wa kāna Allāh bi kulli shay’in muḥīṭā*. For cases like this, let's just return to the correct text of the Qur’ān. We are kind enough to think that it was just a typo/copy error, not the author's intention to change the verses of the Qur’ān. Second, on the basis of the benefits of the doubt, Guru Zuhdi argues, for every sentence in *al-Durr al-Nafis* which is classified as *mutashābihāt* (vague meaning), then we should choose the possibility (*iḥtimāl*) of interpretation which does not contradict orthodoxy, not the other way around, immediately to say that it is wrong. Even if we do not want to choose orthodox understanding, then at least we open up opportunities for the possibility of that

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<sup>27</sup> MUI HSU, “Kesimpulan Pandangan Majelis Ulama Indonesia Hulu Sungai Utara tentang Kitab Ad-Durrun Nafis Karangan Syekh Muhammad Nafis bin Idris al-Banjari” (dated 6 July 2010), 9.

<sup>28</sup> Isa, “Ajaran Tasawuf,” 117.

understanding, by using a hypothetical word, “if the intention is like this, then it can be accepted, but if the meaning is like that, then it is rejected.” Third, when it comes to quotations from other books, and the sentences in Malay are not clear enough to understand, it would be best for us to check back to the original Arabic sources. Thus, our understanding will be more accountable.<sup>29</sup>

### It is Difficult to Understand

In addition to not having a critical edition yet, *al-Durr al-Nafis* does discuss complicated issues surrounding metaphysics in the thoughts and experiences of Sufism, known as *waḥdat al-wujūd*, a term attached to the teachings of Ibn ‘Arabī.<sup>30</sup> However, the metaphysics of Sufism written by Muhammad Nafis is another derivative, namely that which was conceptualized by a scholar from India named Faḍl Allāh al-Burhanfūrī (d. 1620), who in 1590 authored a short but concise treatise entitled *al-Tuḥfat al-Mursalah Ilā Rūḥ al-Nabī*.<sup>31</sup> In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, at least before 1630, this work was already circulating in the archipelago, especially in Aceh and there was concern that it would cause misunderstanding. Because of this, the Islamic scholars of the archipelago asked a major scholar in Medina who came from Kurdistan named Ibrāhīm b. Ḥasan al-Kuranī (1616-1690)<sup>32</sup> to write a commentary (*sharḥ*) on the work. After weighing and asking God’s guidance through prayer (*istikḥārāh*), al-Kuranī agreed to the request so he wrote a

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Tuan Guru Haji Zuhdiannor, 26 July 2016.

<sup>30</sup> It should be noted that the term *waḥdat al-wujūd* was actually never used by Ibn Arabī, but by his student and adopted son named Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī (1207-1274). However, the most vociferous use of this term in the Middle Ages was by the critic of Ibn ‘Arabī, Ibn Taymīyah (1263-1328). See Claude Addas, *Mencari Belerang Merah, Kisah Hidup Ibnu Arabī*, trans. Zaimul Am (Jakarta: Serambi, 2004), 299, footnote number 87 and page 333.

<sup>31</sup> The Arabic text of the treatise was published in A.H. Johns, *The Gift Addressed to the Spirit of the Prophet* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1965), 128-137.

<sup>32</sup> Perhaps one of the students and friends from the archipelago was ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf Singkel (1615-1693). After returning to Aceh, ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf continued to exchange letters with al-Kuranī. See A.H. Johns, “Friends in Grace: Ibrahim al-Kuranī and ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf Singkel,” in *Spectrum: Essays Presented to Sutan Takdir Aljashbana on His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. S. Udin (Jakarta: Dian Rakyat, 1978), 469-485.

book entitled *Ithāf al-Dbakī bi Sharḥ al-Tuḥfat al-Mursalah Ilā al-Nabī*.<sup>33</sup> In addition to explaining the metaphysical view of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, al-Burhanfūrī's work presents a teaching called "*martabat tujuh*," namely seven stages of being, from God to nature and humans. It is this teaching of the *martabat tujuh* that becomes one of the main points of discussion on the controversial *al-Durr al-Nafīs*.

As a metaphysical thought, neither the teachings of *waḥdat al-wujūd* nor the seven stages of beings are easily understood by ordinary people, even by the educated, who are not familiar with such thoughts. Because it is natural that Muhammad Nafīs said that he was asked by his friend to write *al-Durr al-Nafīs*, the purpose of which is to help those who do not know Arabic enough. "That I made for him a treatise condensed in the gentle Jawi language in order to benefit him with those who do not know Arabic."<sup>34</sup> Apart from that, Muhammad Nafīs emphasized that his treatise was not addressed to ordinary people, but to *rāsikh* scholars, who have a depth of knowledge.

You know that all the knowledge that this poor author mentions in this treatise is a secret that is very subtle, and its words are also very deep, no one knows it except the scholar who is *rāsikh*, namely the one who is consistent, and light follows his words because it is the secret of the prophets and saints, and who inherit those who practice the things practiced by the prophets beyond their special attributes (as prophets), and follow what they know...and there is no permission from religion to tell it to all people, and it cannot be understood except by scholars, and that religion does not allow to open it and present it to the people who are not competent as previously mentioned because their minds cannot reach it.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> A critical edition of this treatise and its translation into Indonesian which is enriched with a biographical account of al-Kurani has been realized by Oman Fathurrahman's study, *Ithāf al-Dzakī: Tafsir Waḥdat al-Wujūd bagi Muslim Nusantara* (Bandung: Mizan, 2012).

<sup>34</sup> Muhammad Nafīs al-Banjari, *al-Durr al-Nafīs fī Bayān Waḥdat al-Af'āl, wa al-Asmā', wa al-Shifāt, wa al-Dẓāt, Dẓāt al-Taqdīs* (Surabaya: Maktabah Sa' ad bin Nashir bin Nabhan, tth), 2.

<sup>35</sup> Nafīs al-Banjari, *al-Durr al-Nafīs* (Edition of Maktabah Sa'ad bin Nashir bin Nabhan), 27-28.

For some scholars who are against this treatise, Muhammad Nafis' attitude is self-contradictory. If the knowledge contained in *al-Durr al-Nafis* is not for ordinary people, why did he write it in Malay? Would not it be better in Arabic so that not many people can access it? "Are there *rāsikh* scholars who do not master Arabic?" asked the Islamic scholars from HSU, Amuntai, H. Abdullah Hanafiah.<sup>36</sup> But perhaps, when Muhammad Nafis wrote his work, the concern was not too big because there were still very many illiterate people at that time. Moreover, other Nusantara scholars also wrote about these teachings in Malay, such as 'Abd al-Ṣamad al-Palimbānī (1704-1789), Syamsuddin Sumatranī and Abd al-Ra'uf Singkel (1615-1693).<sup>37</sup> Nafis is actually a younger generation and is only following in the footsteps of his seniors. In addition, it seems that for Sufis like Nafis, the quality of a person's spirituality is not only based on their religious knowledge but mainly on the religious experience itself. People who are considered qualified to understand high-level Sufi teachings are not only smart and knowledgeable but what is more important is to live and experience the Sufi life itself.

On the other hand, precisely because this treatise was written in Malay (Jawi), and the author affirmed it as a high-level teaching, the public's interest in it, including the laity, grew. People may be curious about how knowledge is called high and 'ultimate.' Especially among the Banjar people, high knowledge, which is sometimes called '*patikaman*,' is often the talk of the town, thus encouraging people to hunt for it. As we will see, when education becomes more massive, and more and more people are literate in Malay, the obstacles to reading this treatise are automatically removed. Furthermore, when interest grew, while many people were more familiar with the Roman alphabet, attempts arose to transliterate this treatise into the Roman alphabet, or at the same

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<sup>36</sup> Abdullah Hanafiah, "Kerancuan Isi Kitab Ad-Durrun Nafis" (Makalah 28 Mei 2001), 1.

<sup>37</sup> One of Abd al-Ra'uf Singkel's works on the metaphysics of Sufism which has been transliterated and translated into English is *Daqā'iq al-Hurūf*. See AH Johns, "Daḳā'iq al-Hurūf by Abd al-Ra'uf of Singkel" *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* No.1/2 (April, 1955), 55-73; and No. 3/4 (October, 1955), 139-158.

time adapt it into Indonesian. As a result, the spread of this treatise is difficult to stem.

In the 18th century, Abd al-Samad al-Palimbani in *Sayr al-Sālikin*, actually tried to make a guideline about different levels of Sufi literature. According to him, there are three levels of people studying Sufism,

namely *mubtadi* (beginner), *mutawassit* (intermediate), and *muntahī* (advanced). For him, the works of Ibn ‘Arabī and al-Jīlī belong to the advanced, the highest level. Therefore, those who teach and those who learn must really meet the requirements. Teachers who teach this type of literature must be “teachers who become spiritual guides, who know the knowledge of the essence by intuition (*dhawq*) and *ḥāl* (spiritual state of mind), not by words or statements, so the literature will undoubtedly benefit them.”<sup>38</sup> Apart from that, the teacher must assess whether his students deserve to learn it or not. The true teacher usually forbids certain students from studying the books of Sufism at the highest level because,

... seeing that his students will be short-sighted to understand the problems contained in all the books of the knowledge of the essences, because someone who is short-sighted is not free from two things: first, he perceives the meaning of the Sufi statements in the opposite direction of what they really mean, so if he practices them, he will perish; secondly spending his age in studying the issues of the knowledge of essences without benefiting him, then that is in vain...<sup>39</sup>

However, if the teacher sees that his student fulfills the requirements, then teaching the knowledge of essences will be beneficial to him.

As for someone who has an intelligent mind and understands what is good, who can select what is wrong and right, and who has a strong faith, he can benefit from all of our books containing the knowledge of essences, and he takes and gets from them whatever he wants.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> ‘Abd al-Ṣamad al-Falimbānī, *Sayr al-Sālikin*, Vol. 3 (Singapore: al-Haramain, n.d.), 185.

<sup>39</sup> Al-Falimbānī, *Sayr al-Sālikin*, Vo. 3, 185.

<sup>40</sup> Al-Palimbānī, *Sayr al-Sālikin*, Vol. 3, 185

‘Abd al-Ṣamad then quoted ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī who said that quite a number of Persians, Indians, Arabs, and Turks met such conditions (intelligent, able to distinguish between right and wrong, and had the strength of faith).

However, ‘Abd al-Ṣamad’s optimism faded in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the eyes of a Patani scholar named Zayn al-‘Ābidīn b. Muḥammad al-Faṭṭānī. In his treatise which is still being studied, especially in several religious gatherings in South Kalimantan, *‘Aqīdat al-Nājīm* (its writing was completed in 1308 H/1891 CE), he emphasized that there are no more people who are experts in understanding and teaching the doctrines of the seven stages of beings:

Shahdan. It is not obligatory to learn the doctrine of the seven stages of beings because there are no experts nowadays. So it should be abandoned because it is very deep in its conceptualization, so we do not know what it means, and sometimes it outwardly violates the shari’a, then inwardly it is innocent, but we do not understand its inner meaning, then we understand it outwardly anyway, then it leads to destruction. Because of that, some of the books of the early generation were abandoned because there were no experts who taught them and explained their meaning in Arabic lands such as Mecca and Medina, especially the land of Jawi, because this knowledge seemed to be dead. God knows best.<sup>41</sup>

Thus, the Indonesian scholars of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries had a careful view of the study of Sufi metaphysics such as the teachings of *waḥdat al-wujūd* and the seven stages of being, both of which are the core teachings of *al-Durr al-Nafīs*. As we will see below, this caution is shared by 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century Banjar scholars, especially those who are sympathetic to this teaching. As for those who oppose and reject it, of course, they strictly prohibit the teaching of this treatise to the public.

### **Critical Views: It is Not Ahl al-Sunnah or Even Heresy**

Critical and counter views on the Sufi teachings of *al-Durr al-Nafīs* range from those who simply point out the difference

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<sup>41</sup> Zayn al-‘Ābidīn b. Muḥammad al-Faṭṭānī, *‘Aqīdat al-Nājīm* (Singapore: al-Haramain, n.d.), 88.



between the teachings of Muhammad Nafis and Sunni Sufism which are considered orthodox, to those who firmly state that *al-Durr al-Nafis* contains heretical teachings and misleading. The following are some of the opposing views.

*Sufism of al-Durr al-Nafis is not Ahlussunnah*

M. Laily Mansur's thesis entitled *Kitab Ad Durrun Nafis: Tinjauan atas Suatu Ajaran Tasawuf* addressed three main questions, namely (1) what are the main points to study Sufism in it?; (2) what arguments did he put forward?; (3) what is the similarity with the previous understandings of Sufism and philosophy?<sup>42</sup>

In the first part, Laily Mansur describes Muhammad Nafis' thoughts about a *sālik*, a person who seeks God under the guidance of a Sufi master. In order to reach God, the seeker must protect himself from disobedience to God, both physically and spiritually. Among the bad characters hindering the journey to God are *kasal*, which means lazy, *futur*, which is weak in performing worship, and *malal*, meaning bored. While those that hinder the success of the spiritual journey include: *shirk kebafi*, namely polytheism hidden in the heart, *riya'* or showing off, *sum'ah*, namely wanting to be heard by people so that he or she will be praised, *'ujub*, namely being proud and exaggerating one's own worship, forgetting that it is God's grace, *sakat*, meaning to stop because he or she looks at worship from him or herself, and *hijab* means to be walled off because he is fascinated by the beauty of worship, then forgets God. Apart from going through this Sufi route, to reach God, Laily Mansur also quotes Muhammad Nafis who explains that there is another possibility, namely what is called *majdhūb*. This type of person is someone who is taken or pulled directly by God to be able to know Him without having to go through the process of Sufi route, master guidance, diplomas, and so on. He or she automatically attains gnosis because of God's grace.

Furthermore, it is explained that the person who succeeds in going through the process of Sufi route will reach the position of *'arifin*, that is, people who know God in true monotheism. This

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<sup>42</sup> Mansur, *Kitab Ad Durrun Nafis*. The description below is a summary of this book.

monotheism is none other than the four kinds of monotheism, namely monotheism in actions, names, attributes, and essence. In addition to the matter of monotheism, Laily Mansur also elaborated on Muhammad Nafis' view of the existence of the universe, which is the appearance (*tajallī*) and descent (*tanẓīl*) of the Absolute Being. This is where the concept of the seven stages of being and *Nūr Muḥammad* appears. The seven stages of being includes *Aḥadiyyah*, *Waḥdah*, *Wāḥidiyyah*, *‘Ālam Arwāḥ*, *‘Ālam Mithāl*, *‘Ālam Jism* and *‘Ālam Insān*. As for *Nūr Muḥammad* or *al-Ḥaḥiqah al-Muḥammadiyah*, in the description of Muhammad Nafis, it is in the second stage, namely the stage of *Waḥdah*.

According to Laily Mansur's analysis, the Sufi teachings of Muhammad Nafis appear to be in line with the teachings of Ibn ‘Arabī and al-Jīlī, known as the *waḥdat al-wujūd*. As for comparison, the Sufi stations explained by Nafis are different from those mentioned by al-Ghazālī and al-Qushayrī such as repentance, patience, gratitude, reliance, love, and so on. The theory about the existence of the universe is also not found in al-Ghazālī and al-Qushayrī, but is in the thought of Ibn ‘Arabī. Laily Mansur also cites several opinions of Sufis regarding the nature of monotheism such as al-Junayd al-Baghdādī and al-Kalābidhī, who both emphasize a clear and firm distinction between nature and God, between the Creator and the created. In essence, God is not at all the same and similar to anything. Meanwhile, according to Laily Mansur, Nafis considers this kind of monotheism to be still at the common level, while the monotheism he describes is at a higher level, namely for the *khawās* (specials). Once again, according to Laily Mansur's analysis, this view is in line with Ibn ‘Arabī and al-Jīlī.

Laily Mansur also saw similarities between the teachings of Nafis and philosophy, both Islamic philosophy and neo-Platonism in the theory of creation. In Islamic philosophy there is known the theory of emanation (*naẓḥariyyat al-faidh*) from Ibn Sina and al-Farabi, which explains the process of creating the universe through delegation or emanation, so that creation does not mean from nothing to being, but from being to being. Laily Mansur also cites similar views, which can be found among other Sufis of the archipelago such as Hamzah Fansuri, Syamsuddin Sumatrani and Abd al-Samad al-Falimbani. However, Laily Mansur did not

mention al-Burhanfuri's work, *al-Tuhfat al-Mursalab ila Rûb al-Nabiy*, or its commentary written by Ibrahim al-Kurani.

As for Nûr Muhammad's theory, according to Lalily Mansur, it is actually not something new. This theory originated with al-Hallâj, then was developed by the Shia community, especially from a text (authoritative text) attributed to Ja'far Sâdiq. For the Shiites, the theory of Nûr Muhammad can provide legitimacy for their imams, who are considered to have inherited this Nûr. On the other hand, this theory also has parallels with the logos theory in Stoic philosophy to Christianity. This issue was discussed further by Laily Mansur when he examined the validity of the arguments that underpin the doctrine of Nûr Muhammad, including the interpretation of related verses of the Qur'an.

In addition to reviewing the history of thought, Laily Mansur tries to compare Muhammad Nafis' interpretations of various verses or hadiths with the opinions of other scholars. Several verses that seem "all in God" such as al-Anfâl:17, al-Shâffât 96, and others, were indeed interpreted by Muhammad Nafis to confirm his *wahdat al-wujûd* teachings. Meanwhile, Laily Mansur tries to refute Nafis' interpretation by comparing it to other interpretations from scholars such as al-Khâzin, Yûsuf Mûsa, al-Baidhâwî, al-Marâghî, al-Râzî to the interpretation of al-Manâr by Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Ridha. In essence, the interpretations quoted by Laily Mansur always emphasize the difference between God and creatures, not melding the two.

Likewise, the doctrine of Nûr Muhammad which is based by Nafis on the verse *Laqad jâ'akum minallâhi nûrun wa kitâbun mubîn* (al-Maidah: 15) by Laily Mansur is interpreted not as Nûr Muhammad, but an allegory for the Prophet's message dispelling the darkness of error with the light of guidance. Laily Mansur also quoted Rashid Rida who stated that there were similarities between Nûr Muhammad and the Christian view, which regards Jesus as the image of an invisible God. Likewise, the hadiths about Nûr Muhammad, which are cited in five versions by Muhammad Nafis, according to Laily Mansur, are classified as *maudhû'* (fake) hadiths as stated by Ahmad Abd al-Qâdir al-Sanqithi. Laily Mansur also cited the opinion of other scholars, namely Sayyid Sâbiq (1915-

2000) and Rashid Ridha (1865-1935) who considered the hadith of Nûr Muhammad narrated by Jabir as invalid.<sup>43</sup>

After analyzing the treatise as a whole, in conclusion, Laily Mansur finally emphasized, "Even though Muhammad Nafis claims that his theology is to follow Imam Ash'ari, Al-Junaïd, and to follow the Sufi Order of Abdul Qadir Jailani, his system and conception of Sufism do not belong to Ahlussunnah Waljamaah."<sup>44</sup>

Although it is not surprising, almost all of the arguments put forward by Laily Mansur above were also put forward by a number of Islamic scholars of Hulu Sungai Utara (HSU) in refuting *al-Durr al-Nafis* as noted by Ahmadi Isa in his thesis.<sup>45</sup> This is presumably because the interview that Ahmadi Isa conducted with 12 HSU scholars was held in January 1990, eight years after the publication of Laily Mansur's work. Most likely, this work has been circulated and read by HSU Islamic scholars, especially since Laily Mansur is from the same district.

### B. *Dangerous and Perverted Treatise*

In a Seminar on "Sunni Sufism in South Kalimantan" in 1986, organized by the Ushuluddin Faculty of IAIN Antasari, H. Djanawi made many sharp criticisms of *al-Durr al-Nafis*. He claims that he has studied this treatise along with several of his friends for more than three years, and found three types of errors: mistakes that damage the faith, mistakes that become sins, and mistakes that do not damage the faith, nor do they become sins. Here we focus more on the statements in the treatise, which he considers to deviate from the true creed. The main issues raised are mainly related to the difference between creatures and God and the responsibility of humans in carrying out Shari'a. H. Djanawi expressed his concern about the phenomenon of studying Sufism in society, which tends to ignore the Shari'a, as a result of studying the knowledge of essences as conceived by *al-Durr al-Nafis*.

H. Djanawi noted as many as 16 statements in *al-Durr al-Nafis* which he said were problematic. In general, H. Djanawi criticized Muhammad Nafis' statements which seemed to ignore

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<sup>43</sup> Mansur, *Kitab Ad Durrun Nafis*, 36-37.

<sup>44</sup> Mansur, *Kitab Ad Durrun Nafis*, 61.

<sup>45</sup> Isa, "Ajaran Tasawuf Syekh Muhammad Nafis," 118-183; 197.

the Shari'a such as (1) "evil in appearance but not in essences like *kufr* and disobedience"; (2) "but when we claim during our stay under the divine veil that all our deeds back to us, then God associates them with us according to that claim." In addition, he also criticizes statements that obscure the difference between humans and God, such as (1) "no doubt he will see that all universe is the divine self"; or "and again he sees God as the essence of all universe" (2) "all of the three stages of being are eternal". In fact, Nûr Muhammad is in the second stage, which means eternal, without beginning.

According to H. Djanawi, this kind of Sufi teachings can be dangerous, because they can make people leave the pursuit of worldly life, and religious practices, not be afraid of, and have no regrets about committing sins and think that all things are God. According to him, *wahdat al-wujûd* is unacceptable. What is acceptable is *wahdat al-shuhûd* (witnessing the unity). He seems to understand that *wahdat al-wujûd* is a pantheistic view, which considers that everything that exists is God without distinction at all. In fact, according to him, *wahdat al-wujûd* is none other than *wahdat al-shuhûd*, namely "the end of the journey of the '*ârifîn* ... is not a matter of intention, not a matter of will, nor is it a matter of teaching or philosophy, but it is a matter of intuition which happens suddenly after that person has succeeded in attaining the state of annihilation (*fanâ*)'."<sup>46</sup> In addition, H. Djanawi also emphasized that "Nur Muhammad does not mean 'light', but it is an essence that God has made his will and named it Nûr,"<sup>47</sup> an understanding that is actually in line with the view of the Sufis. But for Djanawi, declaring that Nûr Muhammad is eternal is the same as assuming that the Nûr does not depend on God. If so, then God is no longer a God on whom everything depends (*iftiqâr mâ sinallâh*).

As for H. Abdullah Nafiah (Abdullah Gawang), in his paper entitled "Confusion in the Contents of Ad-durrun Nafis" dated 28 May 2001, he recorded 219 statements in the treatise, which he considered to be deviant or inappropriate. H. Abdullah not only highlights sentences that he considers contrary to orthodoxy as stated by H. Djanawi above, but also points out what for him are

<sup>46</sup> Djanawi, "Beberapa Ajaran Kitab Tasawuf Wahdatul Wujud", 17.

<sup>47</sup> Djanawi, "Beberapa Ajaran Kitab Tasawuf Wahdatul Wujud", 14.

grammatical errors, and the internal contradictions of this treatise.<sup>48</sup> In addition, H. Hamdan Khalid's paper (1936-2019), dated 12 September 2000, criticized *al-Durr al-Nafis* by quoting several sentences in it, then judged it based on Islamic books which are considered authoritative.<sup>49</sup> It appears that the writings of H. Djanawi, H. Abdullah Hanafiah, and H. Hamdan Khalid were the origin of the MUI HSU Fatwa in 2010. This is not surprising since they are prominent figures of HSU Islamic scholars.

Therefore, it is sufficient here to quote several important statements from the HSU MUI Fatwa dated 6 July 2010.<sup>50</sup> This fatwa expressly says that *al-Durr al-Nafis* is not in line with the Ahlussunah Waljamaah doctrines "so it is prohibited to study and teach it. To believe in its contents will lead to misguidance and disbelief." This fatwa then emphasized that the heretical teachings contained in *al-Durr al-Nafis* were *jabariyah*, *wahdat al-wujūd*, *bulūl*, and heretical philosophies. There are also errors in the formulation of the sentences, giving rise to contradictions or inexplicable errors.<sup>51</sup>

The *jabariyah* concept, according to this fatwa, is evident in the statement of *al-Durr al-Nafis* which considers all human actions to be mere *majāzī* (metaphorical) because all of these actions are essentially acts of God.<sup>52</sup> The fatwa then quoted several scholars who opposed *jabariyah* views such as Muhammad Arsyad al-Banjari in *Tuhfat al-Rāghibīn* who considered *jabariyah* to be a kind of disbelief (*kufr*), Muhammad Abu Zahrah (1898-1974) in *Tārīkh al-Madẓāhib al-Islāmiyyah* who explained that *Jabariyah* views human actions as metaphorical, the views of *Syarqāwī 'ala al-Hudbudī* by Abdullah Syarqāwī (1737-1812), the decisions of Majma' al-Buhūts

<sup>48</sup> Hanafiah, "Kerancuan Isi Kitab Ad Durrun Nafis."

<sup>49</sup> Khalid, "Pertemuan Ulama Kab HSU Agenda Khusus Kitab Ad-Durrun Nafis."

<sup>50</sup> MUI HSU, "Kesimpulan Pandangan". This text is not entitled 'fatwa' and is not written in the fatwa format that is common for the MUI, but it is clear that the conclusion of this text is a fatwa. The format is more *to the point* by presenting an analysis of the text of *al-Durr al-Nafis* and comparing it with the opinions of the scholars, plus several attachments. The total is 14 pages.

<sup>51</sup> MUI HSU, "Kesimpulan Pandangan," 1.

<sup>52</sup> "The way to see all these actions from God is to be seen and witnessed by his eyes and with the eyes of his heart that all actions come from God, and to associate them with anything other than God is metaphorical, not in essence..." Nafis, *al-Durr al-Nafis* (Sa'ad bin Nashir bin Nabhan edition), 4.

al-Islâmiyah, Egypt, and the *Tuhfat al-Murîd Syarh Jawharat al-Tawhîd* by Ibrahim bin Muhammad al-Bâjûrî (d.1860), all of them rejected Jabariyah. It is perhaps not a coincidence that, with the exception of Muhammad Arsyad, all of the scholars quoted here are Egyptian figures from al-Azhar,<sup>53</sup> and what is referred to are the books of Islamic theology or Kalam.

Apart from that, various pieces of evidence also indicated that *al-Durr al-Nafis* contains the teachings of *wahdat al-wujûd*. The quotes are taken from pages 8, 9, 13, and 16, all of which show Nafis' statement that the true essence of all that exists is God. Furthermore, the fatwa also quotes Nafis' statement about the universe as a manifestation (*maẓhar*) of God, and that a person who believes in God in his attributes will not see and hear except with God's sight and hearing. According to the fatwa, in the first part Nafis follows Ibn 'Arabi's *wahdat al-wujûd*, while in the second, he follows the theory of *bulûl* of al-Hallâj. This kind of doctrine, according to the fatwa, is considered disbelief (*kufî*) as stated by Arsyad al-Banjari in his *Tuhfat al-Râghibîn*. Likewise, it is mentioned in *Taqrîb al-Ushûl* by Ahmad Zaini Dahlan (1816-1886). The latter is mentioned quoting Sheikh Muhammad Ramli's statement (d. 1596) that followers of *wahdat al-wujûd* are apostates, must be killed, and their dead bodies should be thrown to the dogs. Their disbelief is more serious than Judaism and Christianity. Furthermore, the opinion of Imam al-Sayûthî (1445-1505) in *al-Hâwî li al-Fatawâ*, which states that the adherents of *bulûl* are infidels, also Nâsir al-Dîn al-Tûsî (1201-1274) in *al-Luma'* which emphasizes *bulûl* is a form of disbelief. There is also the opinion of Abd al-Wahhâb Ibn Ahmad al-Sha'rânî (1493-1565) quoted from *Lathâ'if al-Minan*, who stated that his brother named Afdal al-Dîn said, "if I am a judge and someone says nothing exists but God, I will surely behead him."

With regard to the cosmological doctrines, more specifically about Nûr Muhammad, MUI HSU emphasized that the teaching was "a lie and made up". This doctrine, according to the fatwa,

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<sup>53</sup> In addition to these books being popular in Indonesia, many Indonesian Islamic scholars are alumni of al-Azhar, Cairo, including the HSU MUI Advisory and Fatwa Council Chairman who signed this fatwa, namely Tuan Guru H. Muhammad Hamdan Khalid.

originated with Mansur al-Hallâj, then was continued by the Shiites, and is in line with al-Farabi's theory of emanation. Finally, he quoted *al-Dasûqi 'alâ Umm al-Bârâhîn* by Muhammad al-Dasûqî (d. 1814) which emphasized that the existence of something is *not* born or born of God, namely it is not a part of Him or arises from Him, and therefore, God is different from all temporal things.

This fatwa further shows several statements by Nafis which are considered contradictory. In the beginning, Nafis wrote that he composed a treatise, but at the end of the treatise he stated, *waqad kâna al-farâghu min tarjamati hâdzih al-risâlah*. According to the fatwa, this is a contradiction, because at first he said he was composing, but then he said he was translating. In this regard, the MUI's assessment appears to be inaccurate because the word '*tarjamah*' in Arabic does not only mean to translate, but also to introduce.

According to this fatwa, another contradiction in *al-Durr al-Nafîs* is the use of Malay instead of Arabic in writing this book, even though it is addressed to excellent scholars, not ordinary people. As has been quoted above, this criticism was originally raised by Abdullah Hanafiah and apparently also included in this fatwa. Contradiction is also found by the fatwa on Nafis' statement that *kufr* and disobedience are inherently good because they come from a good God. However, in another part, he states that *kufr* and disobedience are considered evil because religion comes to denounce them. The question is, doesn't religion also come from God? If religion, which comes from God, denounces *kufr* and disobedience, the conclusion should be that *kufr* and disobedience are not good. Then why did Nafis say, in essence, *kufr* and disobedience are good?

Then, the fatwa found several statements by Nafis related to the interpretation of several verses of the Qur'an that were not in line with the interpretations of the Islamic scholars. For example, *wa mâ yu'minu aktsaruhum billâhi illâ wa hum mushrikûn*, which Nafis interprets as "And most of them do not believe (in God) while they are associating others with Him because they look at other beings." Also, his interpretation of *walillâh al-mashriq wa al-maghrib, faainamâ tuwallî fatsamma wajhullâh*, "For God only the East and the West, and whatever is facing you, is the being of God." Some of these interpretations have also been criticized by Laily Mansur above. The fatwa also objected to Nafis' statement that in



the Qur'an and Hadith there is no statement that God has attributes. There are only God's names. This is considered by the MUI to have deviated from the creed because in the Qur'an there are many verses mentioning the attributes of God such as knowing, willing, living, and powerful. Then the opinion of Nu'aim Ibn Hammâd was quoted in *Faht al-Majîd* by Nawawî al-Bantani (1813-1897) that those who deny what God has attributed to Him are infidels.

This fatwa finally gave additional information. *First*, the fact that the Amuntai scholar and national figure, Idham Chalid (1922-2010), wrote the preface to the 'translation' of *al-Durr al-Nafîs* by KH Haderanie HN (1933-2008), does not mean that he agreed with its contents. In the introduction, Idham clearly stated that he had not read the contents. *Secondly*, as already mentioned, this fatwa is based on the circulating text of *al-Durr al-Nafîs*, without taking into account the possibility of typographical or language errors. Also not considered the psychological and sociological aspects influencing the writing of the book. The reason is, "all of these things ... on the plains of the general public is not discussed." *Third*, it is recommended that Muslim community should adhere to the books of Sufism that have been held by scholars such as *Marâqî al-'Ubûdiyyah* by Nawawi al-Bantani, *Risâlah Mu'âwanah* by Abdullah bin Alwi al-Haddad (1044-1132H), *Kifâyatul Atqiyâ* 'by Abu Bakar Ibn Sayyid Muhammad Syathâ' (1849-1892), *Minhâjul 'Âbidîn* and *Ihyâ' 'Ulûm al-Dîn* by al-Ghazali (1058-1111), and *Penawar Bagi Hati* by Abdul Qadîr al-Mandili (1910- 1965).<sup>54</sup>

If we examine the books referred to by this fatwa to reject *al-Durr al-Nafîs*, it appears that the majority are the Sanusiyah versions of the Islamic theology of the Asy'ariyah school, that is the Ash'ari theology formulated by scholars from Algeria, Muhammad Ibn Yûsuf al-Sanûsî (1428-1490) whose work has been popular in the archipelago, especially among the Banjar community of South Kalimantan.<sup>55</sup> This Islamic theology places great emphasis on the transcendence of God, who is unlike

<sup>54</sup> MUI HSU, "Kesimpulan Pandangan," 9.

<sup>55</sup> See Mujiburrahman, "Islamic Theological Texts and Contexts in Banjarese Society: An Overview of the Existing Studies" *Southeast Asian Studies* Vol.3 No.3 (December 2014), 611-641.

anything and cannot be grasped by human reason so the distinction between God and creatures is very clear and firm. This is certainly different from the Sufi perspective which does not only emphasize God's transcendence but also His immanence, namely God's closeness and presence in the lives of creatures. In addition, there are indeed similarities between the views of Muhammad Nafis and Muktazilah on the nature of God.<sup>56</sup> Nafis' argument, however, is that the Qur'an and Hadith do not explicitly mention the word 'attribute', but rather 'name'.<sup>57</sup> In addition, the teaching of the seven stages of being supposes that the transcendent substance of God in the first stage is indeed pure and absolute, where substances and names are indistinguishable.

In addition to referring to the books of Islamic theology, several books of Sufism are also referred to. This seems more serious as an argument. If we think of it more closely, the fatwa attacks are aimed at the *wahdat al-wujūd*, which is understood as pantheism, *ḥulūl* which is understood as a kind of incarnation, and Jabariyah which is understood as fatalism so that it ignores human responsibility. The problem is, is it true that the teachings of Muhammad Nafis were pantheistic and/or the same as *ḥulūl* (incarnationism) as alleged? Likewise regarding accusations of following the Jabariyah sect. Is it true that Muhammad Nafis

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<sup>56</sup>In fact, the attitude of the early medieval Muslims was still relatively open to the Mutazilah. A tough attitude seems to begin to develop after Muhammad bin Yusuf al-Sanūsī sharply criticized the views of the Muktazilah in his work, *Umm al-Barāhīn*, which was then recommended by Egyptian and Indonesian scholars who have been influential until now. For a study of this issue, with a focus on the issue of the attributes of God, see Mohd Fakhruddin Abdul Mukti, "The Background of Malay *Kalām* with Special Reference to the Issue of the *Ṣifāt* of Allah" *Afkar: Journal of 'Aqidah & Islamic Thought* Vol. 3 No.1 (2002), 1-32.

<sup>57</sup>"There is nothing in the Qur'an and Hadith that says that God has attributes, and only that which appears in the Qur'an and Hadith is names." In addition, Nafis said, "The rational argument, namely the reason that God, if He has attributes, would surely be that He is unknown (*majhūl*), because there is nothing that has attributes except that which is unknown." Nafis al-Banjari, *al-Durr al-Nafis* (Maktabah Sa'ad bin Nashir bin Nabhan edition), 10. Perhaps the meaning of Nafis' statement is that 'name' indicates the identity of something, while 'attribute' is only a description of something. Thus, the name indicates that something is recognized, whereas the attribute is necessary to describe what is not recognized.

taught Sufism which ignored the Shari'a and human responsibilities? I think we can doubt these assumptions. However, as we have seen, the fatwa ignores these various possibilities for fear that people will only understand the text of *al-Durr al-Nafis* literally so that what emerges is pantheism, incarnationism, and fatalism. It is said that, some people do fall into these notions when studying this treatise.

### Neutral to Sympathetic Views

In addition to critical and counter views, we also find views that are neutral to sympathetic towards *al-Durr al-Nafis* in particular, or the teachings of *wahdat al-wujūd* in general. From these researchers, there were also those who tried to place *al-Durr al-Nafis* within the framework of the level of monotheism according to previous Sufis, so that they concluded that the contents were for a high level, as recognized by Muhammad Nafis himself.

#### *A. Views that Tend to be Neutral*

In general, the descriptive study by M. Ilham Masykuri Hamdi at IAIN Jakarta and Abdul Muthalib's thesis at McGill University can be considered as neutral.<sup>58</sup> Neutral here means neither supporting nor blaming, but academically describing and analyzing the contents of *al-Durr al-Nafis*. The main goal is to understand what has been written by Muhammad Nafis, not to assess or judge whether his teachings are right or wrong, distorted or not.

Perhaps what is more interesting is the attitude of the Banjar Islamic scholars when they discuss this issue in a seminar. In the Seminar on Sufism at IAIN Antasari in 1986, there were at least two papers that were more careful not to pass judgment on the teachings of *wahdat al-wujūd* as *heresy*, namely from M. Saberan Afandi (born 1942), doctor of hadith who graduated from Umm al-Qur'ā, Mecca, and Noor Salim Safran (1952-2001) who is also alumni of the same university, but only up to the undergraduate level. According to Saberan Afandi, it is not easy to accuse believers of having the views of *wahdat al-wujūd*, *ḥulūl* and *ittihād* as heretical. He also made a parable:

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<sup>58</sup> See Masykuri, "Ajaran Tasawuf", and Muthalib, "The Mystical Thought"

If, for example, a daily newspaper or magazine contains news that one or several Muslim scholars or intellectuals, lecturers at IAIN Antasari Banjarmasin, have gone astray because they follow *wahdat al-wujūd* or *bulūl*, we think that not everyone, whether ordinary people or intellectuals, will easily accept the news like that.<sup>59</sup>

Then, someone should be very cautious if the accusation is directed to Ibn Arabi who is popularly known as *al-Syaikh al-Akbar* (the Great Teacher) and *Muhy al-Dīn* (the person who revived religion), who had great thinking power and amazing intellectual creativity. According to Saberan Afandi, it is true that some of his works contain things that are doubtful and hint at *wahdat al-wujūd* (perhaps he means pantheism), but many of his works also order and emphasize the teachings of monotheism and adherence to Shari'a, as said by Ibn 'Arabi: 'never release sharia from your hands, you should immediately practice the Shari'a laws.'" Saberan Afandi also emphasized that Shihāb al-Dīn al-Allūsī (1802-1854) in his Qur'anic Exegesis, *Rūh al-Ma'ānī* quoted many of Ibn 'Arabi's thoughts and stated that Ibn 'Arabi and his followers were apart from *bulūl* and *ittibād*. According to Afandi, many Sunni scholars defended Ibn 'Arabi such as Zakaria al-Ansārī (1420-1520), Murtadā al-Zabidī (1732-1790), 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sha'rānī (1493-1565), Jalāl al-Dīn al-Sayūthī (1445-1505) and others. However, there were those who opposed him, such as Ibn Taimiyah (1263-1328) and his followers.<sup>60</sup>

Saberan Afandi said, al-Sayūthī mentioned<sup>61</sup> that it was the Christians who first popularized the *bulūl* and *ittibād* teachings. Among wise people, no one thinks of such heresy because their hearts are pure and they are safer from such impossible accusations. Some extreme Sufis (*ghulāt al-mutasannifāh*) also claim *bulūl* and *ittibād*, and if this is true then their kufr is more than Christians. Still according to al-Sayūthī, said Afandi, the best

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<sup>59</sup> Afandi, "Makalah Bahasan: Beberapa Ajaran Kitab Tasawuf Wahdatul Wujud yang Tidak Sejalan dengan Ajaran Tasawuf Ahlussunnah (prasaran yang disampaikan oleh K.H. Djanawī) " in Seminar Report on Strengthening Sunni Sufism in South Kalimantan, IAIN Antasari Banjarmasin, 26-27 March 1986), 3.

<sup>60</sup> Saberan Afandi, "Makalah Bahasan," 2-4.

<sup>61</sup> Here Saberan quotes the work of al-Sayūthī, *al-Hâwī li al-Fatâwâ*.

of previous generation are those who say *ana al-haq* when they are drowning and losing their minds, God lifts responsibility from such people, so that expression cannot be called a doctrine. The conclusion of al-Sayûthî is that the term *ittihâd* is *mushtarak* (contains several meanings), sometimes for reprehensible meanings such as *hulûl*. However, sometimes in terms of the Sufis it is used to mean *maqâm fanâ'* (the annihilation station). So we should not limit the meaning of the terms. This kind of term is also commonly found in hadith (prophetic tradition), nahwu (Arabic grammar) and fiqh (Islamic law).<sup>62</sup>

Furthermore, Saberan Afandi quotes Ibn al-Qayyim (1292-1350) who interpretes the term *ittihâd* with *fanâ'* and the disappearance of the desire (*irâdah*) of the person in God's will as the perfect fruit of love (*mahabbah*). According to Ibn al-Qayyim, if a person reaches a high level of annihilation, that is, annihilation from all desires, then there is nothing in his heart that compares to God's wil, so whatever God wills in Shari'a, that is what the person wills. At that time, valid union occurred, namely *ittihad fi al-murâd* (union with God's will) not *ittihâd fi al-murîd* (God union with the person).<sup>63</sup> Likewise, Saberan cites al-Ghazali and al-Qushairi who explain *fanâ'* as the loss of awareness of anything except God as absolute being, the true being. Al-Ghazali called it *fanâ'* in monotheism.<sup>64</sup>

Sufi terms that have a double meaning are actually in line with the statement of the Qur'an that there are verses with clear meaning (*muhkamât*) and there are also verses with unclear meaning (*mutashâbihât*). For those that are vague, there are two choices: *ta'wîl* (digging deeper into the meaning) or *tafwîdh* (giving up the meaning to God). Easier and safer is the second. Likewise, our attitude should be towards the *mutashâbihât* expressions of the Sufis.

Thus, the terms *ittihâd*, *fanâ'*, *wahdat al-wujûd*, *wahdat al-shuhûd* and others, are found in many Ahlussunnah books, such as *Ihyâ' Ulûm al-Dîn*, *Risâlah al-Qushairiyah* and others. So our scholars are careful in understanding them, they are kind to the authors, and they always recommend to ordinary people that they

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<sup>62</sup>Afandi, "Makalah Bahasan," 5.

<sup>63</sup>Afandi, "Makalah Bahasan," 6.

<sup>64</sup>Afandi, "Makalah Bahasan," 8-10.

are always civilized and kind to the authors of these books, *awliya'ullâh* (the saints) and *al-muttaqîn* (the pious people).<sup>65</sup>

Saberan Afandi finally quoted al-Sayûthî that the correct opinion is *to believe in Ibn Arabi's sainthood and that it is forbidden to study his works*, as it is suggested by Ibn Hajar al-Asqalânî (1372-1449H) and Abdullah al-Idrus (1393-1446H). In this regard, Saberan Afandi prohibits the public from reading *al-Durr al-Nafîs*, even though he does not explicitly state that Muhammad Nafis is one of the saints.<sup>66</sup>

Almost in line with Saberan Afandi's view is that of Noor Salim Safran. In his paper, he warned that the study of Sufism is very different from the study of other Islamic religious knowledge. The study of Sufism is of an inner or intuitive nature (*dẓawqî*) and is often expressed in the language typical of the Sufis (*ta'bîrât sufiyyah*), whose understanding requires hermeneutics and interpretation according to what they want. Because if they are in an annihilation state they lose awareness of their own existence due to the pull or invasion of Divine majesty (*al-jadẓb*). Because of that, according to him, Sufi expressions that are born contrary to the Shari'a must be interpreted because they said that was not in a conscious state. It would be very wrong if their expressions were understood in an outward way and then they were judged to be infidels or out of Ahlussunnah.<sup>67</sup>

As for the teachings of *wahdat al-wujûd*, Noor Salim tends to follow the opinion of 'Abd al-Halîm Mahmûd (1910-1978) in his work *Qadhiyyat al-Tasawwuf, al-Munqidẓ min al-Dhalâl*, a book that gives a lengthy preface to al-Ghazali's *al-Munqidẓ*. According to 'Abd al-Halim Mahmud, *wahdat al-wujûd* is not *wahdat al-maujûd*, the two are different. *Wujûd* is *masdar* which means existence, while *maujûd* means something that is found (*isim maf'ûl*). *Manjûd* are as many and varied as the heavens on earth and all of these creatures. In fact, no one among the Sufis including Ibn 'Arabi and al-Hallâj mentions *wahdat al-maujûd*, that is, that

<sup>65</sup> Afandi, "Makalah Bahasan," 9.

<sup>66</sup> Afandi, "Makalah Bahasan," 8-10.

<sup>67</sup> Noor Salim Safran, "Makalah Bahasan: Beberapa Ajaran Kitab Tasawuf Wahdatul Wujud yang Tidak Sejalan dengan Ajaran Tasawuf Ahlussunnah (prasaran yang disampaikan oleh K.H. Djanawi)," in Seminar Report on Strengthening Sunni Sufism in South Kalimantan, IAIN Antasari Banjarmasin, 26-27 March 1986), 1.

there is only one thing. The problem arises when the Sufis say *wahdat al-wujūd* (unity of being), their opponents interpret it as *wahdat al-maujūd*, even though the two are different. This confusion is supported by Ash'ari's opinion that *al-wujūd huwa 'ainul maujūd* (the existence is the entity itself). Sufis and Islamic philosophers disagree with what Asy'ari put forward. As a result, the term *al-maujūd al-wāhid* appears that there is only one reality. What is meant by *al-wujūd al-wāhid* among Sufis is the absolute existence of God which does not need anything else. It is He who gives existence to all others.<sup>68</sup>

Noor Salim then mentions Ibn Arabi as a figure of *wahdat al-wujūd*. He mentioned a brief biography of this figure (which seems to be less known by other scholars in the seminar). Then he stated that the opinion of the scholars of Ibn Arabi was divided in two, some agreed, some rejected because of his contradictory words: on the one hand he adhered to the Shari'a, and on the other hand he seemed to go beyond and ignore the law. Disputes arose as to whether the words were understood literally or whether they required careful interpretation. But for Noor Salim, quoting Abd al-Halim Mahmud, it would be fairer if we did not convict the great Sufi as heretical. Regarding *wahdat al-wujūd*, Noor Salim tends to interpret it in the sense of God as *mumidd al-wujūd*, the giver of existence to all that exist.<sup>69</sup>

In relation to the teaching of Sufism in the Banjar community, Noor Salim said that it must be admitted that *al-Durr al-Nafīs* and the *Risālah 'Amal Ma'rifah* and the like are heavily influenced by the teachings of Ibn 'Arabi. In this case, to be wiser in responding to these works, we must pay attention to three things: (1) the book being taught, (2) the teacher who teach, and (3) the students who learn it. These three things are interconnected. If the book being taught contains high-level complex teachings as taught by Ibn Arabi, then the teacher who teaches must be a qualified person, and the student who is studying is also worthy and able to understand it. According to Noor Salim, the negative effects that arise from the studies of Sufism in society are because the teachers

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<sup>68</sup> Safran, "Makalah Bahasan," 4-5.

<sup>69</sup> Safran, "Makalah Bahasan," 6-12.

who teach are not competent, and the books they teach are not appropriate for the students they teach.<sup>70</sup>

### B. *Sympathetic View*

We have discussed neutral views in two forms, namely (1) trying to describe and understand the contents of *al-Durr al-Nafis* without giving a right-false assessment; (2) encourage people to be kind and send back its meaning to God, alias not to judge. This sympathetic view goes one step further, emphasizing that Muhammad Nafis's teachings are correct or cannot be faulted. For example, Hawash Abdullah, in commenting on the opinions of scholars who consider the Sufi teachings *al-Durr al-Nafis* to be heretical, writes:

If there is someone who is contrary to the actual state of Islam and he admits to studying a Sufi book, then the mistake or misguidance is the person's personality, not the book. This might happen because of a lack of understanding of the knowledge he is studying. So strictly speaking, the treatise *Ad Durrun Nafis* cannot be said to be misleading because it has been studied by Indonesian scholars since its circulation (after it was written in 1200H) until now. As far as I know, not a single Shufi scholar has said that the treatise is not based on the Qur'an and Hadith.<sup>71</sup>

Hawasy Abdullah's view is in line with the following opinion of Ahmadi Isa:

According to the author, every person who loves the truth should not be in a hurry to justify a teaching, and vice versa, we should not be in a hurry to blame a teaching before we have examined carefully how the teaching actually is. If there is a person or a number of people who do something that is contrary to or not in accordance with the provisions of the actual religious teachings, and they admit that because they studied a teaching in one of the books, then such a mistake could be the fault of those who study it, but not necessarily because errors in the teachings of the book.

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<sup>70</sup> Safran, "Makalah Bahasan," 12-13.

<sup>71</sup> Abdullah, *Perkembangan Ilmu Tasawuf*, 111.



This might happen because people who study the book do not understand the teachings they are studying.<sup>72</sup>

With this attitude, Ahmadi Isa finally came to the conclusion that Muhammad Nafis was not a follower of pure philosophical Sufism, but combined Sunni Sufism represented by Junaid al-Baghdadi and al-Ghazali with the philosophical Sufism of Ibn Arabi, al-Jili and the like. For Ahmadi Isa, it seems that these two tendencies should not be opposed to each other.<sup>73</sup>

In contrast to Ahmadi Isa, in his MA thesis Hadariansyah tries to examine the conception of monotheism in Muhammad Nafis' Sufism by comparing it with the views of medieval Sunni Sufi figures, culminating in the theory of the degrees of monotheism according to al-Ghazali. This step taken by Hadariansyah appears to be an attempt to show that Nafis' view is actually a continuation of previous Sufi views. On the other hand, by taking a Sufi point of view, he seems to want to say that to judge Sufism, it would be fairer to look at it from a Sufi perspective. As already mentioned, the view that assumes *al-Durr al-Nafis* is misguided and misleading, partly due to judging it from the point of view of the scholars of theology.

Hadariansyah traced the monotheistic views of Abu al-Husain al-Nuri (d. 259 H), al-Junaid al-Baghdadi (d. 297), Abu Bakr al-Shibli (d. 322 H) and finally Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (d. 505 H). After quoting al-Nuri's statement regarding monotheism, Hadariansyah concluded that monotheism according to this man is to focus all thoughts only on God, by eliminating thoughts about anything other than God. As for al-Junaid, monotheism can be divided into two types: ordinary monotheism and monotheism of

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<sup>72</sup> Isa, *Ajaran Tasawuf*, 10.

<sup>73</sup> | Zurkani Jahja even said that the tendency of Sufism in the archipelago of the 17th and 18th centuries in general was a synthesis or amalgamation of al-Ghazali's and Ibn Arabi's Sufism. His assessment of Muhammad Arsyad al-Banjari's Sufism is also the same. See M. Zurkani Jahja, "Karakteristik Sufisme di Nusantara Abad ke-17 dan 18" *Kandil* Vol. 2 No.4 (February 2004), 20-37 and his "Pemikiran Syekh Muhammad Arsyad al-Banjari di Bidang Teologi dan Tasawuf" in Zulfa Jamalie (ed.), *Biografi dan Pemikiran Syekh Muhammad Arsyad al-Banjari Matahari Islam Kalimantan* (Banjarmasin: PPIK, 2005), 137-174.

the specials. Lay monotheism places more emphasis on the perfect oneness of God, and there is nothing similar to Him. Meanwhile, monotheism the special people is the monotheism of the Sufis, who live the relationship between humans and God, in which humans feel only like shadows before God, subject to all His decrees, even they feel themselves disappearing before Him, because they were not there before, then exist, only because God made it happen. As for al-Shibli, he emphasized that monotheism is only truly realized when humans feel alien to their own secrets due to the appearance of the divine to them.

Unlike the three previous Sufi figures, al-Ghazali explained that there are four levels of monotheism. First, monotheism of the hypocrite, that is when someone with his tongue declares that there is no god but God, but his heart does not follow or reject it. Second, lay monotheism, namely someone who verbally declares that there is no god but God, and his heart agrees with it. The monotheism of the theologians belongs to this lay level. Third, the monotheism of *muqarrabin*, that is, people who witness with their hearts through divine revelation, that all things, basically comes from the One God. Fourth, the monotheism of *siddiqin*, that is, those who see with their minds that all that exists is one, all that exists, including himself, vanishes in that one.

After tracing the views of previous Sufis, Hadariansyah then tried to see the concept of monotheism described by Muhammad Nafis. There are four types of monotheism described by Nafis, viz *tawhid al-af'âl* (unity of deeds), *tawhid al-asmâ'* (unity of names), *tawhid al-shifât* (unity of attributes), and *tawhid al-dẖât* (unity of essence).

In uniting God in all actions, Nafis explains that a person sees with his inner eye that all actions in this world originate from God, whether it is obedience or disobedience, faith or disbelief. An act is considered evil and immoral only because religious law disapproves of it. Nafis' view, according to Hadariansyah, appears to be in line with the monotheism of the specials according to al-Junaid, and the monotheism of *muqarrabin* according to al-Ghazali's explanation.

As for the oneness of God in the names, according to Nafis, a person sees with the eyes of his heart that all the names in this universe go back to the names of God because this universe is

basically the appearance of His names. The existence of this universe is only delusion and imagination when it is faced with the existence of the absoluteness of God. According to Hadriansyah, this conception of the *tawhîd al-asmâ'* has no equivalent in the four levels of monotheism according to al-Ghazali.

Furthermore, attesting to God's attributes, according to Nafis, is to see with the eyes of the heart that all the attributes attached to His essence (*dẓât*) such as will (*irâdah*), power (*qudrâh*), and knowledge (*ilm*) are in essence God's attributes, namely the appearance of God's attributes. As for the attributes attributed to humans, they are only metaphorical (*majâzî*). Thus, in the inner view of a person, all qualities eventually disappear in the attributes of God. He saw with God's sight, heard with God's hearing, and so on. For Hadariansyah, as *tawhîd al-asmâ'*, *tawhîd al-shifât* is also not included in the four levels of monotheism according to al-Ghazali.

The last one is *tawhîd al-dẓât*, to believe in the unity of God's essence. According to Nafis, to see the unity of God's essence means to believe and see with the eyes of the heart that there is no truly essential being except God. Like other descriptions of monotheism, here a person becomes annihilated in the presence of the absoluteness of God. The form of humans and all creatures, according to Nafis, is none other than imagination, delusion, and metaphorical (*majâzî*) because their existence is between two nothings: first nothing, then exists, and finally fades away while the existence of God is always there, which is the origin of all creatures. According to Hadariansyah, Nafis explained that *tawhîd al-dẓât* is in line with al-Ghazali's explanation regarding the monotheism of the *muqarrabîn*.

Thus, Hadariansyah concludes that the monotheism conceptualized by Nafis is the monotheism of the *khawâsh*, namely certain special Sufis, who have obtained *kasyf*, a spiritual revelation from God so that they can see directly with the eyes of the heart the essence of everything. Therefore, *al-Durr al-Nafîs*, as the author himself emphasizes, is not addressed to the common people, but to the *khawâsh*. For this reason, Hadariansyah concluded:

...monotheism in the Sufism of Sheikh Muhammad Nafis al-Banjari which he presented in *al-Durr al-Nafîs*, therefore, is only

appropriate to present it to certain groups of people, namely those who can understand the thoughts and intuition of the Sufis and can grasp the meaning of their expressions. Therefore, it can also be stated that it is not suitable to be presented to ordinary people, especially those whose faith is not yet established and whose knowledge of Sufism is minimal.<sup>74</sup>

Furthermore, sympathetic views were not only given by academics, but also by charismatic Banjar Islamic scholars such as Tuan Guru Haji Ahmad Zuhdiannor (1972-2020) who is familiarly called "Guru Zuhdi".<sup>75</sup> According to Guru Zuhdi, there are three problems surrounding the controversy *al-Durr al-Nafis*. First, there are indeed a number of incorrect prints, such as regarding verses from the Qur'an, which are incorrectly stated. Second, many of the expressions in this treatise are *mustashâbihât*, meaning that it needs to be interpreted and explained further, not in their literal meaning. Third, the knowledge presented in this treatise is really of a high level, so it is not easy for ordinary people to digest it. In this regard, there are people who are able to understand and explain, there are also people who are unable. There are other people who are not only able to explain but have actually felt or experienced it. Nafis is certainly one of the latter. The problem is for people who are unable to understand and explain it, nor have they ever felt and experienced it. For the latter, it is better not to study let alone teach *al-Durrun al-Nafis*.

Likewise, for Guru Zuhdi, when Muhammad Nafis stated, "infidelity and disobedience are evil in appearance, good in essence", it must be understood from an orthodox point of view. This sentence can indeed be interpreted that he considers good and bad, sins and rewards, there is no difference because everything is basically good. This is of course contrary to the teachings of sharia. However, the sentence still has the possibility (*ihhtimal*) to be explained differently so as to be in line with orthodoxy. When the author of the treatise stated "infidelity and disobedience are evil in appearance", then he refers to human behavior. Meanwhile, when he mentions "good in essence", what is meant by essence is the origin of all beings, namely God,

<sup>74</sup> Hadariansyah, "Hakikat Tauhid dalam Tasawuf," 82-83.

<sup>75</sup> Interview with Guru Zuhdiannor, 26 July 2016.

because He as an absolute being cannot possibly be exposed to evil.

Guru Zuhdi also explained *tajallî*, the divine appearance shown in the theory of the seven stages of being. Unlike most critics of *al-Durr al-Nafîs*, Guru Zuhdi can properly combine the transcendence and immanence of God which is reflected in a seemingly contradictory phrase, namely *lâ humâ wa lâ ghairuh* (not Him, and no other than Him). Guru Zuhdi explained that at the Ahadiyah stage, which is the very beginning, God as an absolute being is unknown and impossible to know. Here applies the expression, "No one knows God except God" (*La ya'rifullâh illallâh*). He likens this situation to an empty circle. Nothing is known. This is what is meant by the stage of *lâ ta'ayyun*. Then (what is meant by 'then' here certainly does not mean the sequence of events because God's essence is not bound by time, but only at the level *ta'aqqul* of course, that is our reasoning attempts to understand) the circle is filled with dots. That point is the appearance of the first *tajallî*. This is what it's called *al-haqîqah al-muhammadiyah* (the essence of Muhammad) which is the origin of all appearances. At this level, *al-haqîqah al-muhammadiyah* is eternal (*qadîm*), it has no beginning and no end, because it is still in God's knowledge, and has not yet existed in creation. Here Guru Zuhdi emphasized that *al-haqîqah al-Muhammadiyah* is different from Nûr Muhammad (light of Muhammad) which is new/created. In the seventh stage, Nur Muhammad is at the realm of the spirits (*'âlam al-arwâh*) as explained by Abd al-Samad al-Palimbani in *Sair al-Sâlikîn*. Guru Zuhdi seems to think that Abd al-Samad's views are in line with those of Muhammad Nafis, even though *al-Durr al-Nafîs* put *al-haqiqat al-muhammadiyah* and Nur Muhammad both at the second stage (*wahdah*), and not mentioned at the fourth stage (*'alam al-arwâh*). In other words, Nafis doesn't seem to differentiate between *al-haqiqat al-muhammadiyah* and Nur Muhammad.

Perhaps Guru Zuhdi's efforts to reconcile these two opinions show that he prioritized the benefits of the doubt, namely that Abd al-Samad and Muhammad Nafis were both great scholars and studied with the same teachers or at least, like-minded people. Therefore, the two should go hand in hand. This is reinforced by Abdul Muthalib's findings that based on the recommendation of

his teacher, Muhammad Abd al-Karîm al-Samman, Abd al-Samad admitted to reading *al-Tuhfab al-Mursalab*, the initial source of the teachings of the seventh stages of being, in the presence of Abd al-Rahman bin Abd al-'Azîz al-Maghribi, who also turned out to be a teacher of Muhammad Nafis.<sup>76</sup> Besides that, according to Abdul Muthalib, it is very likely that Nafis read the comments above *al-Tuhfab al-Mursalab* by Ibrahim al-Mirghani (d. 1792) entitled *Mukballash Mukhtasar al-Tuhfab al-Mursalab* which is mentioned in *al-Durr al-Nafis*, not a commentary by al-Kurani, *Ithâf al-Dzâkî*.<sup>77</sup> The thing is, *al-Tuhfab al-Mursalab* did mention *al-haqiqat al-muhammadiyah* in the second stage (*wahdah*), but does not mention that it is identical to Nur Muhammad, nor does it mention that it is in the fourth stage (*âlam al-arwâh*) as it is stated by Abd al-Samad. I tried to trace al-Kurani's comments, i.e., *Ithâf al-Dzâkî*, and did not find any explanation about the difference between *al-haqiqat al-muhammadiyah* and Nur Muhammad, but at the same time, I did not find al-Mirghani's work mentioned by Abdul Muthalib.

So, is it still possible for these two positions to be met? I think the answer is positive because al-Burhanfuri, Abd al-Samad, and Nafis put *al-haqiqat al-muhammadiyah* in the second stage of being (*wahdah*). The difference lies only in Abd al-Samad's explanation that Nur Muhammad is in the fourth stage.<sup>78</sup> This difference can be explained by returning to Ibn Arabi, who mentions *al-haqiqat al-muhammadiyah* or Nur Muhammad as the 'intermediate reality' (*al-haqiqah al-barzakhîyyah*)<sup>79</sup> or also called 'the greatest intermediate reality' (*al-barzakh al-akbar*)<sup>80</sup> that is like a coin with two sides: one side it is eternal (*qadîm*) when it is still in the knowledge of God, but on the other hand, it is temporal (*hadith*) when it was the first appearance, and became the origin of all that exists besides God.

<sup>76</sup> Muthalib, "The Mystical Thought," 33-34.

<sup>77</sup> Muthalib, "The Mystical Thought," 30; 33-34.

<sup>78</sup> According to Su'ad Hakim's research, Ibn 'Arabi himself used the terms *al-haqiqat al-muhammadiyah* and Nur Muhammad as synonyms. Other synonymous terms are *al-kalimah al-muhammadiyah*, *al-nûr al-muhammadi*, and *haqiqat Muhammad*. See Su'ad Hakim, *al-Mu'jam al-Shûfi: al-Hikmah fî Hudûd al-Kalimah* (Beirut: Dandara, 1981), 347-348.

<sup>79</sup> Mohammad Yunus Masrukhin, *al-Wujûd wa al-Zamân fî al-Khitâb al-Shûfî 'inda Muhy al-Dîn Ibn 'Arabi* (Beirut: Mansyûrât al-Jamal, 2015), 483-490.

<sup>80</sup> Muthalib, "The Mystical Thought," 87.

In addition, it may be Abd al-Samad's explanation of Nur Muhammad in the fourth stage as temporal does not refer directly to the text composed by Burhanfuri or comments on it, but is based on oral tradition (*oral traditions*) which is delivered sequentially in the line of teachers to students.<sup>81</sup>

Furthermore, according to Guru Zuhdi, everything that exists comes from the one and manifests in Nur Muhammad, then everything is created from it, is closely related to the Sufi expression described by Muhammad Nafis namely *shuhûd al-wahdah fi al-katsrah* (witnessing the one in the many) and *shuhûd al-wahdah fi al-katsrah* (witnessing the many in the one). To explain the meaning of this expression, Guru Zuhdi follows the imagery put forward by previous Sufis, especially Ibn Arabi, namely mirrors, images in mirrors, and objects of the images. Someone was in the room with the door open, while people outside the room couldn't see him. To see him, one should use the mirror. The person in the room said, "That's me, the one you see in the mirror." Then the mirror image is both him and not him. The image is him because it does feature him. But that image is also not him because it is not his essence. In this simile, the object and the image are different entities, not identical. Especially when there are many mirrors so that the image of an object that is actually one looks like many. Be it the entire universe or human beings, all are appearances of God, and the perfect appearance of God was in the Prophet Muhammad. This is the meaning of the *hadith qudsî* which states, *al-Insânu sirrî wa anâ sirrûh* (human being is My secret, and I am his secret).<sup>82</sup>

### **The Tomb and the Interest of the Public in the Treatise**

As explained above, all scholars who criticize or sympathize with *al-Durr al-Nafîs* recommend that this book not be circulated and taught to the general public. However, in today's highly sophisticated computer and printing technology era, it is difficult

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<sup>81</sup> Regarding the importance of oral tradition in traditional Islamic studies, see Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Oral Transmission and the Book in Islamic Education: The Spoken and the Written Word" *Journal of Islamic Studies* Vol. 3 No.1 (1993), 1-14.

<sup>82</sup> Interview with Guru Zuhdiannor, 26 July 2016.

to stem its spread. Market demands are quite large, encouraging publishers and booksellers to provide this treatise.

The first person to publish the Indonesian edition in the form of an adaptation and summary of *al-Durr al-Nafis* seems to be KH Haderanie HN (1933-2008), an Islamic scholar born in Puruk Cahu and served as Chair of the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI) of Central Kalimantan for three terms (1992-2008). He also taught *al-Durr al-Nafis* in Surabaya and his adaptation of the treatise was published around 1980. While living in Central Kalimantan since the 1990s, he also taught *al-Durr al-Nafis* with reference to the adaptation. To this day, this adaptation continues to be reprinted, and the family still receives royalties. The adaptation of the treatise is titled *Ilmu Ketuhanan: Permata yang Indah (Ad durrunafis)*. This work has a Foreword from a prominent Banjar Islamic scholar who is also a national politician, K.H. Ideham Chalid. In addition to several additions regarding recommendations for reading prayer for the prophet (*salawat*) and other readings, at the end of this work, there are also questions and answers on several issues, including those regarding Nur Muhammad and *wahdat al-wujūd*. The essence of Haderani's opinion is, the true *wahdat al-wujūd* does not allow people to leave the Shari'a, and there is no obligation to believe in the teachings of Nur Muhammad except for adherents of the teaching itself.<sup>83</sup>

Later, one of the publishers that disseminated *al-Durr al-Nafis* was Sahabat Publisher, in Kandangan, South Kalimantan, which was managed by Mujahid.<sup>84</sup> After graduating from Al-Falah Islamic Boarding School in Banjarbaru in 1990, Mujahid traveled to Java and Madura, then returned to Kandangan, his hometown. He started a business in the village, opening a bookstore under the name *Sahabat* in 1993. At first, he only sold books for Islamic boarding schools and religious gatherings. Nonetheless, then he moves on to publishing. Why did he take the initiative to translate and publish treatise? According to his story, one day he left for Banjarmasin, to buy a number of books at the Murni Bookstore, at

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<sup>83</sup> Haderani H.N, *Ilmu Ketuhanan, Permata yang Indah (Ad-durrunafis) Beserta Tanya Jawab* (Seubaraya: Nur ilmu, no date).

<sup>84</sup> Information about the development of Sahabat Publisher was obtained from an interview with Mujahid and Ahmad Husaini, 29 July 2016.



Jalan Penatu, which was owned and managed by H. Syamsul. This shop is indeed very famous, especially for selling Islamic boarding school books. Mujahid was surprised, H. Syamsul only opened his shop at 10 am, while the other shops were already open. But the buyers were lining up waiting for the Murni Bookstore to open. Mujahid then asked the people who were standing in line. Apparently, the reason is, Murni Bookstore not only sells books but also publishes a number of books, which cannot be found anywhere else. This is what prompted Mujahid to publish the book on behalf of his own bookstore.

In 1995, he invited his senior friend, a fellow Al-Falah alumnus who was also from Kandangan, to translate and write in Jawi Arabic letters, a treatise on Sufism which is very popular among Islamic boarding schools, namely *Risâlah al-Mu'âwanah* by al-Haddad. At that time computers were rare and luxury goods, so they made the treatise by handwriting (perhaps because they used Arabic Malay letters). In 1996, the treatise was published, and it turned out that the response from the people, especially the Islamic scholars who teach in religious gatherings, was very good. The treatise is a reference guide for the Islamic scholar as well as for the people who learn it. Thus, there were quite a lot of buyers. In just three months, this treatise was printed three times, each with 2,000 copies. In fact, the printing is still simple, namely using local printing. Later, after using the computer, Mujahid printed the books he produced in Yogyakarta in better quality.

In addition, in the early 2000s, public interest in the hagiographies of the saints increased. Perhaps this was partly driven by the personality of Tuan Guru Haji Muhammad Zaini Martapura, known as Guru Zaini, Guru Ijai, or Guru Sekumpul, whose religious gathering was attended by tens of thousands of people. It is possible that the severe social, economic, and political crises that followed the fall of Suharto in 1998 were also another cause behind the interest in the hagiographies of the saints. Mujahid immediately responded to this market demand by publishing many hagiographies, including Muhammad Nafis al-Banjari's. Together with Ahmad Husaini, he interviewed people who were thought to know about Nafis, then wrote it into a piece of work. Finally, a number of books were published in thousands of copies (3000 to 5000 copies for each print). This business

continues to grow in line with a large number of requests, especially from famous preachers such as Guru Bakhiet, a charismatic Islamic scholar from Barabai whose religious gatherings are attended by thousands of people. The books published by Sahabat were later spread throughout Kalimantan, Java, Sumatra (Palembang, Riau, and Aceh) Singapore, Malaysia, and Southern Thailand (Pattani).

The treatise, *al-Durrun al-Nafis*, which was transliterated and first published in 2003 by Sahabat, was not originally planned by Mujahid. At that time, in 2002, Mujahid met with employees of the Tabalong District Government Office, who gave him a transliteration of *al-Durrun al-Nafis* sponsored by the government. After reading the manuscript, Mujahid was surprised to find so many mistakes in it. Then, he and Husaini tried to make a better edition, by making a new transliteration based on two printed editions accompanied by some commentaries in the footnotes. In making comments, Tim Sahabat tends to be more careful. For example, they provide footnotes for certain verses that are not the same as the text of the Qur'an, by stating that according to the narration of Hafash bin Ashim's reading version, the text is different. The Qur'anic text is then quoted. They also provide explanations of the meanings of certain Malay words that are not familiar to the current generation.

As a result, in 2003, this treatise was published. When it was shown to the Tabalong Regional Government, they were very happy and contributed Rp 10 million for the publication. This edition is also enriched with the hagiography of Nafis, making this treatise more interesting. Even the title that is highlighted is the hagiography, not *al-Durr al-Nafis*.<sup>85</sup> This first edition was printed in 5000 copies and soon sold out. The next edition was made even better in appearance with a neat cover and layout in 2011. In 2013 it has reached its fourth printing.<sup>86</sup> Every time the print is 3000 to

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<sup>85</sup>Tim Sahabat, *Manakib Syekh Muhammad Nafis al-Banjari dan Ajarannya* (Kandangan: Sahabat, 2003). In this first edition, the people who are included in the Team are Junaidi Kamaruddin, Muhammad Marwan, Muhammad Hariyadi, Abul Bayan Husaini, Idwar, Mujahid HS, and Maserani. However, in subsequent editions, these names did not appear anymore.

<sup>86</sup>See Tim Sahabat, *Manakib Syekh Muhammad Nafis al-Banjari dan Ajarannya* (Kandangan: Sahabat, 2013). This new edition was printed at the Yogyakarta printing press.

5000 copies. Mujahid also started to establish a book sales network in Kalimantan, so that his books, including *al-Durr al-Nafīs*, were distributed throughout Kalimantan. For religious gatherings, those who bought *al-Durr al-Nafīs* mainly came from Martapura and Sungai Tabuk of Banjar Regency, and from Samarinda, whose teacher was from Amuntai. There are also buyers from Sumatra, especially Aceh, Palembang, and Riau. From abroad, there are those from Malaysia and Singapore. Generally, they use this treatise to be read with the congregation at the religious gathering. This is why they require quite a large number. At the tomb of Syekh Nafis in Kalua, Tabalong Regency, Mujahid also opened a shop/stall selling books, especially *al-Durr al-Nafīs*. It turned out that many pilgrims bought it, and there were even buyers who claimed to be descended from Nafis, and he now lives in Saudi Arabia.

Later, another person published a Jawi edition with special comments from a local scholar named Ahmad Syuhada Ibn Thabrani al-Alabi. The term 'al-Alabi' behind this man's name indicates that he is from Alabio, Hulu Sungai Utara District. According to Mujahid, in giving comments, Ahmad Syuhada sometimes referred to an Arabic translation of *al-Durr al-Nafīs*.<sup>87</sup> The first hardcover edition of this treatise, which was published in 2013, contains a foreword from H. Burhan Syarief Ibn Hermani al-Banjari who mentions in front of his name al-Murshid and the Caretaker of Pondok Riyadhoh and the al-Ismul A 'zham religious gathering.<sup>88</sup> Uniquely, this introduction is actually written in the Roman alphabet, not in Jawi. This treatise is used for teaching in a religious gathering. It has been printed twice, namely in 2013 and 2016, each in 2,000 copies.

In addition to the wider and more widespread circulation of this treatise, the grave of Muhammad Nafis has also received increasing public attention, especially since the beginning of the 21st century. In a seminar on Sufism in 1986, H. Djanawi doubted

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<sup>87</sup> Unfortunately, I haven't been able to get this Arabic version so I can't identify who the translator was, when it was translated and how it compares to the Jawi version.

<sup>88</sup> See Muhammad Nafis al-Banjari, *al-Durr al-Nafīs fī Bayānī Wahdat al-Af'āl, wa al-Asmā', wa al-Shifāt wa al-Dẓāt Dẓāt al-Taqdīs*, edited and commented by Ahmad Syuhada Ibn Thabrani al-Alabi al-Banjari (Kandangan: Sahabat, 2013).

Muhammad Nafis' stay in Banjar lands. According to him, unlike Muhammad Arsyad, none of Nafis' descendants were found, and "no one can confirm where his grave is."<sup>89</sup> This appears to be in line with Syamsuri Yusup's confession, General Secretary of Indonesian Ulama Council of the Central Kalimantan, that one afternoon he was asked by KH Haderani to accompany him when he departed for Tanjung, at the invitation of the Tabalong Regent, Noor Aidi (in office 1999-2004). Arriving at Tanjung, they were put in the VIP room of the Regent's office. After Isha prayer, KH Haderani together with a Habib from Solo (his name has not been traced) spoke at length about matters of divinity and Muhammad Nafis. They were talking all night up to dawn. Syamsuri Yusup just listened and remembered. They also talked about where the grave of Muhammad Nafis was. The next day, KH Haderani said that it was not him who spoke last night. Because of that, he asked Syamsuri Yusup to help him show the location of Muhammad Nafis' grave according to the instructions last night. To make it short, the grave was then designated, which is now in Kelua, Binturu Village.<sup>90</sup>

Syamsuri Yusup's story shows that previously it was not known where the exact location of Muhammad Nafis' grave. Moreover, there is a claim that Muhammad Nafis is buried in Kotabaru, South Kalimantan. However, Ahmad Barjie, a person who lives not far from the tomb in Kelua, said that since childhood he was often invited by his parents or grandfather to visit the grave of 'Datu Nafis' or 'Datu Haur Kuning'.<sup>91</sup> This means that the grave has long been recognized by the public. When I

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<sup>89</sup>Djanawi, "Beberapa Ajaran," 7. Djanawi even doubted whether Nafis was really a Banjarese because there were no Banjar words in *al-Durr al-Nafis*, although he was aware of the title 'al-Banjari' in the name of Muhammad Nafis. Maybe if we are allowed to speculate, Nafis is indeed a Banjarese but has lived in the holy city of Mecca for so long that he was more familiar with the Malay language as a result of hanging out a lot with fellow Indonesian students rather than just Banjar people.

<sup>90</sup> Interview with Syamsuri Yusuf, 6 August 2016.

<sup>91</sup> This was told by Ahmad Barjie in a class discussion I taught in 2016 at the postgraduate program of IAIN Antasari. Abdul Muthalib in his thesis which he worked on in 1993, also mentioned the Nafis grave in Kelua, but not many visited it. See Muthalib, "The Mystical Thought", 12.

asked Syamsuri Yusuf about this, he said that perhaps in the long term, the grave had 'disappeared' so it needed to be re-determined where its exact position was among the other graves.

Despite the controversy over the authenticity of the grave, with the support of the Regent Noor Aidi, a road to the grave was built and a special building that sheltered the grave made it easier for pilgrims. Every year the prayer for Muhammad Nafis's death is also held, which is attended by scholars, officials, and the wider public. Until now, especially on holidays, quite a lot of pilgrims come to visit this tomb. Around this tomb, as already mentioned, the hagiography of Muhammad Nafis and *al-Durr al-Nafîs* which have been transliterated into Roman Alphabets, are freely sold. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the government's attention to this tomb is inseparable from the democratization spirit of the Reformation era, which directly or indirectly encouraged the highlighting of a distinctive local identity. In addition, attention to 'popular piety' means a lot to politicians. In comparison, the tomb which is said to be the tomb of Muhammad Nafis al-Banjari in Kotabaru, which I visited in 2017, did not receive much public attention and was not very well maintained. Apart from the fact that the tomb is located on a hill and in a forest that is not easily accessible, it seems that the local government and community support are not strong enough to make it a pilgrimage/religious tourism destination.

## Conclusion

We have discussed at length the pros and cons of the teachings of *al-Durr al-Nafîs*, especially among the Banjar Islamic scholars. The discourse around the rejection of the metaphysics of Sufism of Muhammad Nafis covers four issues, namely (1) the print edition currently circulating contains textual errors, while the critical edition does not yet exist; (2) the arguments put forward in this treatise, including the interpretation given to these arguments, are considered weak or distorted; (3) the teachings of this treatise are contrary to sharia because the criteria of good and bad, obedience and disobedience are no longer recognized; (4) the teachings of this treatise are contrary to the Islamic creed, which firmly distinguishes God and all of His creation. The rejection discourse is divided into two: some simply say that the teachings

are not part of Ahlussunnah Sufism, but some are strongly calling them heretical and misleading.

On the other hand, there are also neutral and sympathetic groups. Neutral ones tend to write descriptively without defending or attacking, not judging but simply trying to understand. While those who sympathize go one step further by saying that the teachings of *al-Durr al-Nafis* are in line with orthodox Sufism and are high-level Sufi teachings, which must be assessed from the point of view of Sufism itself, not through the eyes of Islamic law or theology. Besides that, people who sympathize always recommend that people have to have the benefit of the doubt of the author of this treatise so that if there is an error in the text or a statement that is outwardly distorted, then we must interpret it so that its meaning can be in line with orthodoxy.

If examined further, both the pros and cons emphasize that sharia law is important, and this treatise should not lead to neglect of sharia and human moral responsibility. For some scholars, especially those who are against it, learning and teaching this treatise is prohibited because it can damage the true understanding of religion, especially for ordinary people. They do not want to consider the possibility of interpreting some of Nafis' controversial statements because they are not explicitly mentioned in the text. Moreover, it is said that there are some people who ignore the shari'a because they study this treatise. On the other hand, especially those who sympathize are of the opinion that this treatise will be useful if it is taught by teachers who truly have the competence (knowledge and practice), to students who already have 'enough capacity to accept it, not for everyone. This latter attitude is in line with that outlined by Abd al-Samad al-Falimbani in the 18th century.

However, times are moving on and now we live in the 21st century when the majority of the population is literate, and information is abundant. Printing and publication technology is increasingly sophisticated so that more and more written works can be published and distributed, including *al-Durr al-Nafis*. The longing of modern humans for the spiritual world in the midst of a multidimensional crisis has made books on Sufism hunted and studied more and more. In this situation, the adaptation of *al-Durr al-Nafis* to its transliteration into Roman alphabets found its

momentum, namely increased market demand, even outside Kalimantan and Indonesia. The free public sphere makes the recommendation to be careful and even prohibits people from studying this treatise not necessarily obeyed by the public. It may even be that the prohibition makes some people curious and feel proud if they can study knowledge that is considered 'high-level Sufism' even though they cannot necessarily understand it well. This phenomenon also shows that Islamic literature circulating in society has not completely shifted to popular literature written by young writers and celebrities.<sup>92</sup> This shift may be more prevalent among certain urban youth who are no longer interested in traditional religious study gatherings.

Thus, the discourse on the tension between the outer and the inner side, the shari'a and the *haqîqa*, the transcendence and immanence of God, has indeed been in effect for centuries in the Islamic world. Various references mentioned by scholars in addressing this issue show that medieval to modern Islamic thought, both in the Middle East and in the Archipelago, continues to live in the discourse of 21<sup>st</sup>-century Muslims. Efforts to bring together two opposing viewpoints are sometimes successful, sometimes not. When the public sphere, especially in Indonesia, becomes more free and democratic, the pros and cons are simultaneously present, and people can only be encouraged, not forced, to follow an opinion. Situations like this, on the one hand, can make people anxious and confused about making choices, but on the other hand, it can also make people more mature and open-minded in responding to different religious views without losing the beliefs they have chosen.

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## **2. Interviews**

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