

SYSTEMATIZATION OF SHARH AL-HIKAM BY SHEYKH NAWAWI AL-BANTANI IN KITAB MISBAH AL-DZULAM

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the systematization of Al-Hikam aphorisms as presented in the Misbah Al-Dzulam, and explores Sheykh Nawawi Al-Bantani's methodology for interpreting Al-Hikam. Utilizing a descriptive analysis method, the research focuses on the aphorisms of Al-Hikam. The sequence of Al-Hikam is a subject of two contrasting views. The first perspective suggests that despite an apparent randomness, the original sequence of Al-Hikam serves a specific purpose, with a spiritual secret underlying its arrangement. The second view argues that there is no logical connection (*irtibath mantiqi*) between the initial and subsequent aphorisms. The systematic organization of these aphorisms facilitates to be studied. These divergent viewpoints have led to the creation of two models for studying Al-Hikam's aphorisms: the *tahlili* model and the *thematic* model. The findings of this study reveal that the Misbah Al-Dzulam offers a systematic and categorized approach to Al-Hikam. This approach transforms the perceived randomness of Al-Hikam into a coherent and comprehensive structure, particularly when studied thematically. The *tahlili* method further enhances the study by integrating language analysis with Sufistic interpretive approaches. This study suggests to include this book in the advanced learning curricula for *santri* or *Ma'had Aly*.

Keywords: Nawawi Al-Bantani, Systematization, Sharh Methodology, Al-Hikam, Misbah Al-Dzulam

ABSTRAK

Studi ini menganalisis sistematisasi aforisme Al-Hikam dalam Kitab Misbah Al-Dzulam dan metodologi syarah Syaikh Nawawi Al-Bantani atas Al-Hikam. Riset ini menggunakan pendekatan analisis deskriptif terhadap aforisme Al-Hikam yang menjadi obyek riset. Terdapat dua pandangan terkait susunan atau tartib Al-Hikam. Pandangan pertama berkeyakinan bahwa meskipun terlihat acak, susunan asli Al-Hikam memiliki tujuan tertentu. Ada rahasia spiritual dibalik susunan tersebut. Pandangan kedua melihat tidak adanya keterkaitan logis (irtibath mantiqi) antara aforisme pertama dan selanjutnya. Oleh karena itu, upaya menyusunnya secara sistematis akan memudahkan pengkaji. Dua pandangan tersebut mendorong munculnya dua model dalam mengkaji Aforisme Al-Hikam; model Tahlili dan model tematik. Hasil riset ini menunjukkan bahwa Kitab Misbah Al-Dzulam membawa nuansa baru dalam pengkajian Al-Hikam. Urutan sistematis dan klasifikasi babnya merubah stigma lama yang melekat pada Al-Hikam; acak, sulit, tidak memiliki awalan dan akhiran, menjadi lebih mudah dan lebih utuh terutama apabila hendak dikaji secara tematik. Disamping itu, metode tahlili yang mengkomodir analisis bahasa sampai pendekatan tafsir sufistik membuatnya semakin menarik. Oleh karenanya, kitab ini patut dipertimbangkan untuk dimasukkan dalam kurikulum pembelajaran santri level tinggi atau setingkat Ma'had Aly.

Kata kunci: Nawawi Al-Bantani, Sistematisasi, Metodologi Syarah, Al-Hikam, Misbah Al-Dzulam

Introduction

The Sufi continuously strives to improve people's spiritual qualities.¹ Sheykh Tajuddin Ibn Athaillah Al-Sakandari is one of the well-known figures in this case. The *salik* (Sufi disciple) are always suggested to contemplate on themselves, explore the depths of their souls, and take off the *hijab* that covers their hearts by (among many) learning the wisdom compiled in Al-Hikam.

The book of Al-Hikam and Ibn Athaillah² have widely attracted those of spiritual seekers. This book contains 264 apho-

¹ Paul L. Heck, "Sufism – What Is It Exactly?," *Religion Compass* 1, no. 1 (2006): 148–64, <https://compass.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1749-8171.2006.00011.x>.

² Selami Kardaş, "Ibn Ata Allah Al-Iskandari and Al-Hikam Al-'Ata'Iyya in the Context of Spiritually-Oriented Psychology and Counseling,"

risms. It has great literary value in addition to having a very deep meaning. Interest in the study of Al-Hikam never wanes, starting from its simplest form; *pengajian*,³ research and commentary (*sharh*) which is an ancient tradition among Islamic academics in valuing a book. There are several works written in different languages that are dedicated to explaining Al-Hikam. These works transcend generations as well. In Nusantara, Martin van Bruinessen mention three works: Hikam Melayu written in Malay by unknown author, Sharh Al-Hikam by KH. Muhibuddin Wali, Aceh and Syarah Al-Hikam by KH. Sholeh Darat, Semarang.

All of the *sharh* that van Bruinessen mentioned are written in Arabic-Javanese script (*pegon*). Something is missing from Martin's notes: Syarah Al-Hikam, written under the title "Misbah Al-Dzulam Syarh Al-Nahj Al-Atamm Fi Tabwib Al-Hikam" and written by Sheykh Nawawi Al-Bantani. This book is based on the works of Sheykh Al-Muttaqi Al-Hindi, an Indian Sufi muhaddis who resided in Mecca, rather than a direct sharh from Al-Hikam. He attempts to reconstruct the Al-Hikam aphorisms and organize them into chapters. The goal is to simply systematize Al-Hikam has been structured to make its material simpler to read, memorize, and understand.⁴

Sheykh Al-Muttaqi Al-Hindi's work consisted solely of reorganizing (*tartib*) and organizing them into chapters (*tabwib*) without offering any commentary, explanations, or end notes.⁵ Thus, it is acceptable for Sheyikh Nawawi's book to be listed in the catalogue of Sharh Al-Hikam.⁶

Spiritual Psychology and Counseling 3, no. 2 (2018): 115–37, <https://doi.org/10.37898/spc.2018.3.2.0011>.

³ Ali Mas'ud, "Transmisi Dan Motif Pengajian Al-Hikam Ibn Atā' Allah Al-Sakandarī Di Pesantren Tambak Beras Jombang," *Teosofi* 7, no. 1 (2017): 1–29, <https://doi.org/10.15642/teosofi.2017.7.1.1-29>.

⁴ Muhammad Nawawi Al-Bantani, *Misbah Al-Dzulam Syarh Al-Nahj Al-Atamm Fi Tabwib Al-Hikam* (Pati: Dar Turats Ulama Nusantara, 2020), 3.

⁵ Al-Bantani, 3.

⁶ Ali Muqoddas, "Syeikh Nawawi Al-Bantani Al-Jawi Ilmuan Spesialis Ahli Syarah Kitab Kuning," *Jurnal Tarbawi* II, no. I (2014), <https://doi.org/10.34001/tarbawi.v1i1.186>.

Research on Al-Hikam generally can be divided into two models: *First*, aphorisms were studied from diverse perspectives: linguistic aspects and translation as in the research of M. Yunus Anis who examined the ideology behind translating Al-Hikam from Arabic into English⁷ and the comparison of the thematic structure of Al-Hikam's aphorisms translated from Arabic-Indonesian and Arabic-English,⁸ or the study of thoughts in Al-Hikam such as Positive psychology in Al-Hikam and its applications by Winastuti,⁹ Ibn Athaillah's interpretation of the Qur'an regarding the 'will' stated in Al-Hikam by Muhammad Saifullah.¹⁰ Afterwards, Nurhafid Ishari conducted research on Al-Hikam from an educational perspective examining character education,¹¹ Sufism educational application in Al-Hikam¹² and The development of moderation in *ummah* through Tawhid

⁷ Muhammad Yunus Anis et al., "The Ideology behind the Translation of an Islamic Moral Ethic Book: A Case Study of Al-Hikam's Aphorisms," *Cogent Arts & Humanities* 9, no. 1 (n.d.): 1–11.

⁸ Muhammad Yunus Anis, "Thematic Progression Pattern in Al-Hikam Aphorism Arabic – Bahasa Indonesia and Arabic – English; Systemic Functional Linguistic Approach," *World Journal of English Language* 13, no. 7 (2023): 453–66, <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v13n7p453>.

⁹ Winastuti Novi Wahyu and Sunarno, "Psikologi Positif Melalui Kitab Al-Hikam Karya Syaikh Ibn 'Atha'illah As-Sakandari," *Jurnal Spirits* 13, no. 1(2022):1–14, <https://jurnal.ustjogja.ac.id/index.php/spirit/article/view/14442>.

¹⁰ Muhammad Saifullah, "Aforisme Alquran Dan Hermeneutika Terbuka: Interpretasi Ibn Athaillah Atas Kehendak," *Analisis: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 17, no. 2 (2017): 27–50, <https://doi.org/10.24042/ajsk.v17i2.3372>.

¹¹ Nurhafid Ishari and Ahmad Fauzan, "Pendidikan Karakter Dalam Kitab Al-Hikam Al-Atha'iyah Karya Syekh Ibnu Atha'illah As-Sakandari," *Tarbiyatuna* 10, no. 1 (2017): 66–79, <https://ejournal.iaisyarifuddin.ac.id/index.php/tarbiyatuna/article/view/254>.

¹² Abu Ammar Bustomi and Muhammad Umar, "Pengamalan Pendidikan Ilmu Tasawuf Dalam Kitab Al-Hikam Syekh Ibnu 'Atha'illah as-Sakandari," *AL-IFKAR: Jurnal Pengembangan Ilmu Keislaman* 16, no. 2 (2021): 50–71, <https://ejournal.kopertais4.or.id/mataraman/index.php/ifkar/article/view/PDF>.

¹³ Fitroh Qudsiyyah, Sarno Hanipudin, and Sajidin, "Pendidikan Tasawuf Dalam Kitab Al-Hikam Karya Syekh Ibnu Atha'illah As-Sakandari," *Tafhim Al-'Ilmi: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pemikiran Islam* 15, no. 2 (2024): 204–17, <https://doi.org/10.37459/tafhim.v15i02.7466>.

therapy in Al-Hikam.¹⁴ However, no research has been published on the systematics of Al-Hikam's aphorisms.

Second, studies of the Sharh Al-Hikam book, specifically the works of Nusantara scholars, such as the study of the Sharh Al-Hikam manuscript by KH. Soleh Darat, who examined traces of Java's Islamization¹⁵ and the political ethos of his *da'wa*,¹⁶ In addition, the study of the concept of *makrifat* of KH. Soleh Darat in his Sharh of Al-Hikam.¹⁷ A study that examined the various aspects of the Misbah Al-Dzulam has not been found. This study aims to fill in the gaps of both of these topics.

It is important to examine the *kitab* Misbah Al-Dzulam in more depth for several reasons: *first*, the author is a notable teacher of Ulama Nusantara. *Second*, this *kitab* is the largest Al-Hikam sharh in Arabic written by Indonesian scholars. However, this prominent work was almost forgotten. It was first published in 1314 AH/1897 AD in Mecca and republished in 1442 H/2020 AD by Dar Turats Ulama Nusantara, Indonesia. This book disappeared for over a century. This work is undoubtedly a priceless masterpiece of Indonesian Islam that should be valued and preserved.¹⁸ *Third*, the systematization of this *kitab* is unique compared to Al-Hikam sharh written by previous scholars, even by Nusantara scholars.

¹⁴ Syed Hadzrullathfi Syed Omar and Nurul Aarifah Musa, "Formation of Ummah Wasatiyyah Through Tauhid Al-Hikam Shaykh Ibn Ataillah Therapy," *Jurnal Islam Dan Masyarakat Kontemporari* 16, no. 1 (2018): 11–21, <https://doi.org/10.37231/jimk.2018.16.1.241>.

¹⁵ Muhammad Abdullah, "Jejak Islamisasi Jawa Oleh KH Soleh Darat (Studi Kasus Naskah Kitab Syarah Al-Hikam)," *Nusa: Jurnal Ilmu Bahasa Dan Sastra* 13, no. 3 (2018): 418–30, <https://doi.org/10.14710/nusa.13.3.418-430>.

¹⁶ Muhammad Abdullah, "Etos Politik Dakwah KH Soleh Darat: Islamisasi Jawa (Kasus Naskah Kitab Syarah Al-Hikam Ibn Athoillah)," *Endogami: Jurnal Ilmiah Kajian Antropologi* 5, no. 2 (2022): 145–56, <https://ejournal.undip.ac.id/index.php/endogami/article/view/46981>.

¹⁷ Siswoyo Aris Munandar, "The Concept of Makrifat in Syar Al-Hikam by Kyai Sholeh Darat," *Islam Transformatif: Journal of Islamic Studies* 5, no. 1 (2021): 17–33, <https://doi.org/10.30983/it.v5i1.4062>.

¹⁸ Nasrullah Nurdin, "Apresiasi Intelektual Islam Terhadap Naskah Klasik Keagamaan," *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan* 13, no. 2 (2015): 497–512, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.31291/jlk.v13i2.237>.

The aim of this research is to examine and analyze two main aspects: the systematization of Al-Hikam's aphorisms in the kitab Misbah Al-Dzulam and Sheykh Nawawi Al-Bantani's sharh methodology of Al-Hikam. The discussion in this article includes the significance of Al-Hikam in Sufism, the introduction of Misbah Al-Dzulam, the systematics and methodology of the Sharh.

METHOD

This research employs descriptive qualitative research. The goal of descriptive analysis is to clearly describe a situation or manuscript, not to test a particular hypothesis.¹⁹ The primary data in this study is the book Al-Misbah Al-Dzulam Syarh Al-Nahj Al-Atamm fi Tartib Al-Hikam by Sheikh Nawawi Al-Bantani. Secondary data sources include other *sharh* of Al-Hikam, *kitab*s by Sheikh Nawawi Al-Bantani, other works by Sheykh Ibn Athaillah, and relevant Sufism literature.

The data analysis in this study is conducted in four steps:²⁰ *First*, Collecting data. Primary data were obtained from the original text of Misbah Al-Dzulam. Secondary data were gathered from various academic libraries and online databases, focusing on works related to Al-Hikam and Sufism. *Second*, Reducing the data. The collected data were then filtered to focus on the most relevant aphorisms and commentary for analysis, eliminating redundant or non-essential information.

Third, Displaying the data. The relevant data were organized and displayed in a manner that facilitates thematic analysis, including categorizing aphorisms into different themes based on their content and relevance to the study's objectives. *Fourth*, synthesizing the findings from the data analysis to draw meaningful conclusions about the systematization and methodology used by Sheykh Nawawi Al-Bantani.

¹⁹ Lexy J moloeng, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif* (Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya, 2004), 8.

²⁰ Matthew B Miles and A. Michael; Huberman, *Analisis Data Kualitatif* (Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya, 1992), 3.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the research, several measures were taken. Multiple data sources were used to corroborate findings through triangulation. The research process and findings were reviewed by experts in the field of Islamic studies and Sufism through peer review. Each step of the data collection and analysis process was meticulously documented to provide a clear audit trail.

Findings and Discussion

Al-Hikam's Significance in The Sufism Study

Prior to writing Al-Hikam, Shaykh Ibn Athaillah was not concerned with spiritual aspect. In fact, he had a negative opinion of Sufism. His perception of Sufism (*Ilm Al-Bathin*) has been profoundly impacted by family traditions that are identical with the Fiqh science (*ilm Al-Dzahir*). Moreover, in his time and in previous times, the polemic between the two was very famous and has not yet been resolved. However, Ibn Athaillah was an intelligent person and constantly eager to learn new things. He was curious about the negative stigma attached to Sufi figures. he didn't feel satisfied if he did not prove himself by attending a *halaqah* taught by a Sufi figure.

After meeting Sheykh Abu Al-Abbas Al-Mursi, a renowned Sufi leader and student of Sheykh Abu al-Hasan Al-Syadzili (founder of the Tarekat Syadziliyah), his perspective had a significant change. Previously, there was a long debate between Sheykh Ibn Athaillah and one of Sheykh Abul Abbas Al-Mursi's students. He believed that while Sufis frequently make lofty claims about spirituality, they frequently overlook *ilm dhahir* (fiqh). The student immediately disproved this unfavorable opinion with his experiences learning from Sheykh Abul Abbas. In addition, he said that he wanted to raise an issue about the debate to his Sheykh. Before he could share his plans and wishes, the teacher said, "*Their hearts are like stone (it is difficult to accept spiritual things like this).*"²¹

²¹ Ibn Athaillah Al-Sakandari, *Lathaif Al-Minan*, 3rd ed. (Cairo: Dar El Ma'aref, 2006), 105.

Sheykh Ibn Athaillah became more curious after hearing the student's testimony and wished to meet Sheykh Abul Abbas Al-Mursi in person. He said to himself, "Let me go meet that person, Sheykh Al-Mursi; a lover of Allah ought to have observable signs." He came at the *halaqah* of Sheykh Al-Mursi, who was elaborating the most important aspects of religion at that moment, 1) *Islam*, 2) *Iman*, and 3) *Ihsan*, or in other words: *Ibadah*, *Ubudiyyah* and *Ubudah*, or in other words: *Syariat*, *Hakikat* and *Tahaqquq*.

After hearing Sheykh Al-Mursi's sermon, which has astounded and broadened his thinking, he gradually came to believe that the Sheykh's advice originated from the *fuyudlat ilahiyah* and *futuhat rabbaniyah*, which are only achieved by a selected and chosen people. Next, he bravely went to meet Sheykh Al-Mursi despite his immense embarrassment and anxiety. He was greeted with a smile, and after voicing his grievances and inner turmoil, he was given advice that would eventually come to pass: "*Continue! By the name of Allah, if you follow this path seriously, you will simultaneously become the mufti of two madzhabs, madzhab ahl al-Syariat and madzhab ahl Al-Haqiqat.*"²²

Sheykh Al-Mursi's words came true. Sheykh Ibn Athaillah, like his father and grandfather, became an expert in the Maliki school of jurisprudence, in addition to being a great Sufi who inherited the wisdom and spirituality of Sheykh Al-Mursi and Sheykh Al-Syadzili. In other words, he inherited the baton of Tarekat Syadziliyah.

Sheykh Ibn Athaillah moved to Cairo to take a position as a scholar at the Al-Azhar Mosque following the passing of Sheykh Al-Mursi in 686 AD. His words of Sufism are so calming and interesting. A large number of people attended his lesson.²³

Many Sufi scholars believe that Sheykh Al-Mursi and Sheykh Al-Syadzili did not leave any written works. This

²² Al-Sakandari, 106.

²³ Abu Al-Wafa Al-Taftāzāni, "Hikam Ibn Athaillah Al-Sakandary," *Turats Al Insaniyah* 4 (1965).

conclusion is based on Sheykh Abu al-Hasan's response, which is preserved in *Lataif Al-Minan*, to the question of why he chose not to write a book on Sufism: **كتبي أصحابي** (*my books are my students*).²⁴ The Syadziliyah's teachings are deeply ingrained in the minds of its students. As a result, Sheykh Abu Al-Hasan and Sheykh Abu Al-Abbas left their students with wisdoms, a collection of *do'a*, *Awrad*, and *hizib*. In this circumstance, Ibn Athaillah played the most important role in preserving the Syadziliyah's teachings by collecting his teachers' advises, wisdoms, *Awrad*, and *hizib*, as well as writing down the theoretical-practical *manhaj* and *adab* of Al-Thariqah Al-Syadziliyah.²⁵ His great efforts to preserve his teacher's treasures made it easier for future students to study the tarekat Syadziliah.

Al-Hikam is the most well-known of Sheykh Ibn Athaillah's works and contributed to Sufism philosophy in general. Al-Taftazani reached to the conclusion that the other works of Ibn Athaillah may be considered *sharh*, or extensions of Al-Hikam.²⁶ Many of his other writings contain quotations from his Al-Hikam Aphorisms. Aside from that, Al-Hikam's nuances and language are clearly present in his other books.²⁷

Ibn Athaillah was a devoted Sufi who constantly sought his teacher's pleasure especially while writing Al-Hikam. Haji Khalifah accurately documented this episode in *Kasyf Al-Dzunun*: when writing Al-Hikam, he delivered it to Sheykh Abu Al-Abbas Al-Mursi. Additionally, Syeikh welcomed and gave praise, saying: "*O my son, you presented the maqashid of Ihya Ulumuddin on this sheet, even more.*"²⁸ It is not surprising that Ibn Athaillah's work Al-Hikam gained popularity among spiritual seekers and became widely distributed across the nation, as he skillfully conveyed profound meaning through beautiful apho-

²⁴ Al-Sakandari, *Lathaif Al-Minan*, 24.

²⁵ Al-Taftāzāni, "Hikam Ibn Athaillah Al-Sakandary," 314.

²⁶ Al-Taftāzāni, 314.

²⁷ Rose Deighton, "Performing Sufi Masculinity by Transcending Embodiment in Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh's Kitāb Al-Ḥikam," *Journal of Islamic Ethics* 4 (2020): 98–127, <https://doi.org/doi:10.1163/24685542-12340046>.

²⁸ Haji Khalifah, *Kasyf Al-Dzunun An Asami Al-Kutub Wa Al-Funun* (Baghdad: Dar Al Mutsanna, 1941), 675.

risms. Faqih Al-Banani expressed his admiration for Ibn Athaillah's Hikam by saying: “it is nearly a revelation. If it is permitted to pray with reading other than the *Qur'an*, then it is absolutely permissible to pray with *Al-Hikam*”.²⁹

Since its introduction to the public intellectual sphere, *Al-Hikam* has been phenomenal. Many scholars have spent a great deal of time offering commentary (*Sharh*) on the aphorisms found in *Al-Hikam*. It started from the author himself, Ibn Athaillah, then Ibn Abbad Al-Rundi (792 H) with the title *Ghais Al-Mawahib Al-Aliyah bi sharh Al-Hikam Al-Athaiyah*, Ahmad Zarrouq (899 H) was the most prolific writer of *sharh*, penning up to 36 series of *Al-Hikam sharh*, Ibn ‘Allan Al-Naqsyabandi (1033 H), Ibn Ajibah Al-Hasani (1224 H),³⁰ Grand Syekh of Al-Azhar Abdullah Al-Syarqawi Al-Khalwati (1227 H), Nuruddin Al-Barifkani Al-Naqsyabandi (1268 H), Sheykh Nawawi Al-Bantani (1316 H), KH. Sholeh Darat (1321 H), Ramadhan Al-Buthy and others.

In addition to written works, *Al-Hikam* was also disseminated through teaching and recitations in *majlis*, which are frequently highly popular events. *Al-Hikam* teaching has become a tradition for Al-Azhar scholars, according to Zaki Mubarak in his book *Al-Tasawuf Al-Islami fi Al-Adab wa Al-Akhlaq*. In reality, he frequently attended the *halaqah* at the Husein Mosque, where it was taught by Sheykh Bakhit Al-Muthi'I, the Grand Mufti of Egypt at the time.³¹

Ibn Athaillah is a highly well-known scholars in Indonesia, particularly among *pesantrens*. Until now, Indonesian *santri* continue to read, study and practice *Al-Hikam*.³² This book is taught

²⁹ Ibn Ajibah Al Hasani, *Iqadz Al Himam Fi Syarh Al-Hikam* (Cairo: Dar Jawami' Al Kalim, 2005), 16.

³⁰ Sumit Jha, “A Thematic Analysis of Īqāz Al-Himmam: Ibn ‘Ajībah’s Commentary on the Aphorisms (Hikam) of Ibn ‘Atā’ Allāh” (University of Nottingham, 2022).

³¹ Zaki Mubarak, *Al-Tasawuf Al-Islami Fi Al-Adab Wa Al-Akhlaq* (Cairo: Hindawi Foundation, 2012), 132.

³² Muhammad Ahsan Jauhari, “Perilaku Sosial Santri Pondok Pesantren Al-Ishlah Bandar Kidul Mojoroto Kota Kediri Setelah Mengikuti Penga-

in several *pesantren*; some students read it in mosques or *mu-shallas*, while others only read it during Ramadan.³³ For student of *pesantren*, Al-Hikam becomes a moral and spiritual guide.

Recently, the book Al-Hikam has not only been studied by *santri*, but the beauty of the language and the depth of its meaning have drawn the attention of urban Muslims and urban *sufis*.³⁴ Al-Hikam recitation programs began to be held in mosques, *majlis taklim* and offices in major cities. There are, even, programs held online.³⁵ In a different settings, Al-Hikam is associated with spiritual healing therapy.³⁶

Martin Van Bruinessen mentioned that Sheykh Abd Al-Shamad Al-Falimbani (1203 H/1789 AD) was the first scholar to bring Al-Hikam into Indonesia.³⁷ Since then, Muslims in Indonesia have praised this book greatly. It was translated into

jian Kitab Al-Hikam,” *Spiritualita* 1, no. 1 (2017): 1–18, <https://doi.org/10.30762/spr.v1i1.637>.

³³ Asep Saepul Malik, “Dakwah Melalui Pengajian Pasaran Kitab Al-Hikam Di Pondok Pesantren Azzainiyyah Sukabumi,” *Tabligh: Jurnal Komunikasi dan Penyiaran Islam* 53 (2020): 227–48, <https://doi.org/10.15575/tabligh.v5i3.1989>.

³⁴ Muzakkir Syahrul and Ziaulhaq Hidayat, “New Face of Contemporary Sufism in Southeast Asia: Experience of Indonesia and Malaysia,” *Teosofi* 11, no. 2 (2021): 268–289, <https://doi.org/10.15642/teosofi.2021.11.2.270-292>.

³⁵ Jazilus Sakhok, Siswoyo Aris Munandar, and Ibtisaamatin Ladzidzah, “Tasawuf Dan Budaya Populer: Studi Atas Pengajian Online Kitab Al-Hikam Di Facebook Oleh Ulil Abshar Abdalla,” *Esoterik* 5, no. 2 (2019): 387–412, <https://doi.org/10.21043/esoterik.v5i2.6446>.

³⁶ Muhammad Yunus Anis et al., “Sufi Healing and the Translation of Metafunction in Al-Hikam Aphorisms,” *Humaniora* 33, no. 3 (2021): 221–30, <https://doi.org/10.22146/jh.68070>; Tahmina Iqbal and Mazhar Farid, “Sufi Practices as the Cause of Spiritual, Mental and Physical Healing at Chishti Shrines in Pakistan,” *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 20, no. 10 (2017): 943–53, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13674676.2017.1372736>; Mohammad Rindu Fajar Islamy et al., “Spiritual Healing: A Study of Modern Sufi Reflexology Therapy in Indonesia,” *Teosofi* 12, no. 2 (2022): 209–231, <https://doi.org/10.15642/teosofi.2022.12.2.209-231>.

³⁷ Zaenal Muttaqin, “Al-Hikam Mutiara Pemikiran Sufistik Ibnu Atha’illah as-Sakandari,” *Ushuluna: Jurnal Ilmu Ushuluddin* 2, no. 1 (2020): 50–73.

Melayu, Javanese *Pegon* by KH. Sholeh Darat or Arabic sharh by Sheykh Nawawi Al-Bantani.

The author of Al-Hikam's *sharh* is not only from Madrasah Al-Syadziliah; this demonstrates that the depth of meaning included in Al-Hikam's aphorisms may be absorbed by all people pursuing Sufi wisdom, regardless of the tarekat. Sheykh Muhammad Basim Dahman Al-Naqsyabandi underlined that all *tarekats* lead to Allah, despite the differences in their suluk ways and spiritual approaches. Therefore, he dared to write the Al-Hikam *sharh* using a Naqshabandi spiritual approach, so that Naqshabandi followers might better appreciate Ibn Athaillah's meaningful aphorisms. Thus, the differences in *suluk* methods and Sufi terms do not always cause confusion in understanding.³⁸

The kitab og Al-Hikam also attracted the attention of western orientalis. Those with an interest in Islamic studies, especially the spiritual aspects of Sufism, conduct intensive research on Al-Hikam and Ibn Athaillah. English orientalist A.J. Arberry was astounded by Al-Hikam's charisma, which was able to astound a great number of Muslims. He said: "The Al-Hikam is a very fascinating little book". Not to be outdone, Spanish Orientalist Miguel Asin Palacios translated portions of Al-Hikam and Sharh Al-Rundy into Spanish. Additionally, he examined the potential impact of Ibn Athaillah and the Madrasah Syadziliah on the spiritual beliefs of Juan De La Cruz, a Christian Spiritualist.³⁹

Other than Malay-Javanese, the kitab of Al-Hikam was translated into various languages. For example, *Athaullah Iskenderî* and *Yahya Pakiş* translated it into Turkish under the title *Hikem-i Atâiyye*, while Victor Danner translated it into English under the title *The Book of Wisdoms: A Collection of Sufi Aphorisms*. Victor Danner's translation is considered the best work to date.⁴⁰ The research on the subject is still being

³⁸ Basim Dahman, *Adzwaq Naqsyabandiyah Fi Syarh Al-Hikam Al Athaiyyah*, 1st ed. (Damascus: Dar Al Thayba, 2009), 7.

³⁹ Al-Taftāzāni, "Hikam Ibn Athaillah Al-Sakandary," 319.

⁴⁰ Al-Taftāzāni, 319.

explored, as seen by Rose Deighton's comparison of Al-Hikam with Al-Shathiyat.⁴¹

The Moslem Scholars pay special attention to Al-Hikam because of its unique characteristics in several aspects:

First: The beauty of language. In addition to being a *faqih-sufi*, Ibn Athaillah was a proficient writer and an expert in hadith, exegesis, and Arabic literature. The works written are more than enough to prove his expertise. Moreover, in the book of Al-Hikam, readers who have sufficient knowledge of Balaghah will immediately be swept away by the beauty of the words. The written aphorisms are extremely succinct, yet they hold a profound meaning.

Ibn Athaillah regularly used *majaz* and *Tasybihat* as metaphors, like in the following wisdom:

ادْفِنِ وُجُودَكَ فِي أَرْضِ الْخُمُولِ،
فَمَا نَبَتَ مِمَّا لَمْ يُدْفَنْ لَّا يَتِمُّ نِتَاجُهُ

“Bury your existence in the earth of obscurity, for whatever sprouts forth, without having first been buried, flowers imperfectly.”

The beauty of Al-Hikam is also apparent in the words which are arranged in rhyme. This kind of aphorism is extremely common. It's interesting to note that even with the rhyming, the meaning is not reduced.

لَا تَصْحَبْ مَنْ لَا يُنْهَضُكَ حَالُهُ وَلَا يَدُلُّكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ مَقَالُهُ

“Do not keep company with anyone whose state does not inspire you and whose speech does not lead you to God.”

Ibn Athaillah makes frequent use of the *muqabalah* arrangement. That is presenting two or more meaning in a sentence and then sequentially contrasting them with opposing meanings.

⁴¹ Rose Deighton, “Rearticulating Drunkenness and Sobriety: Epistemology and Literary Embodiment in the Shathiyāt of Abū Bakr Al-Shiblī and Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh’s Ḥikam,” *Religion Compass* 15, no. 6 (2021): 1–13, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/rec3.12395>.

This type of statement is extremely popular in Sufi quotes. Sufism's character, which frequently employs the dialectics 'dhabir' and 'bathin', necessitates the use of the *muqabalah* structure.

مَعْصِيَةٌ أَوْرَثَتْ ذُلًّا وَافْتِقَارًا خَيْرٌ مِنْ طَاعَةٍ أَوْرَثَتْ عِزًّا وَاسْتِكْبَارًا

“A disobedience that bequeathes humiliation and extreme need is better than an obedience that bequeathes self-infatuation and pride.”

Second: Aspect of theme and depth meaning.⁴² Al-Hikam is the result of Ibn Athaillah's authentic reflection, contemplation and thoughts. His spiritual experiences were recorded so that we might read about them now. This is not like the other works he published, like Al-Tanwir fi Isqat Al-Tadbir, Lathaif Al-Minan,⁴³ Taj Al-'Arus, and so forth, which are filled with Hadith, Qur'anic verses, and ulama statements.

The content of Al-Hikam's aphorisms was categorized by Ibn Ajibah Al-Hasani into four topics: *First:* Ilm of *Tadzkir* (reminder) dan *Mau'idzah*. This category's aphorisms dominate the substance of Al-Hikam and are aimed saliks who are at *maqam Al-Awam*. The works of Ibn Al-Jauzi,⁴⁴ Harits Al-Muhasibi, Al-Ghazali; the beginning of *Ihya Ulumiddin*, Abu Talib Al-Makki's *Qut Al-Qulub*, Imam Al-Qusyairi's *Al-Tahbir*,⁴⁵ and

⁴² Muhammad Y. Anis et al., “The Thematic System in the Construction of Arabic Sufism Communities and Islamic Identity,” *HTS Theological Studies* 78, no. 4 (2022): 1–6, <https://hts.org.za/index.php/hts/article/view/7469>.

⁴³ Samia Touati, “The Wanderings of Abu Al-Hasan Al-Sadili (d. 1258) According to Ibn ‘Atā’ Allāh’s i’f Al-Minan and Ibn Al-Sabbag’s Durrat Al-Asrar,” *Romano-Arabica* 18 (2018): 227–38, <https://www.ceeol.com/search/article-detail?id=808792>.

⁴⁴ Pascal Held, “Ibn Al-Jawzī’s Critique of Sufism in Talbīs Iblīs: A Re-Examination,” *Studia Islamica* 117, no. 1 (2022): 86–126, <https://doi.org/10.1163/19585705-12341440>.

⁴⁵ Matthew Ingalls, “Recasting Qushayrī’s Risāla in Fifteenth-Century Egypt,” *Journal of Sufi Studies* 2, no. 1 (2013): 93–120, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22105956-12341243>.

other similar works are among the books that are referenced in this category.

Second: Tazkiyah, it means purification of deeds and improvement of circumstances are achieved by internalizing noble morals and purifying them of despicable characteristics. Those who have begun Sufi *suluk* and plan to take it seriously belong in this category. The books that are references in this category are the works of Al-Ghazali, Al-Suhrawardi, and similar works. *Third: Achievement of Maqamat, Ahwal* and experiences of Sufism intended for *saliks* who have advanced to the advanced level and are beginning to go up the wisdom/*irfan* ladder. The books used as references are Al-Mu'amalat by Al-Hatimi, Al-Munazalat by Al-Buni⁴⁶ and similar works. *Fourth: Sufism wisdom and divine knowledge.*⁴⁷

According to Ibn Ajibah's classification, Al-Hikam is a comprehensive Sufi curriculum. It is regarded to be comprehensive because its content encompasses major themes that are essential for advancing through the Sufi ladder. nevertheless, Al-Hikam is written in extremely succinct terms and only has 264 aphorisms.

Aside from the considerations mentioned above, the moderate nature of Ibn Athaillah's Sufism ensures that readers are not tainted by controversial views. If it is possible to categorize, Ibn Athaillah belongs to the Sufi *Akhlaqi-Amali* group, which is focused and passionate in *Irsyadi-Akhlaqi*. Ibn Ajibah referred to it as *Maslak Tawhidi* (the tawhid way),⁴⁸ which is consistent with the Qur'an and Sunnah. There are topics that are contentious and controversial,⁴⁹ such as *Hulul* and *Ittihad*.⁵⁰ In reference to this,

⁴⁶ Jean-Charles Coulon, "Building Al-Būnī's Legend," *Journal of Sufi Studies* 5, no. 2 (2016): 1–26, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22105956-12341281>.

⁴⁷ Al-Hasani, *Iqadz Al-Himam Fi Syarh Al-Hikam*, 25.

⁴⁸ Setianing Nur Laili, "Nilai Tauhid Yang Terkandung Dalam Kitab Al-Hikam Karya Ibnu Athaillah" (IAIN Ponorogo, 2020).

⁴⁹ Annabel Keeler, "Wisdom in Controversy," *Journal of Sufi Studies* 7, no. 1 (2018): 1026, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22105956-12341305>.

⁵⁰ Firmansyah, "Analisis Paham Al-Ittihad Dan Al-Hulul Dalam Tradisi Tasawuf Islam," *An-Natiq: Jurnal Kajian Islam Interdisipliner* 1, no. 2 (2021): 206–22, <https://doi.org/10.33474/an-natiq.v1i2.13632>.

Ibn Mughizal Al-Syadzili made the following observation: “*Al-Subki could not have studied Al-Hikam and agreed with it if there were seeds of ittihad ideology or signs of exposure to a deviant ideology.*”⁵¹

Ibn Athaillah's opinions on *Tawbat*⁵² and asceticism (*zuhud*) also reflect his moderate thinking.⁵³ *Zuhud* does not mean isolating yourself from the outside world, but it basically means filling your heart completely with God and not turning away from Him for any reason. Sufis avoid a *dunya* that enslaves them and leads to carelessness.

ما أَحَبَبْتَ شَيْئاً إِلَّا كُنْتَ لَهُ عَبْدًا،
وَهُوَ لَا يُحِبُّ أَنْ تَكُونَ لِغَيْرِهِ عَبْدًا

“You have not loved anything without being its slave, but He does not want you to be someone else's slave.”

Moreover, Ibn Athaillah mentioned:

إِنَّمَا جَعَلَهَا مَحَلًّا لِلْأَغْيَارِ وَمَعْدِنًا لِلْأَكْدَارِ تَرْهِيدًا لَكَ فِيهَا
“He only made the world the place of alterities and the mine of impurities by way of inducing detachment (*tazhid*) in you towards it.”

In this way, a *salik's* heart is no longer drawn to or fulfilled by the *dunya*. Even if our method of understanding and reacting to the *dunya* is right, it will nevertheless bring us to the fullness of His essence, Allah.

أَمَرَكَ فِي هَذِهِ الدَّارِ بِالنَّظَرِ فِي مُكُونَاتِهِ،

⁵¹ Al-Taftāzāni, “Hikam Ibn Athaillah Al-Sakandary,” 318.

⁵² Mukhtar H. Ali, “Repentance and the Return to God: Tawba in Early Sufism,” *Journal of Sufi Studies* 9, no. 2 (2021): 247–53, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22105956-12341323>.

⁵³ Harapandi Dahri, “Moderasi Islam Pespektif Sufi: Kajian Kitab Tajul ‘Arus Karya Al-Syaikh Tajuddin Ibn ‘Athaillah Al-Sakandari,” *Jurnal Fuaduna: Jurnal Kajian Keagamaan Dan Kemasyarakatan* 4, no. 2 (2020): 126, <https://doi.org/10.30983/fuaduna.v4i2.3740>.

وَسَيَكْشِفُ لَكَ فِي تِلْكَ الدَّارِ عَنْ كَمَالِ ذَاتِهِ

“He commanded you in this world to reflect upon His creations (*bi al-nadzar fi mukawwanatihi*); but in the Hereafter He will reveal to you the Perfection of His Essence (*kamil dhatih*).”

**Kitab Misbah Al-Dzulam by Syeikh Nawawi Al-Bantani;
An Introduction**

It would be difficult to discuss Indonesian Islam without bringing up Sufism,⁵⁴ Ahlussunnah,⁵⁵ Syafi'i Madzhab, and Sheykh Nawawi Al-Bantani (1316 H). According to Azyumardi Azra,⁵⁶ Sheykh Nawawi Al-Bantani is the greatest Sheykh among Indonesian ulama, serving as the hub of the ulama network (*sanad*) spanning Southeast Asia and even the Islamic world in general. His works inspired many Islamic scholars, and are still used as textbooks in Islamic institutions starting from the science of hadith, the science of the Qur'an, tafsir, fiqh, creed (Qatrul Ghait, Syarh Kitab Masail Al-Samarqandi⁵⁷), morals and Sufism.⁵⁸

Al-Hikam is one of Sheykh Nawawi Al-Bantani's favorite books. The admiration that Muslims have for Ibn Athaillah's

⁵⁴ Jajang A. Rohmana, “Diskursus Tasawuf Nusantara Di Mekah: Respons Mukhtar Atharid Al-Bughuri Terhadap Ajaran Martabat Tujuh,” *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan* 19, no. 1 (2021): 1–36, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.31291/jlka.v19i1.923>.

⁵⁵ Syaifuddin, “Paham Teologi Di Jawa Abad XVIII-XIX M.: Kajian Atas Naskah Bayan at-Tasdiq,” *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan* 11, no. 1 (2013): 1–26, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.31291/jlk.v11i1.50>.

⁵⁶ Lukmanul Hakim et al., “Analisis Historiografi Terhadap Pemikiran Azyumardi Azra Dalam Jaringan Ulama,” *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan* 18, no. 2 (2020): 517–46, <https://doi.org/DOI: https://doi.org/10.31291/jlka.v18i2.795>.

⁵⁷ Agus Supriatna et al., “Text Reception Of The Manuscript Masa'il As-Samarqandi Written By Syeikh Abulait As-Samarqandi,” *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan* 21, no. 1 (2023): 189–214, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.31291/jlka.v21i1.996>.

⁵⁸ Zumrotul Mukaffa, “Ulama Hijaz-Jawa Pertengahan Abad XIX M: Syeikh Nawawi Al Bantani Dan Pendidikan Tasawuf,” *ALQALAM: Jurnal Keagamaan dan Kemasyarakatan* 37, no. 1 (2017): 121–42, <https://doi.org/10.32678/alqalam.v34i1.737>.

spiritual advice and the attention that the book Al-Hikam has received have inspired sheykh Nawawi's students to ask their Sheykh to write sharh on Al-Hikam. In the beginning, he was hesitant to agree with this request for two reasons: there were already many syaraha on Al-Hikam and Sheykh Nawawi believed that it was unethical to write a syarah on this great work. His "adab and tawadhu" are the only reasons for this. Because if we look at the works that sheykh Nawawi has written, it feels like writing the Al-Hikam sharh is not a completely difficult work. Indeed, an individual's sense of humility increases with their level of knowledge. Similar to rice, as it gets older, it bends more because it is more filled.

His decision was altered after visiting Medina and discovering an original Al-Hikam manuscript that unlike the ones he normally read. The manuscript contains Al-Hikam aphorisms which have been systematically compiled and clasified into several chapters (bab). Written by Sheykh Ali Al-Muttaqi Al-Hindi (d. 975 H), an Indian Sufi of the Syadziliah order who resided in Mecca and was student of Sheykh Ibn Hajar Al-Haitami. Sheykh Al-Muttaqi Al-Hindi's work is titled Al-Nahj Al-Atam fi Tartib Al-Hikam (النهج الأتم في ترتيب الحكم).

Sheykh Nawawi was inspired to write a sharh on the aphorisms of Al-Hikam at his students' request after acquiring the manuscript of Al-Muttaqi Hindi's book Al-Hikam. This was because he found something different in the Al-Muttaqi al-Hindi version of Al-Hikam compared to the manuscript of Al-Hikam which had been spread among the Ulama. Aside from that, he was even more confident and brave to begin studying Al-Hikam because of two riwayat:

First: Arabic quotation that states: “*When people who like to show off (riya') die, this world will be destroyed.*” Because they are primarily responsible for the construction of bridges, madrasas, mosques, and other charitable projects. This charity is highly advantageous for the general public, even though donations are based on *riya'*. Because of his *riya'* in charity, he might not receive a reward, but the good prayers of those who benefited from the bridge, madrasah, and mosque will never stop flowing

to the people who constructed them. According to story, there was a person who constructed a dorm for science students. He asked himself, "I don't know if my charity is sincere *Lillahi Ta'ala* or not." Once, in a dream, someone appeared to him and said, "even if your deeds are not sincere because of Allah SWT, be assured that the prayers of the Muslims for you (because they are helped by your deeds) are sincere *lillahi ta'ala*."

Second: *Rewayah* from Sheykh Abu Al-Mawahib Al-Syadzili: "I met Rasulullah in a dream, then I told him: "O Rasulullah, how I am like a child in Sufism". The Prophet said: "Read the Sufism experts' advice. A beginner in this field is, in fact, a *waliyullah*. People who have mastered this fields are like stars who are difficult to match,"⁵⁹

Sheykh Nawawi named his Sharh of Al-Hikam: *Misbah Al-Dzulam Syarh Al Nahj Al-Atam fi Tartib Al-Hikam* (مصباح الظلم شرح النهج الأتم في ترتيب الحكم). No one knows for certain when this book was written. He did not explain it either in the introduction to the sharh or at the end of the book. The only known year for which he completed the Book of Sharh is 1305 H/1887 AD, or roughly ten years before to his passing.⁶⁰

Syeikh Nawawi Al-Bantani and Systematization of Sharh Al-Hikam

The Book of Al-Hikam in its several published forms is a compilation of aphorisms which are arranged randomly and without chapters. This is deemed odd by the readers. The arrangement is not as common as the Sufism works, which are cited by academics like *Ihya Ulumudin*, *Minhajul Abidin*,

⁵⁹ Al-Bantani, *Misbah Al-Dzulam Syarh Al-Nahj Al-Atamm Fi Tabwib Al-Hikam*, 1.

⁶⁰ Nanal Ainal Fauz, "Mishbah Adz-Dzulam, Kitab Monumental Syaikh Nawawi Banten Dalam Bidang Tasawuf," *sanadmedia.com*, 2021, <https://sanadmedia.com/post/mishbah-adz-dzulam-kitab-monumental-syaikh-nawawi-banten-dalam-bidang-tasawuf>.

Manazil Al-Sairin,⁶¹ Risalah Al-Qusairiyah, and others. Moreover, Al-Hikam has been described to be a book with no beginning or conclusion. It means that a reader can begin reading it anywhere and not simply on the first page. Many ulama or kyai who dedicate their lives to teach Al-Hikam have this kind of perception.

It can occasionally be challenging for reviewers to find a comprehensive understanding of a topic due to the unsystematic aphorisms. The reviewer has to read each aphorism in order to identify which ones contain the same topic. The author did not provide chapters or sub-chapters in writing it, so it is far from being systematic.

In the first discussion, Ibn Athaillah explained about 'relying on one's own deeds'. Next, he talks about the *maqam Tajrid* and *maqam Asbab* in the second aphorism, which are unrelated to the first aphorism, and so on.⁶²

Regarding the sequence of Al-Hikam's aphorisms, there are two viewpoints that analyses the random arrangement of the aphorisms. *First perspective* posits that Al-Hikam actually has a precise purpose for this arrangement, despite the fact that it appears random. This arrangement hides a spiritual secret because aphorisms are related to one another. This opinion was delivered by Sheykh Ali Gomaa, former grand mufti of Egypt.

Second perspective views that the random arrangement of Al-Hikam has no specific reason. These aphorisms are reflection of the author's personal spiritual experience, condensed into a concise statement and depth. Therefore, there is no logical connection (*irtibath mantiqi*) between the first and subsequent aphorisms. Furthermore, the author does not group them into various chapters addressing the same topic. This viewpoint was delivered by Abu Al-Wafa Al-Taftazani.⁶³

⁶¹ Mukhtar H. Ali, "The 'Doctrine of Love' in 'Abd Allāh Al-Anṣārī's Manāzil Al-Sā'irīn with Critical Paraphrase of 'Abd Al-Razzāq Kāshānī's Commentary," *Journal of Sufi Studies* 5, no. 2 (2016): 140–55, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22105956-12341288>.

⁶² Ma'ruf Khozin, "Kitab Hikam Yang Sistematis," *tarbiyahislamiyah.id*, 2020, <https://tarbiyahislamiyah.id/kitab-hikam-yang-sistematis/>.

⁶³ Al-Taftāzāni, "Hikam Ibn Athaillah Al-Sakandary."

Thus, Al-Muttaqi Al-Hindi was inspired to reorganize and categorize Al-Hikam's aphorisms into thirty chapters in order to make the arrangement more systematical. The first aphorism in this form is no longer about depending on one's own deeds; من علامة الاعتماد على العمل نقصان الرجاء عند وجود الزلل
“One of the signs of relying on one's own deeds is the loss of hope when a downfall occurs.”

He starts out by addressing the concept of ‘ilm (knowledge), as in earlier Sufism books:

العلم النافع هو الذي ينبسط في الصدر شعاعه،
وينكشف عن القلب قناعه

“Beneficial knowledge is the one whose ray of light expands in the mind and uncovers the veil over the heart.”

The aphorism with the theme "beneficial knowledge" was on number 231 in the original sequence. The first chapter contains a discussion (باب العلم) which contains three aphorisms. It is customary for traditional Muslim scholars to write their works with a chapter on “Ilm” coming before a detailed discussion of other chapters. This kind of systematicity is found in several disciplines of science; Fiqh, Ushul Fiqh, Hadith, Theology, Morals and Sufism.

The *sharh* was authored by Imam Nawawi in accordance with the format established by Al-Muttaqi Al-Hindi in Al-Nahju Al-Atamm. This structure consists of 30 chapters, with containing 253 pearls of wisdom, as well as a conclusion. The 30 chapters are chapter on knowledge (‘Ilm) (3 aphorisms), Tawbah (5 aphorisms), *ikhlas* (17 aphorisms), prayers (8 aphorisms), *Uzlah* and *khumul* (5 aphorisms), maintaining and utilizing of time (6 aphorisms), Dhikr (3 aphorisms), *tafakkur* (3 aphorisms), *zuhud* (11 aphorisms), need of Allah (7 aphorisms), *Riyadhat Al-Nafs* (15 aphorisms), *Khauf* and *Raja'* (9 aphorisms), etiquettes of prayers (14 aphorisms), *tawakkal* to Allah (9 aphorisms), patience in disasters (4 aphorisms), God's Hidden Grace and Help (21 aphorisms), friendship (4 aphorisms), gredi-

ness (3 aphorisms), humility (4 aphorisms), *Istidraj* (2 aphorisms), *Al-Wird* and *Al-Warid* (14 aphorisms), The Levels of *Salikin* (13 aphorisms), *Qabdh* and *Basth* (4 aphorisms), *Anwar wa Ru'yatuha* (9 aphorisms), The worshipper's closeness to Allah (9 aphorisms), God's proximity to his servants (13 aphorisms), the eminence of *arifin billah* (4 aphorisms), *Firasah* and inferring something (10 aphorisms), advice and conditions to over the hearts of the listeners (6 aphorisms), Gratitude and Its Levels (8 aphorisms). The book concludes with Imam Ibnu Athaillah al-Sakandari's prayer to his god, known as the *munajat*.⁶⁴

Sheykh Nawawi Al-Bantani's Methodology of Sharh Al-Hikam

Writing a *sharh* (interpretation) of *kitab* entails more than just offering comments and explanations. The author will analyze the words or sentences in the *matan*, explain them in simpler terms, support the main ideas in the *matan* with arguments and assertions, and offer more materials to enrich the meaning of the *matan* such as Fathul Qarib Sharh of Taqrib, Sharh Ibn Aqil on Matan Alfiyah, Iqadz Al-Himam Sharh of Al-Hikam and others.

Sheykh Nawawi Al-Bantani is known as a scholar who specializes in Sharh Kitab Turats, due to his hundreds of publications, the majority of which are sharh, remarks, and explanations on the Matan of kitab Turats.⁶⁵ His sharh was not only from one scientific discipline but also from a number of Islamic disciplines, including Sufism, Hadith, Fiqh, Akhlak, and Aqeedah. A significant sharh he wrote is Misbah al-Dzulam, which is written differently than other sharh of Al-Hikam.

The Misbah Al-Dzulam is written by using specific methods and approaches of interpretation. Sheykh Nawawi Al-Bantani's method in Sharh Al-Hikam: Rearranging Al-Hikam's aphorisms and classifying them into 30 chapters, providing a

⁶⁴ Al-Bantani, *Misbah Al-Dzulam Syarh Al-Nahj Al-Atamm Fi Tabwib Al-Hikam*.

⁶⁵ Muqoddas, "Syekh Nawawi Al-Bantani Al-Jawi Ilmuan Spesialis Ahli Syarah Kitab Kuning."

brief introduction to each chapter, providing linguistic analysis, explanation technique, and interpretation approach on verses listed in Al-Hikam.

1. The Systematic Sequence of Al-Hikam

Sheikh Nawawi Al-Bantani wrote the Sharh of Al-Hikam using a different systematic. Before Kitab Misbah Al-Dzulam, all of the Al-Hikam sharh was written following the original Al-Hikam manuscript's form, without chapters and with a tendency toward less systematic.⁶⁶

Sharh written by Sheikh Nawawi is using a more structured Al-Hikam sequence and it is divided into 30 chapters. This systematics was adopted from kitab Al-Nahj Al-Atamm fi Tabwib Al-Hikam by Sheikh Muttaqi Al-Hindi. This systematics is expected to be of great assistance to many scholars exploring the Sufi lessons taught by Sheikh Ibn Athaillah. This systematic structure allows scholars to conduct intertextual analysis quickly between aphorisms and other aphorisms in a single chapter.

Table 1.

For example: The First chapter (Bab Al-Ilm)

Original version	Systematical version in Misbah Al-Dzulam
1. مِنْ عَلَامَةِ الْاِعْتِمَادِ عَلَى الْعَمَلِ، نُقْصَانُ الرَّجَاءِ عِنْدَ وُجُودِ الرَّزْلِ.	1. الْعِلْمُ النَّافِعُ الَّذِي يَنْبَسِطُ فِي الصَّدْرِ شُعَاعُهُ، وَيُنْكَشِفُ بِهِ عَنِ الْقَلْبِ قِنَاعَهُ. (231)
2. إِرَادَتُكَ التَّجْرِيدَ مَعَ إِقَامَةِ اللَّهِ إِيَّاكَ فِي الْأَسْبَابِ مِنْ الشَّهْوَةِ الْخَفِيَّةِ، وَإِرَادَتُكَ	2. خَيْرُ الْعِلْمِ مَا كَانَتْ الْحَشِيَّةُ مَعَهُ. (232)

⁶⁶ Muttaqin, “Al-Hikam Mutiara Pemikiran Sufistik Ibnu Atha’illah as-Sakandari.”

الأسباب مع إقامة الله إياك
في التجريد انحطاط عن
الهمة العلية.

3. العلم إن قارنته
الخشية فلك ، وإلا
فعليك. (233)

Researchers can find aphorisms that describe concept of knowledge from a Sufi perspective in the systematic version in Misbah Al-Dzulam:

1. Beneficial knowledge is the one whose ray of light expands in the mind and uncovers the veil over the heart.
2. The best knowledge is the one accompanied by fear (*al-khashya*).
3. If fear is united with knowledge, then it is for you; if not, then it is against you.

The three aphorisms are interrelated to one another, interpret one another, and complement one another. It looks like a puzzle, putting pieces back together after they were first dispersed; then creates a complete picture. It could improve the reviewer's comprehension of the Sufism concept offered if enriched with explanations found in the Sharh.

The original systematics of the Al-Hikam manuscript as shown in the above table will give the reader a different feeling. There is a significant gap between aphorisms 1, 2, and 3. Therefore, it makes sense that many readers would find it strange to read Al-Hikam according to its original structure. Even Sheykh Abul wafa al-Taftazani concluded that there was no logical relationship (*irtibath manthiqi*) between one aphorism and another in the compilation of the original manuscript version of Al-Hikam.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Al-Taftāzāni, "Hikam Ibn Athaillah Al-Sakandary."

2. Introduction of Chapters

The author writes a short description of each chapter as a *muqaddimah*. There are two parts to this description: the qualitative and the quantitative parts. Quantitative description related to the number of aphorisms contained in a chapter. On the other hand, the qualitative description contains:

a. Rationale for chapter placement

In the first chapter (Chapter Al-Ilmu), Syekh Nawawi explains the reasons for placing the theme of Al-Ilmu in the first chapter.

(باب العلم)

"قدّم المصنف العلم، لأنه بمنزلة الشجرة و العبادة بمنزلة الثمرة.
و ذكر في هذا الباب ثلاث حكم."

الأولى قوله:

العلم النافع: هو الذي ينبسط في الصدر شعاعه.....الخ.⁶⁸

b. Chapter conceptual explanation

Sometimes, Syekh Nawawi goes over the main ideas of the chapter before entering into an analysis of the collection of aphorisms. This is to make sure that readers possess the fundamental knowledge needed to analyze aphorisms, which are frequently hard to understand. In addition, Al-Hikam's dialogical narrative approach frequently necessitates that readers understand the fundamental ideas before moving on to the aphorism. this is in accordance with the second chapter, which compiles aphorisms related to repentance (باب التوبة).

(باب التوبة)

وهي من أعمال القلب، وهي تبرئة من الذنوب بأن يوطن قلبه و
يجرد عزمه على ان لا يعود الى الذنب تعظيماً لله و حذراً من سخطه

⁶⁸ Al-Bantani, *Misbah Al-Dzulam Syarh Al-Nahj Al-Atamm Fi Tabwib Al-Hikam*, 4.

وأليم عذابه، لا لرغبة دنيوية أو رهبة من الناس أو لضعف في النفس أو لفقر أو لغير ذلك. وهذا باب ثان، وذكر المصنف في هذا الباب خمس حكم⁶⁹

c. Syarah conclusion to chapter

In addition to offering a theoretical explanation of the chapter, *Tarjamat Al-Bab* provides a *sharh* conclusion. Sheykh Nawawi stated in the book's preface/prologue that the chapter descriptions also served as *al-Sharh al-Mujaz*, or condensed sharh, for the compilation of al-Hikam aphorisms. so that readers can learn everything they need to know about the chapter's broad contents just by looking at the description.

(باب الإخلاص في العمل)

فإخلاص الأبرار هو: السلامة من الرياء و السمعة. و إخلاص المقربين هو: العمل بقصد الامتثال من غير طلب جزاء. و إخلاص خاصة المقربين هو: تجريد العمل من باعث غير قصد التقرب. و هذا باب ثالث، و ذكر المصنف في هذا الباب سبع عشرة حكمة.⁷⁰

d. Sufi's Quotations about the chapter

Syekh Nawawi uses quotes from well-known Sufis in some of the chapters to define and illustrate the concepts discussed.

(باب الذكر)

قال أبو مدين: الذكر شهود المذكور و دوام الحضور. أه
و هذا باب سابع، ذكر المصنف في هذا الباب ثلاث حكم.⁷¹

e. Quantitative description

In some cases where the chapter includes topics that are hard to understand or when the author feels that an introduction is necessary, Syekh Nawawi provides a qualitative explanation.

⁶⁹ Al-Bantani, 9.

⁷⁰ Al-Bantani, 14.

⁷¹ Al-Bantani, 49.

The author merely gives a brief summary of the chapter number and the total number of aphorisms collected in chapters where the idea is well-known and not overly complex.

(باب أداب الدعاء)

و هذا باب ثالث عشر، ذكر المصنف في هذا الباب أربع عشرة
حكمة.⁷²

3. Linguistic Analysis

The goal of authoring *sharh* books, such as the Al-Hikam *sharh*, is generally to make the texts easy to understand. The writer's meticulous choice of diction and arrangement frequently makes it difficult for readers from different generations to grasp the author's intended meaning. These difficulties may arise from using words that are no longer popular (*gharib*), sentence structure that is too concise or contains *majaz*, *kinayah*, and other *balaghah* elements.

Sheykh Nawawi usually begins his *sharh* by examining the morphological and grammatical aspects. The analysis can be divided into the following categories:

a. *Dhabt alfadz*

It means punctuating words or sentences (Arabic diacritical mark or *harakat*) in aphorism texts, as well as explaining their meaning. It is described on *sharh* of aphorism no. 64:

64. الفاقات بٌسط المواهب

(البُسط) – بضم الباء- جمع بساط، والمراد: المحل.⁷³

Sheykh Nawawi punctuated the word **بسط** with *dhammah* to make its meaning clearer. The word means ‘place’. By reading the same letter with the fathah (**بسط**), it means ‘to extend, broaden, and expand,’ so this helps to prevent reading errors.

⁷² Al-Bantani, 90.

⁷³ Al-Bantani, 66.

Or *sharh* of aphorism no.116:

116. اذا فتح لك وجهة من التعرف، فلا تبال معها ان قل عملك....
قوله (وَجْهَةٌ) -بكسر الواو وضمها- و معناها: الجهة، و المراد هنا:
السبب و الطريق.⁷⁴

The author notes in the context above that there are two ways to pronounce the word **وجهة**: *kasrah* (وجهة) or *dhammah* (وَجْهَةٌ). The meaning of both is same.

b. *Tafseer gharib* and sufism term

It refers to explaining words with specific meanings in Sufism or words that are rarely used. It is described on *sharh* of aphorism no. 155:

155. الوارد يوجد في الدار الآخرة، و الورد ينطوي بانطواء هذه الدار،...
(الوارد) الوارد وهو مايرد على باطن العبد من اللطائف و الأنوار.⁷⁵

According to Sheykh Nawawi **وارد**, refers to concepts like kindness and enlightenment that a *salik* experiences in their spiritual way.

Furthermore, the author explains that the meaning of **القُطعة** in aphorism no. 83 is enmity (Al-Adawah).

83. لولا ميادين النفوس ما تحقق سير السائرين، اذ لا مسافة بينك و
بينه حتى تطويها رحلتك، و لا قُطعة بينك و بينه حتى تمحوها
وصلتك. و القطعة -بضم القاف- معناه العداوة.⁷⁶

c. Grammatical analysis

In writing *sharh* of Al-Hikam, grammar was an aspect analyzed by Sheykh Nawawi. Not all of them were analyzed;

⁷⁴ Al-Bantani, 114.

⁷⁵ Al-Bantani, 160.

⁷⁶ Al-Bantani, 81.

only select aphorisms were judged relevant for analyzing their grammar, such as aphorism number 109:

(109) سوابق الهمم لا تخرق أسوار الأقدار. وإضافة إلى قوله ((سوابق الهمم)) اما من إضافة الصفة للموصوف أى الهمم السريعة فى التأثير للأشياء. و إما من إضافة المشبه به إلى المشبه كإضافة الأسوار إلى الأقدار، أى الهمم الشبيهة بالخيل الشديدة الجري فى السرعة لا تخرق أقدار الله الشبيهة بالأسوار المحيطة بالمدن فى القوة على المنع.⁷⁷

The idhafah in the aphorism above, according to Sheykh Nawawi, could be:

- *Idhafah shifat* towards *maushuf*, which means: quick determination to change something.
- *Idhafah Musyabbah bih* to *Musyabbah*, which means: a determination as strong and fast as a running horse that will not be able to breach the fortress of destiny of Allah SWT.

4. Three Models Employed by Sheykh Nawawi

Misbah Al-Dzulam is categorized as a *sharh mutawassit* book (moderate); it is neither excessively long nor overly short. The shortest *sharh* is found in the first chapter of the second aphorism (Al-Ilmu), where it is just a small paragraph. The longest *sharh* is the aphorism *sharh* 11th (chapter: Sincerity in Charity) taking up to 4 pages.

The *sharh* applied by sheykh Nawawi can be classified into three models:

- Providing an interpretation or explanation to a piece of wisdom. It's applied on aphorism *sharh* no.71:

(71) أصل كل معصية و غفلة و شهوة: الرضا عن النفس، و أصل كل طاعة و يقظة و عفة؛ عدم الرضا منك عنها. (أصل كل معصية و غفلة) عن الرب، (وشهوة) أى تعلق بما يشغل عن الله تعالى (الرضا عن النفس)؛ لأنه يجب اتباع أمرها و تغطية أمرها.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Al-Bantani, 104.

⁷⁸ Al-Bantani, 72.

- Providing an advice or suggestions that are relevant to the meaning of aphorisms by using command sentences. It's applied on aphorism sharh no.5:

(5) لَا صَغِيرَةً إِذَا قَابَلَكَ عَدُوُّهُ ، وَلَا كَبِيرَةً إِذَا وَاجَهَكَ فَضْلُهُ .
أى: استعظم ذنبك و ان كان صغيرا!، لأنه لا صغيرة إذا قابلك عدوُّه و
عاقبك، و ذلك ليكون استعظام الذنب باعثا لك على التوبة منه. ولا
تقنط من رحمة الله و عفوهِ، و ان كان ذنبك كبيرا، لأنه لا كبيرة اذا
قابلك فضله و عفا عنك. و المؤمن يكون بين الخوف و الرجاء، لو
وزن رجاء المؤمن و خوفه لاعتدلا.⁷⁹

- Analyzing the concept of wisdom holistically using clearer terms and narration. It's applied on aphorism *sharh* no.1:

(1) الْعِلْمُ النَّافِعُ الَّذِي يَنْبَسِطُ فِي الصَّدْرِ شِعَاعُهُ ، وَيَنْكَشِفُ بِهِ عَنِ
الْقَلْبِ قِتَاعُهُ . أى العلم الوارد نفعه في الأثار هو العلم الذي يبسط في
صدر العالم و السامع ضياء نوره، فينشر القلب للإسلام و ينكشف
عن قلب العالم و السامع غطاؤه، فتزول عنه الشكوك و الأوهام،
وهو علم الشريعة و آدابها و العلم بالله الذي جاء به الرسول من
ربه.⁸⁰

The third model is the *sharh* model which Sheykh Nawawi most frequently used to describe aphorisms.

By employing the three models previously mentioned, Sheykh Nawawi continues his sharh by providing arguments that are important to the subject of wisdom and come from the Al-Qur'an, Hadith, the statements of *Shahabat*, and quotations from Sufi figures. Therefore, even though this book is classified as a *mutawasit sharh*, it contains explanations rich in meaning.

In certain aphorisms, Sheykh Nawawi provides an explanation of the level or *maqam* of *salik* related to this wisdom. Therefore, this aphorism cannot be understood only at

⁷⁹ Al-Bantani, 11.

⁸⁰ Al-Bantani, 4.

one particular level. This is similar to the 9th aphorism *sharh*, which divides *Ikhlas* into three levels: *Ikhlas al-awam*, *Khawash*, and *Khawash al-Khawash*:

(9) الأعمال صور قائمة و أرواحها وجود سر الإخلاص فيها أي الأعمال الظاهرة كأشباح ليس فيها أرواح، فأرواحها التي بها نفعها وجود الإخلاص فيها. و الإخلاص ثلاثة أنواع: الأول: الإخلاص من الرياء و السمعة و قصد موافقة هواء النفس، وهو طالب لجزيل الثواب و حسن المآب و هارب عن أليم العذاب و سوء الحساب، و هذا إخلاص العوام. الثاني: الإخلاص من ملاحظة الصواب و خوف العقاب، وهو إخلاص الخواص. الثالث: الإخلاص من رؤية العمل، فلا يرى من نفسه حولا و لا قوة. و هذا مقام الصدق، وهو إخلاص خواص الخواص.⁸¹

5. Interpretation Approach on Verses Listed in Al-Hikam

Sheykh Nawawi is a multidisciplinary scholar who possesses exceptional expertise in exegesis in addition to his expertise of Fiqh, Hadith, Theology, and Sufism. His works such as *Tafsir Marah Labid*⁸² or *Tafsir Al-Munir*⁸³ demonstrate his proficiency in analyzing the meaning of the Qur'an.

In *Misbah Al-Dzulam*, His expertise in interpreting Al-Qur'an was evident. He normally employs *tahlili* approach is in his *Tafsir* books, and in the studied text, he applies both the *Tahlili* and *Isyari* approaches⁸⁴ (the Sufistic exegesis approach).

⁸¹ Al-Bantani, 14–15.

⁸² And Abur Hamdi Usman Noor Umar Muhammad, “Al-Bantānī and the Interpretation of Ṣifāt Verses in Marāḥ Labīd,” *HTS Theological Studies* 79, no. 2 (2023), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v79i1.7661>.

⁸³ Muhammad Fathoni Mufidah, Ida; Hasyim, “Menelisis Corak Khas Penafsiran Nusantara (Studi Kasus Tafsir Marah Labid Karya Syaikh Nawawi Al-Bantani),” *Nun Jurnal Studi Alquran Dan Tafsir Di Nusantara* 7, no. 1 (2021): 141–62, <https://jurnalnun.ariat.or.id/index.php/nun/article/view/232>.

⁸⁴ Ahmad Khamid, “Interpretasi Sufistik Atas Teks Al-Qur'an: Memahami Analisis Nadzari Dan Isyari,” *Jurnal Al Irfani Ilmu Al Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 1, no. 02 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.51700/irfani.v1i02.65>.

ach).⁸⁵ *Tafsir Isyari* is an attempt, based on the cryptic signs known to those who walk the spiritual way (*salikin*), to interpret the Qur'an with a meaning different from its *dhahir* meaning.⁸⁶ The *Isyari* approach⁸⁷ is applied to Qur'anic verses that is in *sharh* of aphorisms, so that the interpretation's context matches the aphorism's meaning. It's described on *sharh* no. 164 which discusses Al-Wird and Al-Warid:

متى وردت الواردات الإلهية اليك، هدمت العوائد عليك
{النمل: 34}

“When divine inspirations come upon you, they demolish your habits.
“Surely the kings, when they enter a town, ruin it (Al-Nam: 34).”

Sheykh Nawawi interpreted the above verse in *Isyari* approach that the heart is often held captive by *syahwat* (desire) and *nafsu* (lust). However, if *waridat ilahiyah* (God's gift), has entered the heart and is acting as a spiritual king, He will eliminate the negative effects of *syahwat* within the person's soul. Then, because of the power of *waridat*, He will transform the soul, which was initially negative due to the effect of *syahwat*, to become good and enlightened.⁸⁸

The explanation of this verse in *Tafsir Marah Labid* takes place within the context of Queen Balqis' fear and submission to Prophet Sulaiman As. In a resigned tone and postponing her decision, Balqis said: “*The habit of kings, when they enter a country with their troops, is to always cause damage. They frequently*

⁸⁵ Fuad Basit, Abdul; Nawawi, “Epistemologi Tafsir Isyari,” *Jurnal Al-Fath* 13, no. 1 (2019): 68–87, <https://jurnal.uinbanten.ac.id/index.php/alfath/article/view/2893>.

⁸⁶ Muhammed Husein Al-Dzahabi, *Al-Tafsir Wa Al-Mufasssirun* (Cairo: Dar Al-Hadits, 2012), 125.

⁸⁷ Basit, Abdul; Nawawi, “Epistemologi Tafsir Isyari.”

⁸⁸ Al-Bantani, *Misbah Al-Dzulam Syarh Al-Nahj Al-Atamm Fi Tabwib Al-Hikam*, 168.

destroy buildings, destroying inside. They also humiliated their leaders by killing, enslaving, and mistreating them.”⁸⁹

Conclusion

This study explored that Al-Hikam, a seminal text in Sufism, offers unique perspectives often overlooked in other standard Sufi writings. Sheykh Nawawi Al-Bantani has been instrumental in presenting Al-Hikam in a novel way. This research provides an in-depth analysis of Sheykh Nawawi Al-Bantani’s systematic organization of Al-Hikam’s aphorisms within the Misbah Al-Dzulam, as well as his Sharh methodology. The findings suggest that Sheykh Nawawi’s methodical approach provides a well-structured and accessible framework, thereby simplifying the intricate aphorisms of Al-Hikam for both students (*santri*) and scholars. This represents a significant progression in Al-Hikam studies.

This study contributes to the existing scholarly discourse by underlining the distinctive pedagogical approach of Sheykh Nawawi Al-Bantani. It emphasizes the critical role of systematic methodology in religious education and elucidates how complex spiritual texts can be made more accessible.

The practical implications of this research are substantial for the realm of Sufism teaching. The systematic approach employed in Misbah Al-Dzulam could be integrated into advanced religious curricula (Ma’had Aly), thereby fostering a deeper comprehension of Sufism learning among students. This could potentially promote the spiritual and intellectual growth of the *santri*, encouraging a more profound engagement with Sufism literature.

While this research provides valuable insights, it is crucial to recognize its limitations. The study primarily depends on qualitative analysis, which may be subjective. Future research could include quantitative methods or comparative studies with other Sharh works to yield a more holistic understanding. Furthermore, investigating the reception and impact of Misbah Al-Dzulam in

⁸⁹ Muhammad Nawawi Al-Bantani, *Tafsir Marah Labid* (Beirut: Dar Al Kutub Al Ilmiyah, n.d.), 173.

modern educational contexts could also provide additional valuable insights.

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