

THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF SPIRITUAL EDUCATION IN THE WEST SUMATRAN SYATTARIYAH MANUSCRIPT TRADITION: A LIVING MANUSCRIPT AS EPISTEMOLOGICAL INSTRUMENT OF SUFI RECEPTION

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ABSTRACT

This article examines how a Syattariyah teaching manuscript, copied by Shaykh 'Alī 'Imrān and actively used as a pedagogical text at Pondok Pesantren Nūr al-Yaqīn Pakandangan, West Sumatra, epistemologically receives the teachings of 'abd al-Ra'ūf al-Sinkilī and constructs a framework of spiritual education within the living manuscript tradition of the Syattariyah Order. Previous studies on this order have focused primarily on historical transmission, ritual practice, scholarly networks, and doctrinal debates surrounding waḥdat al-wujūd, while the epistemological role of teaching manuscripts in the production and transmission of spiritual knowledge remains underexplored. This study employs a qualitative, manuscript-based philological-critical analysis guided by Jaussian reception theory, supported by limited contextual interviews with practitioners of the tradition. The analysis reveals three forms of Sufi reception: the preservation of metaphysical substance, the modification of theological terminology, and the localization of spiritual teachings into pedagogical categories. Through these processes, the manuscript constructs an epistemology of spiritual education oriented toward ma'rifatullāh through the integration of metaphysical knowledge, self-knowledge, and transformative spiritual practice. The article demonstrates that the receipt of al-Sinkilī's teachings is not merely textual transmission but an epistemological process through which spiritual knowledge is constructed, validated, and transmitted. This contributes to the study of Sufi pedagogy and Nusantara Islamic manuscript traditions by demonstrating that the tarīkat text functions as an epistemological instrument for producing, selecting, validating, and transmitting spiritual knowledge.

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Keywords: Sufi Epistemology; Spiritual Education; Sufi Reception; 'Abd al-Ra'ūf Al-Sinkilī; Syattariyah Order

ABSTRAK

Artikel ini mengkaji bagaimana manuskrip pengajian Tarekat Syattariyah — salinan Syekh 'Alī 'Imrān yang masih aktif digunakan sebagai teks pedagogis di Pondok Pesantren Nūr al-Yaqīn Pakandangan, Sumatera Barat — meresepsi secara epistemologis ajaran 'abd al-Ra'ūf al-Sinkilī dan membangun kerangka pendidikan spiritual dalam tradisi living manuscript Tarekat Syattariyah. Kajian tentang tarekat ini sebelumnya lebih berfokus pada transmisi historis, praktik ritual, jaringan ulama, dan perdebatan doktrinal seputar waḥdat al-wujūd, sementara peran epistemologis teks pengajaran dalam produksi dan transmisi pengetahuan spiritual masih relatif jarang dikaji. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif berbasis filologi-kritis manuskrip yang dipandu oleh teori resepsi Jauss, didukung wawancara kontekstual terbatas dengan para pelaku tradisi. Temuan menunjukkan tiga bentuk resepsi Sufi: pelestarian substansi metafisis, modifikasi terminologi teologis, dan lokalisasi ajaran spiritual ke dalam kategori pedagogis. Melalui proses tersebut, manuskrip membangun epistemologi pendidikan spiritual yang berorientasi pada ma'rifatullāh melalui integrasi pengetahuan metafisis, pengenalan diri, dan praktik transformasi spiritual. Artikel ini menunjukkan bahwa resepsi terhadap ajaran al-Sinkilī bukan sekadar transmisi tekstual, melainkan proses epistemologis yang memungkinkan pengetahuan spiritual dibangun, divalidasi, dan ditransmisikan.

Kata Kunci: Epistemologi Sufi; Pendidikan Spiritual; Resepsi Sufistik; 'Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Sinkilī; Tarekat Syattariyah.

INTRODUCTION

How does a community of Sufi practitioners transform received metaphysical teaching into a living system of spiritual education? This article addresses that question through a philological-critical and reception-theoretical analysis of a Syattariyah teaching manuscript in active pedagogical use at Pondok Pesantren Nūr al-Yaqīn Pakandangan, West Sumatra. More specifically, it asks: How does the Pakandangan Syattariyah manuscript epistemologically receive, reformulate, and transmit the spiritual teachings of 'abd al-Ra'ūf al-Sinkilī, and what epistemology of spiritual education emerges from that process?

Studies on Sufi orders in the Indonesian archipelago have generally positioned *tarikat* as historical phenomena, religious ritual, or metaphysical teaching systems.¹ In West Sumatra, the Syattariyah Order occupies a central position as one of the oldest Sufi traditions deeply rooted in the religious life of the Minangkabau people. Through the network of Shaykh Burhānuddīn Ulakan and the intellectual transmission of 'abd al-Ra'ūf al-Sinkilī, the Syattariyah Order functions as a spiritual education system shaping the religious awareness, ethics, and life orientation of its followers in a structured and sustainable manner.²

Previous studies on the Syattariyah Order may be classified into four major clusters. The first consists of historical-transmission studies examining scholarly networks, genealogies of transmission, and the dissemination of Syattariyah teachings in the Malay-Indonesian world.³ The second comprises ritual-community studies focusing on religious practices, communal traditions, and socio-religious dynamics.⁴ The third consists of doctrinal-metaphysical studies exploring concepts such as *wahdat al-wujūd* and Sufi ontology. The fourth comprises textual-pedagogical studies discussing Sufi teachings through texts and educational practices.⁵ While these studies have significantly

¹Martin van Bruinessen, *Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah di Indonesia* (Bandung: Mizan, 1992), 1–5; Oman Fathurahman, “Reinforcing Neo-Sufism in the Malay-Indonesian World: Shattārīyah Order in West Sumatra,” *Studia Islamika* 10, no. 3 (2003).

²Oman Fathurahman, *Tarekat Syattariyah di Minangkabau: Teks dan Konteks* (Jakarta: Prenadamedia, 2008); Azyumardi Azra, *The Origins of Islamic Reformism in Southeast Asia: Networks of Malay-Indonesian and Middle Eastern 'Ulama' in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), 89–102.

³Azyumardi Azra, *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad XVII dan XVIII* (Bandung: Mizan, 1994), 186–195.

⁴Zulkifli, “Sufism in Java,” *Studia Islamika* 10, no. 2 (2003): 1–27, <https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v10i2.622>; Welhendri Azwar dan Muliono, “The Multifaced Politics: A Study on Polarization of Political Behavior of Tarekat Community in West Sumatera, Indonesia,” *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 60, no. 2 (2022): 315–346, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2022.602.315-346>.

⁵William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 79–85; Ahmad Rivauzi, “Landasan Filosofis Pemikiran Tasawuf 'Abd al-Ra'ūf Al-Sinkilī tentang Allah, Manusia, dan Alam,” *Teologia* 28, no. 2 (2017): 299–328, 214

enriched the field, limited scholarly attention has been paid to the epistemic role of living teaching manuscripts as instruments for selecting, validating, and transmitting spiritual knowledge, i.e., to the epistemological function of the *tarīkat* text itself.

In the context of Malay-Nusantara Sufism, 'abd al-Ra'ūf al-Sinkilī (1615–1693) occupies a central position as the khalifah appointed to disseminate the Syattariyah Order in the Malay-Indonesian world. Gaining legitimacy within the Haramain network through his teacher Aḥmad al-Qushāshī, he is also recognized as a productive scholar across multiple disciplines (*fiqh, tafsīr, and taṣawwuf*) and is recorded as the first Malay-language Qur'anic commentator, author of *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd*.⁶ His Sufi thought demonstrates an integrative character rooted in the Qur'an and hadith, particularly in his discussion of monotheism and the "essence of being"⁷, and his theological caution regarding *waḥdat al-wujūd* can be understood as an effort to maintain the acceptability of Sufi teaching without exceeding the limits of orthodox language.⁸

In West Sumatra, the reception of al-Sinkilī's thought took place through the Syattariyah Order brought by Shaykh Burhānuddīn Ulakan (1646–1699), one of al-Sinkilī's students.⁹ Within the Pakandangan branch, the tradition developed through adaptation to local religious culture, producing a selective and

<https://doi.org/10.21580/teo.2017.28.2.1451>; Oman Fathurahman, "Iṭḥāf al-Dhakī by Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī: A Commentary of Waḥdat al-Wujūd for Jāwī Audiences," *Archipel* 81 (2011): 177–198, <https://doi.org/10.3406/arch.2011.4274>.

⁶Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Sinkilī, *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* (Singapura, t.t.).

⁷Toshihiko Izutsu, *God and Man in the Qur'an* (Tokyo: Keio Institute of Cultural and Linguistic Studies, 1964), 238–245; Ahmad Rivauzi, "Landasan Filosofis Pemikiran Tasawuf 'Abd al-Ra'ūf Al-Sinkilī tentang Allah, Manusia, dan Alam," 299–328.

⁸Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *The Mysticism of Hamzah Fansuri* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1970), 55–63; Oman Fathurahman, "Iṭḥāf al-Dhakī by Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī," 177–198.

⁹Oman Fathurahman, *Tarekat Syattariyah di Minangkabau* (Jakarta: Prenadamedia, 2008), 85–102.

contextual form of teaching.¹⁰ The primary medium for transmitting these teachings is the Syattariyah teaching text actively used at Nūr al-Yaqīn Islamic Boarding School in Pakandangan, i.e., the manuscript of Shaykh 'alī 'Imrān, which this study examines as a living manuscript functioning as a pedagogical instrument of spiritual education.

The epistemological dimension of this tradition particularly how spiritual knowledge is acquired, validated, and transmitted within the tarīkat has received limited scholarly attention.¹¹ Previous studies have not examined how al-Sinkilī's teachings were received epistemologically in *tarīkat* teaching texts,¹² nor how this reception constituted an operational framework of spiritual education.¹³ In other words, the tarīkat text has not been positioned as the primary locus for reading the epistemology of spiritual education.¹⁴

The novelty of this article lies in analyzing a Syattariyah teaching manuscript as an epistemological instrument through a reception theory approach, demonstrating that the Sufi reception of al-Sinkilī's teachings functions as a mechanism for selecting, reinterpreting, and regulating metaphysical doctrine.

Based on these considerations, this article aims to analyze the epistemology of spiritual education in the text of the Syattariyah Tarekat study group as an epistemological reception of the teachings of 'Abd al-Ra'ūf Al-Sinkilī. This epistemological reception is articulated in the text of the Syattariyah Tarekat study group in West Sumatra, specifically the text of the tarekat study

¹⁰R. Michael Feener, "A Re-Examination of al-Raniri," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 151, no. 4 (1995): 573–592, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22134379-90003042>.

¹¹Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 119–130.

¹²Ahmad Muttaqin, "Tasawuf dan Spiritualitas Islam Nusantara," *Teosofi* 5, no. 1 (2015): 1–22.

¹³Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 268–274.

¹⁴Ahmad Rivauzi dkk., "Integrasi Epistemologi Sufi dan Kepatuhan Syariah: Model Pengarusutamaan Moderasi Islamisasi di Madrasah Tarbiyah Islamiyah, Indonesia," *Jurnal Ilmiah Syariah* 24, no. 2 (2025): 311–330, <https://doi.org/10.31958/juris.v24i2.15756>; Fazlur Rahman, *Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 140–145.

group belonging to Sheikh Ali Imran at the Nurul Yaqin Islamic Boarding School in Pakandangan, Padang Pariaman, West Sumatra.¹⁵ Operationally, Sufi Islamic education in this article refers to the teachings, practices, and pedagogical relationships contained in the Tarekat study texts as a spiritual education system that has a structured epistemological basis.

This article's contribution lies in affirming the tarīkat as an epistemological system of spiritual education within the Nusantara Sufi tradition, treating the Syattariyah teaching text not merely as a historical or doctrinal document but as an epistemological medium through which spiritual knowledge is selected, interpreted, validated, and transmitted. The study also expands the application of reception theory to the study of tarīkat texts, contributing to the philosophical discourse on Islamic spiritual education.

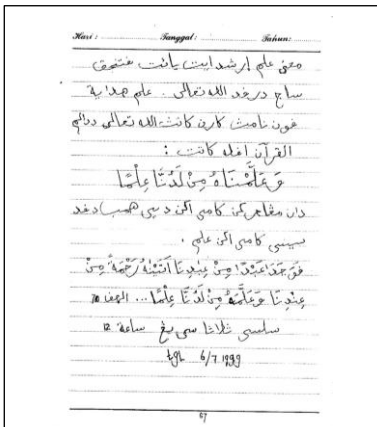
METHOD

This study is a qualitative, manuscript-based philological-critical investigation employing reception analysis. The primary data source is the Syattariyah Tarīkat teaching text in Arabic-Malay (Jawi) script, copied by Shaykh 'alī 'Imrān Pakandangan. The manuscript consists of 57 pages, is complete and intact, and has been continuously used as a teaching text in the Syattariyah learning tradition at Surau Nūr al-Yaqīn Pakandangan, Padang

¹⁵Shaykh 'Alī 'Imrān was related to 'Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Sinkilī through the lineage of Burhanuddin Ulakan. In one of his own documents, the lineage of the Syattariyah Order was found. The document contains a genealogy starting from Shaykh 'Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Sinkilī (d. 1105 H/1693 M), Burhanuddin Ulakan (1056–1111 H/1646–1699 M), then in sequence Shaykh Qādhi Padang Gantiang, Shaykh Cupak, Shaykh Muhammad Ṣāliḥ Talawi, Shaykh Ismā'īl Padang Gantiang, Shaykh M. Yasin Qādhi Koto Tujuh Malin Mandaro (1227–1367 H/1806–1946 M), Shaykh Hasan bin Muhammad Rahim Tuanku Bagindo Ringan-Ringan Pakandangan (d. 1400 H/1980 M), up to Shaykh 'Alī 'Imrān bin Hasan (born 1926 AD), founder of the Nurul Yaqin Ringan-Ringan Pakandangan Islamic Boarding School. 'Alī 'Imrān, *Teks Tarekat Syattariyyah* (Padang Pariaman: Manuskrip Pondok Pesantren Nurul Yaqin, t.t.).

Pariaman, West Sumatra.¹⁶ A colophon at the end of the manuscript records that copying was completed on Tuesday, 6 July 1999, providing evidence of its provenance. The manuscript functions as a living manuscript — a document that is not merely archival but performatively operative in the practice of spiritual education and the transmission of *tarikat* knowledge.

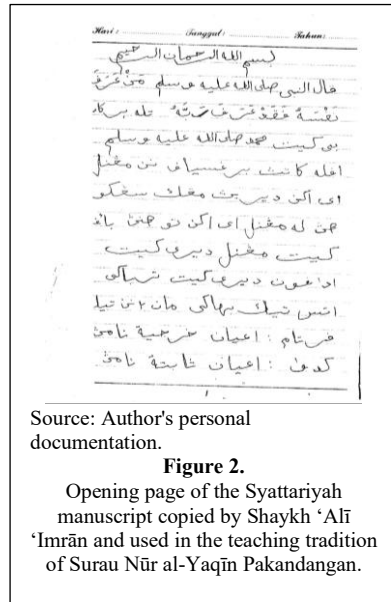
Regarding nomenclature: the writing form "Syattariyah" was found in the local manuscript itself, reflecting the transmission network of *surau* and *tarikat* in Minangkabau. In this article, "Syattariyah" is adopted as the standard academic form following the transliteration convention most commonly used in contemporary Nusantara Islamic studies, while acknowledging the manuscript's original textual form.



Source: Author's personal documentation.

Figure 1.

Colophon of the manuscript indicating the completion of copying on 6 July 1999



Source: Author's personal documentation.

Figure 2.

Opening page of the Syattariyah manuscript copied by Shaykh 'Alī 'Imrān and used in the teaching tradition of *Surau Nūr al-Yaqīn Pakandangan*.

For purposes of identifying the continuity and transformation of al-Sinkilī's teachings, this study draws on his primary works: *Tanbīh al-Māsyī*, *Bayān Tajallī*, *Lubb al-Kasyf wa al-Bayān limā Yarāhu al-Muḥtaḍar bi al-I'yān*, *Kifāyah al-Muḥtājīn ilā Masyrabb al-Muwaḥḥidīn al-Qā'ilīn bi Waḥdat al-*

¹⁶Interview with Tuanku Kerajaan, student of Shaykh 'Alī 'Imrān and teacher of the Syattariyah Order, *Surau Nurul Yaqin Pakandangan*, Padang Pariaman, Thursday, April 23, 2026.

*Wujūd, 'Umdah al-Muhtājīn ilā Sulūk Maslak al-Mufarridīn, and Daqā'iq al-Ḥurūf.*¹⁷

Data were collected through a philological-critical reading of the manuscript, identification of thematic units, exploration of epistemological concepts, and comparative studies with the works of 'Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Sinkilī. Contextual interviews with Shaykh 'Alī 'Imrān and his student Tuanku Kerajaan were used as supporting data to understand the practice of using and positioning the Syattariyah text in tarekat education, rather than as the primary source of research. This approach allows for the reading of the text not only as a written document, but also as a living social practice within the tarekat community.¹⁸

Contextual interviews were conducted with two informants: Shaykh 'alī 'Imrān, murshid of the Syattariyah Order at Surau Nūr al-Yaqīn Pakandangan (interviews: 23 March 2007 and 1 May 2012), and Tuanku Kerajaan, his student and tarīkat teacher at the same surau (interview: 23 April 2026). These informants were selected purposively as authoritative practitioners of the living manuscript tradition. Both provided informed consent for the use of their information. Interview data were used as supporting evidence to understand the practice of using and positioning the Syattariyah text in tarīkat education, not as the primary data source allowing the text to be read not only as a written document but also as a living social practice within the tarīkat community. This research was conducted with the ethical approval of Universitas Negeri Padang.

This study employs reception theory as its primary analytical framework, following the thinking of Hans Robert Jauss and Wolfgang Iser, who positioned the reader as an active subject in the production of textual meaning, so that reception is

¹⁷'Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Sinkilī, *Tanbīh al-Māsyī; Bayān Tajallī; Kifāyah al-Muhtājīn ilā Masyrab al-Muwaḥḥidīn; 'Umdah al-Muhtājīn ilā Sulūk Maslak al-Mufarridīn; dan Daqā'iq al-Ḥurūf.*

¹⁸Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 23–45; Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 107–120.

understood not as passive acceptance but as a creative process in the formation of knowledge. Reception theory emerged in literary studies in the 1960s and was further developed in the 1970s through the works of Iser and Jauss, building on earlier contributions by Jan Mukařovský. According to Jauss, meaning is mediated by the reader's horizon of expectations, shaped by three factors: the conventions embedded in the text, the reader's prior knowledge and experience, and the relationship between the text and lived reality. According to Hans Günther, aesthetic reception occurs through concretization, whereby the intended function of a text is realized through interpretation. This process involves contemplation, interaction, and reinterpretation — a text acquires meaning only through engagement with readers across generations and contexts.

Reception theory has been extended beyond literary studies to Qur'anic studies, where it is employed to examine how Muslim communities receive, interpret, and respond to sacred texts. One notable example is *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* by 'abd al-Ra'ūf al-Sinkilī, widely recognized as the first complete Qur'anic commentary in Malay. Reception has also been examined in studies of living Qur'an and living Hadith, where religious texts are understood through the practices and experiences of Muslim communities.

Applied to the present study, reception theory provides the conceptual basis for understanding how the Syattariyah community of Pakandangan as an interpretive community, did not merely preserve al-Sinkilī's teachings but actively reconstructed their form to remain operational within local conditions. The *tarikāt* text thus becomes the product of a creative dialogue between al-Sinkilī's classical authority and the horizon of understanding of the local Syattariyah community.

Findings

The findings of this study are organized into four thematic categories: (1) the reception of theological concepts, (2) the reception of body ontology, (3) the reception of spiritual knowledge classification, and (4) the reception of pedagogical methods. These categories demonstrate how the teachings of 'abd al-Ra'ūf al-Sinkilī were selectively reformulated and transmitted through the Pakandangan Syattariyah manuscript.

1. Reception of Theological Concepts: Epistemological Caution Regarding *Waḥdat al-Wujūd*

In Nurul Yaqin Ringan-Ringan Pakandangan Islamic Boarding School in Padang Pariaman Regency, there is a manuscript that serves as the primary learning resource in studying the order, which in this study will hereafter be referred to as the Syattariyah Text. This text of the tarekat's study was written by Shaykh 'Alī 'Imrān. Essentially, this manuscript is the text used in transmitting the teachings of the Syattariyah.¹⁹

One of the primary findings in Shaykh 'alī 'Imrān's Syattariyah manuscript is the theological caution exercised in use of the term *waḥdat al-wujūd*. The term is stripped away in the practice of Sufi education (it is not used explicitly) while its ontological substance is preserved.²⁰

Shaykh 'alī 'Imrān rejected its explicit use by associating it with the extreme interpretation attributed to Hamzah Fansuri's metaphysical doctrine. This constitutes an *epistemological reception of the first type*: the modification of theological terminology without abandoning the underlying metaphysical substance.

Reception of the Goals of Spiritual Education

'Abd al-Ra'ūf Al-Sinkilī's epistemological reception of Sufism is also evident in the way the Syattariyah text frames the goals of spiritual education. According to him, Sufi education is directed at achieving mystical experience, existential transformation of self-knowledge, strengthening awareness of monotheism, and developing noble morals. These goals are then translated into various pedagogical tools, such as the classification of knowledge, the study of the body, and an emphasis on the practice of dhikr, prayer, and etiquette. 'Abd al-Ra'ūf emphasizes the goals to be achieved in Sufi education: obtaining guidance from God in mortal life or mortal life from mortal life, servitude

¹⁹Zakirman, Elva Mahmudi, dan Shafwatul Bary, "Nukilan Al-Qur'an dalam Naskah Tarekat Syekh H. Ali Imran Hasan Ringan-Ringan (1917–1926)," *SUHUF* 16, no. 1 (2023): 155–177, <https://doi.org/10.22548/shf.v16i1.804>.

²⁰Zakirman, Elva Mahmudi, dan Shafwatul Bary, "Nukilan Al-Qur'an

to Allah and becoming Allah's vicegerent (khalīfah), and developing noble morals.²¹

'abd al-Ra'ūf al-Sinkilī's epistemological goals for Sufi education, i.e., obtaining divine guidance, achieving servitude to Allah and becoming Allah's vicegerent (*khalīfah*), and cultivating noble morals are received in the Syattariyah manuscript and reformulated through body studies (*pengajian tubuh*). The goal is expressed as the return of *a'yān khārijīyah*, understood as governed by *rūḥ tamāyiz* (animal traits), to the consciousness of *a'yān tsābitah*, the locus of tajallī of the Divine Attributes. In principle, the process of tarāqqī is an effort to exit animal nature and enter the awareness of divinity; a transformation that is simultaneously cognitive, moral, and existential.

Reception of Spiritual Knowledge: Classification, Body Ontology, and the Knowledge of God

Classification of Knowledge

In the study of the Syattariyah order, knowledge is divided into three types. These three types of knowledge are: First, knowledge of sharia, which encompasses understanding fardhu (obligatory), sunnah (recommended), pillars and conditions, permissible (permissible) and forbidden (haram), and valid (sah) and invalid (false). This knowledge is also called *suthuri* (study), which encompasses knowledge written by mujtahids on sheets of paper. Second, knowledge of *najwa* (special discourse), which encompasses knowledge acquired from a teacher of the caliber of murshid (religious teacher), also known as shuduri (study), which is acquired through whispering (special discourse), also known as ma'rifat (knowledge of ma'rifat). Third, knowledge derived from divine inspiration from Allah SWT, not through the intermediary of a teacher, but through direct guidance and enlightenment from Allah, also known as *hidayah* (guidance).²² 'Ilm Ladunnī (acquired knowledge) is an epistemology of mysticism in the form of spiritual enlightenment. In the Sufi view, if someone reaches the position of waliyullah, he can see everything as God sees

²¹Zakirman, Elva Mahmudi, dan Shafwatul Bary, "Nukilan Al-Qur'an

²²Zakirman, Elva Mahmudi, dan Shafwatul Bary, "Nukilan Al-Qur'an

everything.²³ Therefore, the Sufis are connected to the *ālam al ghaib* in a position (*maqām*) achieved through *riyāda* (practice).²⁴

Body Ontology (Pengajian Tubuh) as Epistemological Framework

The Syattariyah teaching text develops an ontology of the self that serves as the epistemological foundation for the knowledge of God. In the local tradition, this ontology is known as *pengajian tubuh*, functioning as the principal epistemological framework for attaining *ma'rifatullāh*. Its underlying principle is that knowledge of God can only be attained through a proper understanding of the true nature of the self. The manuscript states: "The Essence belongs to Allah; the secret belongs to us. The Attributes belong to Allah; the soul belongs to us. The Names belong to Allah; the subtle body belongs to us. The Acts belong to Allah; the physical body belongs to us. Wa Allāhu sirrī wa anā sirruhu (Allah is my secret, and I am His secret); fanā' fī Allāh, baqā' bi Allāh (annihilation in Allah and subsistence through Allah)."

Self-knowledge begins with understanding three dimensions of self. The first is *a'yān khārijīyah*,²⁵ the outward physical body composed of four elements, each as the locus of *tajallī* of a Divine Attribute: (1) fire, manifested as blood - the locus of *'aẓīm* (greatness); (2) air, manifested as the veins - the locus of *Qawīyy* (strength); (3) water, manifested as the bones - the locus of *Ḥayy* (life); (4) earth, manifested as flesh and skin - the locus of *Ḥakīm* (wisdom). The second is *a'yān tsābitah*,²⁶ the subtle body, luminous and white, understood within the Syattariyah tradition as the true self of the human being, originating from the Light of

²³Ahmad Tafsir, *Filsafat Ilmu: Mengurai Ontologi, Epistemologi, dan Aksiologi Pengetahuan* (Bandung: PT Remaja Rosdakarya, 2015).

²⁴Mahmudi dan Ahsanul Anam, "The Javanese Mystical Epistemology in *Kitab Primbon Betaljemur Adammakna* and Its Implication to Inclusivism," *Teosofia: Indonesian Journal of Islamic Mysticism* 13, no. 1 (2024): 115–132, <https://doi.org/10.21580/tos.v13i1.20933>.

²⁵'Alī 'Imrān, *Teks Tarekat Syattariyah*.

²⁶'Alī 'Imrān, *Teks Tarekat Syattariyah*.

Muḥammad (Nūr Muḥammad). It possesses ten inherent qualities: truthfulness, conveying the message, trustworthiness, wisdom, contentment with Allah's will,²⁷ patient submission, longing for Allah, mercy toward believers, humble reverence, and humility.²⁸ The third is *rūḥ tamāyiz*, the vital spirit characterized by passion and desire, symbolized by the color red, originating from the light of fire and associated with the attributes of Iblīs. It possesses ten opposing qualities: falsehood, concealment, betrayal, stupidity, arrogance, greed, self-exaltation, anger, seeking praise, and seeking reputation.

Table 1.
The Seven Dignities in the Syathāriyyah Order Text ²⁹

انسان كامل	عالم اجسام	عالم مثال	عالم ارواح	واحدية	وحده	احدية	
جامع	مظاهر	مصو	مناور	رحمان	الله	غائب	الله
انسان كامل	ظاهر	مثال	نور	اعيان ثابتة	شون ذاتية	غائب الغيوب	إنسان
كل مرتبة سبعة	مع اعيان خارجية	اعيان ثابتة خارج	محمد	تعيين ثان	تعيين اول	ذات البُحْتِ	
Blood Veins Bones Flesh and skin	Fire Air Water Earth		نور محمد نور		توهن ذات والصفة (سر)	حق	
		Nūr Muḥammad is the subtle body within us.		The Divine Attributes belong to Allah; the spirit belongs to us.		The Essence belongs to Allah; the secret belongs to us.	
	كل شئى يرجع الى اصله			حقيقة	طريقة	شريعة	الله
		Divine Attributes		Essence	Spirit	الله	الله
				Physical Body		servant	Human

²⁷ ‘Alī ‘Imrān, *Teks Tarekat Syattariyah*.

²⁸ ‘Alī ‘Imrān, *Teks Tarekat Syattariyah*.

²⁹ ‘Alī ‘Imrān, *Teks Tarekat Syattariyah*.

Source: Author's personal documentation.

A'yān khārijīyyah is likened to the city of Mecca, *a'yān tsābitah* to the Prophet Muḥammad, and *rūḥ tamāyiz* to Abū Jahl. If Muḥammad prevails, the individual attains salvation; if Abū Jahl prevails, the self falls into destruction. Furthermore, the manuscript explains that *Wujūd 'Ām* (the seven ma'ānī attributes of Allah (qudrah, irādah, 'ilm, ḥayāh, sam', baṣar, and kalām) — is eternally manifested (tajallī) in *a'yān tsābitah* without separation, constituting the essential reality of the human self. The manuscript states: wa Allāhu nafsunā (نفسنا والله), "Allah is our self,"³⁰ supported by Q. 8:17.

The manuscript further explains that *ma'rifah* consists of four components: dhikr (remembrance of Allah in the heart), tawajjuh (directing the heart toward Allah), mushāhadah (beholding Allah with the heart), and murāqabah (maintaining vigilant awareness of Allah's nearness). Shaykh 'alī 'Imrān uses the expression "attaining" (*sampai*) to indicate attaining *ma'rifah* of Allah, receiving divine guidance and grace³¹. Accordingly, the text opens with the well-known tradition: "Whoever knows himself will know his Lord."

Reception of Pedagogical Methods: Tanāzul–Tarāqqī, Dhikr, Adab, Death and Spiritual Protection

The Syattariyah teaching text explains that every follower of the *tarekat* (the spiritual path toward Allah) must understand and undertake the process of *tarāqī*.³² The term *tarāqī* derives from the Arabic verb *irtaqā–yartaqī* (ارتقى–يرتقى), which, according to Arabic grammar, conveys the meaning of *muṭāwa'ah*, namely, the resultant state or effect produced by an action.³³ The concept of *tarāqī* is further grounded in the following Qur'anic verse:

أَمْ لَهُمْ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا فَلْيَرْتَقُوا فِي الْأَسْبَابِ

³⁰Alī 'Imrān, *Teks Tarekat Syattariyah*.

³¹Alī 'Imrān, *Teks Tarekat Syattariyah*.

³²Alī 'Imrān, *Teks Tarekat Syattariyah*.

³³Ahmad Rusydi, *Matan al-Binā wa al-Asās* (Jakarta: Jaya, t.t.).

“Or do they possess the dominion of the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them? Then let them ascend by the means of ascent.” (Q. 38:10)

The Syattariyah teaching text interprets *tarāqī* in the above verse as ascending the stages of spiritual awareness. This ascent begins with the realization that flesh originates from bones, bones from veins, veins from blood, blood from fire (heat), fire (heat) from the light of *a’yān tsābitah*, *a’yān tsābitah* from *Nūr Muḥammad*, and *Nūr Muḥammad* from the Light of the Essence (*Nūr Dhāt*) of Allah. The Light of the Divine Essence does not arise by itself but radiates from *Wujūd ‘Ām*. Likewise, *Wujūd ‘Ām* does not subsist independently but subsists through *Wujūd Muḥad*, whose meaning is the Essence in itself.

Elsewhere, the Syattariyah teaching text formulates the epistemology of *tarāqī* as a process of returning all created things to their primordial origin. The earth is understood to have originated from water, while the heavens are returned to smoke, and smoke is returned to water, giving rise to the realization that all things are, in essence, nothing but the sea. The sea is then returned to *Durrat al-Bayḍā*, whereby the seeker realizes that its true reality is nothing but the White Pearl. *Durrat al-Bayḍā* is subsequently returned to its origin, namely *Nūr Muḥammad*, giving rise to the realization that its true reality is nothing but Light. This Light is described as spherical and as the locus of *dhikr*, where the declaration *lā ilāha illā Allāh* (لا إله إلا الله) is recited. At the stage of *ma’rifah*, the heart realizes the principle: *kullu shay’ in yarji’u ilā aṣlihi* (كل شيء يرجع إلى أصله) — everything returns to its origin.

Shaykh Ali Imran further explained that, in order to attain nearness to Allah, a seeker must return *a’yān khārijīyyah* to *a’yān tsābitah*, *a’yān tsābitah* to *Wujūd ‘Ām*, and *Wujūd ‘Ām* to *Wujūd Muḥad*, until one realizes that true Existence belongs to Allah alone (Interview with Shaykh Ali Imran, 23 March 2007). Nevertheless, one should not contemplate *Wujūd Muḥad* (the Essence of Allah). Rather, contemplation should be directed toward *Wujūd ‘Ām*, namely the Divine Attributes. This teaching is based on the following *ḥadīth qudsī*:

تَفَكَّرُوا فِي صِفَتِي وَلَا تَفَكَّرُوا فِي ذَاتِي

“Contemplate My Attributes, namely *Wujūd 'Ām*, and do not contemplate My Essence, namely *Wujūd Muḥaḍ*.”³⁴

The next stage requires the *sālik* to perceive *Wujūd 'Ām* with the eye of the heart. This teaching is based on the Qur'anic verse:

وَفِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَفَلَا تُبْصِرُونَ

“And within yourselves—will you not then perceive?” (Q. 51:21)³⁵

Dhikr, Prayer, Supplication and Worship

In addition to its ontological, epistemological, and ethical framework, the Syattariyah teaching text presents spiritual practices as the means through which spiritual knowledge is acquired and confirmed. Practices such as *dhikr*, prayer, supplication, and other forms of worship function not only as acts of devotion but also as spiritual disciplines that open inner awareness and confirm the authenticity of spiritual experience.

The Syattariyah teaching text cites *Jawāhir al-'Ulūm*, which records the following supplication of the Prophet:

“O Allah, by Your Knowledge, preserve and establish every aspect, state, and condition within my body as an entity recognized as *a'yān tsābitah*. Remove the perception that these exist independently as entities perceived and seen as *a'yān khārijīyyah*.”³⁶

In addition to supplication, *dhikr* occupies a central place in Syattariyah spiritual education as a means of attaining spiritual knowledge. Among the forms of *dhikr* taught in the Syattariyah *tarekat* is the declaration *lā ilāha illā Allāh* (لا إله إلا الله). The meaning of *lā ilāha illā Allāh* is understood at three levels: that of the *mubtadi'*, the *mutawassit*, and the *muntahī*. For the *mubtadi'* (the beginner or one who has just entered the Sufi path), it means “There is no god but Allah.” For the *mutawassit* (the intermediate seeker), it signifies “There is none truly worthy of worship except Allah.” At the level of the *muntahī* (one who has attained *ma'rifatullāh*), *lā ilāha illā Allāh* signifies that neither *a'yān*

³⁴ Alī 'Imrān, *Teks Tarekat Syattariyah*.

³⁵ Alī 'Imrān, *Teks Tarekat Syattariyah*.

³⁶ Alī 'Imrān, *Teks Tarekat Syattariyah*.

khārijīyyah nor a *'yān tsābitah* possesses life, knowledge, power, hearing, sight, speech, or cognition independently; all of these belong to Allah alone.³⁷

The Syattariyah teaching text classifies *dhikr* into four forms. The first is loud *dhikr* (*dhikr jahrī*), consisting of the formula *lā ilāha illā Allāh* (لا إله إلا الله). The second is silent *dhikr* (*dhikr sirrī*), consisting of the invocation Allāh, Allāh, Allāh (الله، الله، الله). The third is *dhikr manshūrī*, which signifies that no distinction exists between the Divine Essence and the Divine Attributes. The fourth is *dhikr qalbī*, consisting of the invocation Huw, Huw, Huw (هو، هو، هو).³⁸

In general, the methods and forms of *dhikr* taught in the Syattariyah tradition at Nurul Yaqin Pakandangan constitute a legacy of the *dhikr* transmitted by *'Abd al-Ra'ūf* through *Burhanuddin Ulakan*. These teachings have been preserved through the oral transmission of *tarekat* master's to their disciples, with some of them subsequently recorded in Syattariyah teaching manuscripts.

Physical Death and the Mortification of the Desires of the Nafs

The Syattariyah teaching text explains the process of physical death by referring to Q. 16:32 as follows:

When death approaches, five lights appear before the dying person. The first is a black light, identified as the light of Iblīs, upon which one should immediately recite *lā ilāha illā Allāh* (لا إله إلا الله). The second is a red light, identified as the light of the Jews, upon which one should likewise recite *lā ilāha illā Allāh*. The third is a yellow light, identified as the light of the Christians, upon which one should again recite *lā ilāha illā Allāh*. The fourth is a green light, identified as the light of the Angel of Death, upon which one should recite *Qul huwa Allāhu aḥad* (قل هو الله أحد). The Angel of Death then says, “Al-salāmu ‘alaykum,” to which the reply is, “Wa ‘alaykum al-salām.” The fifth is a brilliant white light, identified as the light of Muḥammad. At this stage, one should recite, *In shā'a Allāh kāna al-mu'minu ḥaqqan, lā ilāha illā Allāh* (إن شاء الله كان المؤمن حقًا لا إله إلا الله). Muḥammad is then seen within that light, with the name “Muḥammad” shining upon his forehead like a star. Thereafter, the light passes into the person, who experiences the sweetness and serenity of death. This understanding is associated with the Qur'anic verse: *tatawaffāhum al-malā'ikatu*

³⁷Alī 'Imrān, *Teks Tarekat Syattariyah*.

³⁸Alī 'Imrān, *Teks Tarekat Syattariyah*.

ṭayyibīn (تتوفاهم الملائكة طيبين), “The angels take them in a state of purity”
(Q. 16:32).³⁹

After experiencing the sweetness of death, Allah addresses the believer: “O believing soul, return to your Lord, well pleased and well pleasing. Enter among My righteous servants and enter My Paradise.” Thereafter, the believer rejoices within the crop of a green bird that flies in the *barzakh*, as indicated by the Qur’anic verse: “Indeed, the righteous will be in bliss” (Q. 82:13). By contrast, those who disbelieve in or reject Allah will receive His punishment (Q. 16:28–29). According to the Syattariyah teaching text, the punishment of Allah in the Hereafter is for those who remain at the level of a *‘yān khārijīyah*, symbolized by the color black. Those who receive Allah’s mercy are the believers whose lives are established at the level of a *‘yān tsābitah*, symbolized by the color white. This understanding is received from Q. 3:106–107, Q. 3:99–100, and Q. 6:122⁴⁰ This understanding is received from Q. 3:106–107, Q. 3:99–100, and Q. 6:122

With regard to death, the condition of the dying, and the signs preceding death, the Syattariyah teaching text represents a reception and transmission of the teachings of *‘Abd al-Ra’ūf al-Singkel* as recorded in his works. According to *‘Abd al-Ra’ūf*, the signs preceding the appointed time of death are only general indications (*ghālib*); they are neither absolute nor applicable to every individual. Death belongs to the realm of the unseen (*ghayb*), the knowledge of which belongs to Allah alone.⁴¹ This constitutes the essence of *‘Abd al-Ra’ūf*’s response to the question concerning the signs that precede death.

Shaykh Ali Imran further explained that among the signs indicating the approach of death are the inability of a person to see the tip of his or her own nose and the inability to hear the sound produced by rubbing the hair near the ear with the fingers (Interview with Shaykh Ali Imran, 1 May 2012). These are regarded as indications that death is drawing near. Nevertheless,

³⁹ Alī ‘Imrān, *Teks Tarekat Syattariyah*.

⁴⁰ Alī ‘Imrān, *Teks Tarekat Syattariyah*.

⁴¹ ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf al-Sinkilī, *Bayān Tajallī*, manuskrip; ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf al-Sinkilī, *Lubb al-Kasyf wa al-Bayān limā Yarāhu al-Muḥtaḍar bi al-I’yān*, manuskrip.

as '*Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Singkel* also emphasized, such signs are only general indications (*ghālib*) and do not apply to every individual.

Cultivating Adab

The Syattariyah teaching text presents *adab* as an integral component of spiritual education rather than as a separate ethical concern. The text explains that spiritual knowledge is not disclosed to those who fail to observe proper *adab* toward Allah, the spiritual master, and fellow human beings. In this way, *adab* is presented as an essential condition for receiving spiritual knowledge.

Table 2.
Adab in the Syattariyah tarekat is as follows:⁴²

<i>Adab</i>	Description
Nothing should be attributed to oneself; rather, everything should be attributed to Allah. This teaching is based on the Qur'anic verse: "To Allah belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. And sufficient is Allah as Disposer of all affairs." (Q. 4:132).	"One who has attained <i>ma'rifah</i> is one who attributes nothing to oneself. Do not set up a chair before Allah. One should never regard oneself as possessing power or anything else independently. Allah alone possesses all things. Sincerity (<i>ikhlaṣ</i>) is the realization that oneself is effaced in the awareness of <i>a'yān tsābitah</i> , upon which <i>Wujūd 'Ām</i> (the Divine Attributes) is manifested through <i>tajallī</i> ."
One should not dwell on possessions or anything that has passed out of one's hands or has been lost.	
Acts of worship attributed to oneself are of no value.	
One should not make material provision for old age as one's primary concern.	
One should place one's trust in Allah alone. This teaching is based on Q. 58 and Q. 3:122.	

Source: Author's personal documentation.

Spiritual Protection in the Syattariyah Tarekat

The Syattariyah tarekat teaches a method of spiritual protection against the temptations of Satan. This is achieved by entering into the meaning of the declaration *lā ilāha illā Allāh* (لا إله إلا الله). Through understanding the meaning of *lā ilāha illā Allāh*, the seeker attains the level of the Divine Names and Attributes, namely *Wujūd 'Ām*, which is manifested through *tajallī* in *a'yān tsābitah*. The Divine Attributes (*Wujūd 'Ām*) subsist in the Divine Essence (*Wujūd Muḥaḍ*). In this spiritual state, the seeker is

⁴²Alī 'Imrān, *Teks Tarekat Syattariyah*.

strengthened by Allah and is protected from the various deceptions of Satan..⁴³ “And if they intend to deceive you, then indeed Allah is sufficient for you. It is He who strengthened you with His help and with the believers.” (Q. 8:62–63)

Table 3.
Epistemological Reception of Spiritual Education in the Syattariyah TeachingText

Source	Educational Objectives	Objects of Knowledge	Instructional Methods
‘Abd al-Ra’ūf	<i>Fanā’</i> , servitude to Allah, becoming Allah’s vicegerent (<i>khalīfah</i>), and the cultivation of noble character	(1) <i>Tawhīd</i> (Islamic creed); (2) the universe; (3) moral character; (4) the Qur’an and <i>ḥadīth</i> ; (5) <i>dhikr</i> ; (6) supplications, obligatory and supererogatory acts of worship, and blessings upon the Prophet	(1) Affirming Divine Unity (<i>tawhīd</i>); (2) mortifying the desires of the <i>nafs</i> ; (3) self-knowledge; (4) <i>dhikr</i> through the method of <i>tarāqī</i> ; (5) supplication
Teks Syattariyah	Returning <i>a’yān khārijīyyah</i> to <i>a’yān tsābitah</i> , the locus of the <i>tajallī</i> of <i>Wujūd ‘Ām</i> (the Divine Attributes)	Classification of knowledge; knowledge of the One who is worshipped, the worshipper, the object of worship, and the place of worship; the study of the body (<i>self-knowledge</i>)	Transforming the physical into the subtle through <i>tarāqī</i> ; <i>dhikr</i> ; acts of worship; physical death and the mortification of the desires of the <i>nafs</i> ; cultivating <i>adab</i> ; spiritual protection in the <i>tarekat</i>

Source: Author’s personal documentation.

⁴³ ‘Alī ‘Imrān, *Teks Tarekat Syattariyah*.

DISCUSSIONS

Terminological Exclusion as Epistemological Filtering

The rejection of the term *wahdat al-wujūd* in the Syattariyah texts and educational tradition should not be understood as a rejection of the substance of 'Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Sinkilī's teachings. Rather, it reflects an epistemological and pedagogical strategy designed to prevent theological misunderstanding among the congregation, preserve the boundaries of Sunni orthodoxy, and ensure that spiritual instruction remained accessible and acceptable within the local religious context. This process produced a selective mode of Sufi reception in which the ontological and spiritual substance of the doctrine was retained, while potentially controversial terminology was deliberately excluded from the pedagogical discourse.

This finding demonstrates that the transmission of Sufi knowledge involved not only the preservation of doctrinal content but also the pedagogical adaptation of religious language to specific social and theological contexts. In this sense, the Syattariyah tradition in West Sumatra exemplifies how Sufi reception functioned as an interpretive process that negotiated continuity with 'Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Sinkilī's teachings while responding to local concerns about orthodoxy.

Earlier leading figures of the Syattariyah order, particularly Aḥmad al-Qushāshī (d. 1071 AH/1660 CE) and Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī, as well as their distinguished disciple, 'Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Sinkilī, did not reject the doctrine of *wahdat al-wujūd*. Rather, they reinterpreted it by presenting an explanation that was theologically acceptable, including to scholars of Islamic jurisprudence.⁴⁴ For 'Abd al-Ra'ūf, *wahdat al-wujūd* signifies that true existence belongs solely to Allah, who alone exists independently. The universe does not constitute a second, independent existence; rather, Allah is the only true Being, incomparable to anything, yet ever present with all creation from

⁴⁴Azyumardi Azra, *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad XVII dan XVIII* (Bandung: Mizan, 1994).

beginning to end. Although ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf continued to employ the term *waḥdat al-wujūd*, he redefined its meaning in a way that differed significantly from the interpretation advanced by Hamzah Fansuri and Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrānī.⁴⁵

The Pakandangan manuscript's omission of the term demonstrates that the orthodoxy of Nusantara Sufism was not built through rejection of metaphysics, but through terminological control and linguistic strategy. This finding strengthens Oman Fathurahman's argument that the polemic over *waḥdat al-wujūd* within the Malay-Jawi Syattariyah network resulted more in pedagogical adjustments than doctrinal ruptures. Thus, the elimination of the term can be understood as a form of *epistemological filtering* — a conceptual screening that allows the depth of metaphysics to be inherited without destabilizing the faith community's theological equilibrium.

A potential counterargument should be acknowledged: the avoidance of *waḥdat al-wujūd* might reflect the personal theological stance of Shaykh ‘alī ‘Imrān as copyist, rather than a community-wide pedagogical strategy. It is also possible that this manuscript represents a minority voice within the Syattariyah tradition rather than its typical expression. However, the evidence of contextual interviews with both Shaykh ‘alī ‘Imrān and Tuanku Kerajaan, taken alongside Fathurahman's broader study of Syattariyah texts in Minangkabau, suggests that terminological caution is a structural feature of the Pakandangan transmission lineage rather than an idiosyncratic copyist preference.

Body Study as Epistemological Method

The study of the body in the Syathāriyyah tradition of West Sumatra, particularly at the Nurul Yaqin Islamic boarding school, may be understood from two perspectives. First, it constitutes a central component of the order's spiritual instruction inherited from Shaykh Burhanuddin Ulakan, emphasizing the nature of creation, human volition, and their relationship to the Divine Essence and Divine Will. Within this framework, the study of the body serves as a form of *riyāḍat al-naḥs* (spiritual discipline) intended to guide the transformation of the gross body (*a‘yān*

⁴⁵ Abd al-Ra’ūf al-Sinkilī, *Tanbīh al-Māsyī*, manuskrip.

khārijīyyah) toward the subtle body (*a'yān tsābitah*). At the same time, it functions as a means of self-knowledge through which the *sālik* comes to understand the true nature of the self, thereby acquiring the spiritual capacity to resist the temptations of Satan and the lower self (*nafs*).⁴⁶ This finding suggests that, within the Syathāriyyah tradition, the body is understood not merely as a physical entity but as an epistemological medium through which spiritual knowledge and *ma'rifah* are attained.

Second, study of the body constitutes a fundamental component of various local expressions of the Syattariyah Order across West Sumatra; evident, for example, in the *salawat dulang* tradition, a distinctive West Sumatran performance art rooted in Sufi spirituality, in which body symbolism drawn from the *pengajian tubuh* framework is expressed through communal devotional performance. This suggests that the manuscript's body ontology is not merely a textual doctrine, but a living pedagogical framework embedded in local Sufi culture.

Accordingly, this study shifts the discussion of body symbolism from a purely metaphysical discourse toward an epistemological framework of spiritual education. The body-study teachings function as an epistemological method integrating ontology and pedagogy: spiritual knowledge is acquired not only through rational understanding but through an ontological transformation that reshapes how individuals know and experience reality.

Tanāzul–Tarāqqī as Epistemological Cosmology

The cosmological structure of *tanāzul* and *tarāqqī* indicates that the human being is not an autonomous entity but forms part of a cosmic order wholly dependent on Divine will and *qudrah*. *Tanāzul* explains the origins of human existence as an emanation of the Divine Being; *tarāqqī* indicates the direction of spiritual education as a process of returning to that ontological origin. The principle of *kullu shay'in yarji'u ilā aṣliḥī* is not only a

⁴⁶M. Yafas, *Perkembangan Thariqat Syathāriyyah dan Pengaruhnya dalam Pengamalan Ajaran Islam di Kecamatan Lintau Buo*, laporan penelitian (Padang, 1990).

metaphysical formulation but the pedagogical basis of all spiritual training in the tarīkat: human beings are educated to return to awareness of the origin of their creation through the disciplines of dhikr, contemplation, and self-control. Within this framework, knowledge and existence are inseparable; to know means to undergo a transformation of existence itself. This finding demonstrates that cosmology in the Syattariyah tradition functions not merely as a doctrine of creation but as a pedagogical framework for cultivating spiritual consciousness.

The Syattariyah Tarīkat as an Integrated Epistemological System of Spiritual Education

The classification of knowledge into *sharī'ah*, *najwā*, and *ladunni* reveals that the epistemology of spiritual education within the tarīkat possesses a hierarchical structure that transcends the normative Islamic educational model based on textual transmission. *Ladunni* knowledge, attained through a combination of discursive rationality and inner experience validated by a spiritual master, constitutes the epistemological pinnacle, achievable only through self-purification and ontological readiness. This demonstrates that the tarīkat operates as a pedagogical institution with an implicit curriculum, distinct mechanisms of epistemic authority, and its own logic of knowledge legitimacy. Tarīkat education must therefore be understood not merely as ritual practice but as a comprehensive system of spiritual education,⁴⁷ one that extends previous studies primarily describing Syattariyah knowledge as mystical hierarchy by demonstrating its function as a structured epistemological curriculum.

Within this curriculum, *adab* occupies a foundational position, not as a separate ethical concern, but as an ontological prerequisite for the opening of knowledge itself. A student cannot receive *ladunni* knowledge without moral readiness, submission to God, and obedience to the murshid. This corrects the modern tendency to treat knowledge as morally neutral: in the tarīkat tradition, epistemic legitimacy is inseparable from ethical formation. *Adab* thus functions as a spiritual validation

⁴⁷Martin van Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren dan Tarekat* (Yogyakarta: Gading Publishing, 2012), 201–228.

mechanism, determining not only what a person knows, but whether they are ready to receive knowledge at all⁴⁸. Ethical transformation and epistemic formation constitute a single, indivisible process within the Syattariyah educational tradition.

This integration of knowledge and moral formation extends further into the tarikat's treatment of death and spiritual self-defense, which demonstrate that Syattariyah spiritual education is oriented toward existential awareness in everyday life rather than abstract doctrine. Death is understood as an epistemological phase that reveals the true nature of human existence, making awareness of the *sakaratul maut* and barzakh life into instruments of ongoing spiritual education. Similarly, protection from Satan's deception through deepening understanding of *lā ilāha illā Allāh* shows that self-defense within the tarikat is fundamentally epistemological: spiritual salvation is determined by accurate understanding of the reality of *tawhīd*. Thus, the tarikat functions not as a set of individual ritual obligations but as a total way of life shaping a holistic religious orientation, in which awareness of death serves not merely as eschatological doctrine but as a continuous instrument of spiritual vigilance.

Taken together, these dimensions, namely hierarchical knowledge structure, adab as epistemic prerequisite, and existential-eschatological orientation, constitute what this study identifies as the integrative epistemology of Syattariyah spiritual education: a system simultaneously connecting the cognitive, mystical-experiential, ethical, and enlightenment dimensions of knowing. This integrative character provides the conceptual foundation for understanding how al-Sinkilī's teachings were received, reformulated, and transmitted not as a fixed doctrine but as a living educational system adapted to local conditions. Theoretically, the study extends reception theory beyond literary and Qur'anic studies to the analysis of Sufi manuscripts and pedagogy, demonstrating that the community of worshippers and guides constitutes a *collective reception* that produces a contextual system of spiritual education across generations. The Syattariyah

⁴⁸ Martin van Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren dan Tarekat*, 214–228.

manuscript of Shaykh ‘Alī ‘Imrān is thus not merely a repository of mystical teachings but an integrated epistemological instrument, one that this article argues should be studied on its own terms within the comparative study of Islamic pedagogy.

CONCLUSION

The Pakandangan Syattariyah manuscript of Shaykh ‘alī ‘Imrān constitutes an integrated epistemological system of spiritual education formed through three active forms of Sufi reception: the preservation of metaphysical substance, the modification of theological terminology, and the localization of spiritual teaching into pedagogical categories. The elimination of the term *wahdat al-wujūd* in this tradition cannot be understood as a rejection of al-Sinkilī's thought, but rather as a pedagogical and epistemological strategy to maintain orthodoxy and prevent theological misunderstanding. The reception that occurred reflects a dialectic between the continuity of classical teachings and contextual adaptation to local educational needs.

Theoretically, this article contributes to Nusantara Sufism studies by positioning the *tarikat* not merely as a spiritual practice or ritual tradition, but as a spiritual educational system with a clear epistemological structure encompassing ontological, methodological, and ethical dimensions. The reception approach demonstrates that Sufi knowledge transmission involves a creative process shaping local spiritual educational models without severing connection to classical authority.

For scholars of Islamic education and Sufism more broadly, this study's findings carry implications beyond the Syattariyah case: they suggest that living manuscripts in the Nusantara Sufi tradition should be approached not primarily as historical or doctrinal documents but as epistemological instruments, media through which spiritual knowledge is selected, validated, and transmitted across generations. This methodological reorientation from manuscript-as-archive to manuscript-as-pedagog, offers a model for future reception-theoretical studies of *tarikat* texts across Southeast Asia and the wider Muslim world.

This research is limited to the analysis of a single Syattariyah teaching text at the Nurul Yaqin Islamic Boarding School in Pakandangan. Further research is needed, expanding

comparative study to tarikat texts from other orders and regions in the archipelago, and integrating an ethnographic approach to understand living pedagogical practices in everyday life. Such studies would further enrich understanding of the epistemology of spiritual education within the Nusantara Islamic Sufi tradition.

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