ISLAMIC THEOLOGY
IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY ACEH
A Study on ‘Abd Al-Ra’ūf Al-Sinki’s Concept on Tawḥīd

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Abstract
This paper examines ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf al-Sinki’s concept of tawḥīd. Using a historical approach and content analysis, this paper argues that tawḥīd is an important aspect in Islam and becomes an interesting discourse in the Islamic intellectual tradition, especially Sufism. ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf al-Sinki stated that the first commitment for a human being is to accept the Oneness of Allah, and purity it from all things inappropriate to Him with the statement of lā ilaha illā Allāh. This affirms that Allah is believed to be the only Being. There is no existence without the existence of Allah (lā ilaha illā Allāh). This statement of creed implies two meanings: to negate any existence (al-nafyu), and to confirm only one existence (al-ithbāt), which is the existence of al-Haqq (the true Being). Al-Sinki also states that Allah is One, without our attempt to make Him One. Allah is true without a need to truth legitimation from humans.

[Artikel ini menjelaskan lebih lanjut tentang konsep tawḥīd ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf al-Sinki. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan historis dan analisis konten, artikel ini berkesimpulan bahwa tawḥīd adalah aspek yang cukup penting dalam Islam dan menjadi diskursus yang menarik dalam tradisi intelektual Islam, khususnya dalam tradisi tasawuf. Menurut ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf al-Sinki kewajiban pertama bagi manusia adalah menerima Keesaan dari Allah SWT, dan memurnikannya dari segala hal yang sepantasnya dengan pernyataan lā ilaha illā Allāh. Melalui konfirmasi ini, Allah diyakini sebagai satu...]

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keberadaan, tidak ada keberadaan tanpa keberadaan Allah (lā ilāha illā Allāh). Dalam pernyataan itu, ada dua makna, untuk meniadakan keberadaan (al-nafyu), dan untuk mengkonfirmasi hanya satu keberadaan (al-ithbāt), yaitu al-Haqq. Al-Sinkīli juga menyatakan bahwa Allah itu Esa tanpa kita berusaha menjadikannya Esa, Allah itu benar tanpa memerlukan legitimasi kebenaran dari manusia.

Keyword: Tawḥīd, 'Abd al-Ra‘ūf al-Sinki, Sufism

Introduction

Islam considers that religion is the basic principle and the regulator of life, and tawḥīd is the basis of all aspects of life. Tawḥīd which is manifested everywhere in the Qur’an and the prophetic tradition (ḥadīth) and becomes qaidah fikriyah (rationale) or a principle upon which the whole foundation of thought and human science is built. In Islam, everything revolves around the axis of the unity of God (tawḥīd) and the feasibility of science and technology is also based on that creed. Tawḥīd is a tool that lead humans to the knowledge about God, and can be effective in establishing an independent tawḥīd society.

This Islamic paradigm instructs humans to build all their thoughts based on Islamic aqīda (creed). We can understand this from the first Qur’anic verse to be revealed (meaning): “Read by (mentioning) the name of your God who created. (QS. al-‘Alaq [96]: 1). This verse means that humans have been ordered to read in order to obtain various thoughts and understanding. But all of his thoughts must not be separated from the Islamic aqīda, because the command of reading (iqra’) must be linked to God (rabbika). In other words, reading must be based on faith in Allah, which is the basic principle of Islamic aqīda. The explanation above shows that tawḥīd is the most important aspect in Islam. It becomes an interesting discourse in the Islamic intellectual tradition, especially in the tradition of Sufism. This article examines the concept of tawḥīd in Sufism,
especially according to ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf al-Sinki (1616-1693), a seventeenth century very influential scholar in the Malay world.

A study on ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf al-Sinki is initiated by a Dutch scholar, D. A. Rinkes. He is investigates the influence of al-Sinki and the spreading of his mystical ideas and teachings in Sumatera and Java in particular, and in the Indonesian archipelago in general. Research on al-Sinki also attract the attention of Indonesian scholars Syamsul Bahri. He examines the mystical thought of al-Sinki. Bahri highlights al-Sinki’s thought on wahdah al-wujūd (the unity of existence) based on one of al-Sinki’s works, namely Tanbih al-Māshi. Bahri discovers that ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf al-Sinki emphasized the importance of tawhīd as the basis of religious life in general and Sufism in particular. Regarding the ontological status between Allah and the universe, al-Sinki, according to Bahri, asserts the transcendence of Allah upon His creation (the universe). Meanwhile, in the case of the doctrine of wahdah al-wujūd, Bahri arrives at a different conclusion from other researchers on al-Sinki. According to Bahri, al-Sinki rejected wahdah al-wujūd, but embraced wahdah al-shuhūd. Bahri concludes that al-Sinki’s Sufism is a Sunni one, not a philosophical (falsafi) one. Al-Sinki’s tendency to the Sunni Sufism, according to Bahri, is demonstrated by his thought which emphasizes on the importance of the Qur’an and sunnah as the foundation and guidance for muslim especially those who follow the sufis path, the significance of tawhīd, and his attention to rites (‘amal) and ethics (akhlāq).

Oman Fathurrahman also observes the mystical thought of al-Sinki in his book. The book is developed from his Master thesis defended at University of Indonesia. Fathurrahman uses a philological approach to the manuscript of Tanbih al-Māshi by editing the text, employing content

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1 D. A. Rinkes, “Abdoerraoef van Singkel: bijdrage tot de kennis van de mystiek op Sumatra en Java,” thesis (Leiden: Leiden University, 1909).
2 Syamsul Bahri, “Tasawuf Syaikh Abd al-Rauf Singkel dan Paham Wujūdiyyah dalam Karyanya Kitab Tanbih al-Māysi,” thesis (Jakarta: UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, 2004).
analysis and translating the text from Arabic to Indonesian. Another important academic research on this topic has been conducted by Baihaqi. In his bachelor’s thesis, Baihaqi conducts a comparative study between the thought of Shams al-Dīn al-Samāṭra’ī and ‘Abd al-Ra‘ūf al-Sīnkīlī.4

Another study has been conducted by Rasyad, Hermansyah and Zulkhairi who analyze the Arabic literary aspects in the works of ‘Abd al-Ra‘ūf al-Sīnkīlī.5 Meanwhile, Ridwan Arif discusses the role of ‘Abd al-Ra‘ūf al-Sīnkīlī in reconciling Sufism and the shari‘ah in the 17th century Malay world.6 And a study by Abid Syahni focuses more on al-Sīnkīlī as a Qur‘an interpreter with his commentary Turjuman al-Mustafid.7

Azyumardi Azra partially discussed ‘Abd al-Ra‘ūf al-Sīnkīlī in his Ph.D. thesis which was later published as Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad XVII & XVIII. In his book, Azra investigates the relation and network between Muslim scholars in the Malay world and their counterparts in the Middle East. In his analysis, Azra places al-Sīnkīlī as one of the most important reformers (mujaddids) beside Nūr al-Dīn al-Rānīrī, Yusūf al-Makassārī (from the 17th Century), ‘Abd al-Samād al-Palimbānī, and Daud ibn ‘Abdullah al-Pattānī (from the 18th Century). This research contributes greatly to describing the network of Muslim scholars in the Middle Eastern countries. Contrary to al-Rānīrī who employed the radical approach, al-Sīnkīlī, according to Azra, presented himself as an evolutionist reformer. It means that al-Sīnkīlī emphasized

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3 Oman Fathurrahman, Tanbih al-Māshi: Menyoal Wahdah al-Wujūd Kasus Abdurrauf Singkel di Aceh Abad 17 (Bandung: Mizan, 1999).
4 Baihaqi, “Konsep Wahdah al-Wujūd dalam Perfektif Shams al-Dīn al-Samāṭra’ī dan ‘Abd al-Ra‘ūf al-Sīnkīlī,” bachelor’s thesis (Jakarta: UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, 2002).
5 Rasyad, Hermansyah and Zulkhairi, “Tanbih Al-Māṣyī Al-MansūB Ilā Tariq Al-Qusyasyī: Analisis Usul Bahasa Arab dalam Karya ‘Abd Ar-Rauf As- Singkili”, Adabiya, Vol. 18, No. 35, 2016, pp. 62-82.
6 Ridwan Arif, “The Role of Shaikh Abd Al-Ra‘uf Al-Fansuri in The Reconciliation of Sufism And Shari‘ah of 17th Century the Malay World,” Al-Shajarah: Journal of the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), Vol. 23, No. 1, 2018, pp. 207-45.
7 Abis Syahni, “Mufassir dan Kitab Tafsir Nusantara: Tafsir Turjuman al-Mustafid Karya Abd. Rauf as-Sinkili,” Journal Nun, Vol. 5, No. 1, 2019, pp. 33-51.
more on a reconciling approach when facing two contradictory views. Azra briefly touches upon al-Sinkīli’s mystical thought.⁸

Despite the richness of studies on ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf al-Sinkīli, there has not been any single study which attempts to investigate the concept of *tawḥīd* according to ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf al-Sinkīli. Most of the existing studies discuss al-Sinkīli’s mystical thought, commentary of the Qur’an, explanation of some prophetic tradition, and concepts of *shari‘ah*. This study is a library research, using a historical approach to obtain data and conducting content analysis. This study aims to explain further the concept of *tawḥīd* according to ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf al-Sinkīli.

**A Biographical Sketch of ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf al-Sinkīli**

The full name of ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf al-Sinkīli is ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf bin ‘Ali al-Fanṣūrī al-Jāwi al-Sinkīli. He was a Malay scholar coming from Fanṣūr, Singkil (modern: Singkel) in the Northwest Coast of Aceh. His father was an Arab, named *Shaikh* ‘Ali. It is not known for sure when he was born, but according to Rinkes, as quoted by Azyumardi Azra, al-Sinkīli was born around the year 1024/1615 and possibly had a relation with Ḥamzah Fanṣūrī, because in part of his works his name is always followed by the statement “the nation of Fanṣūrī”⁹

Concerning the birth of al-Sinkīli, Rinkes tracks the time when al-Sinkīli returned from the Middle East to Aceh in 1661 AD. According to him, the reasonable age for people starting to wander is the ages between 25 and 30 years old. Some evidences show that al-Sinkīli certainly lived in Arabia for 19 years. Therefore, Rinkes suggests that 1615 is a perfect estimation as the year when al-Sinkīli was born. Rinkes’s conclusion has been later adopted by many scholars researching al-Sinkīli.¹⁰

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⁸ Azyumardi Azra, *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad XVII dan XVIII, Melacak Akar-Akar Pembaruan Islam di Indonesia* (Bandung: Mizan, 1994).
⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 189.
¹⁰ T. Iskandar, *Abdurrauf Singkel Tokoh Syatariyah (Abad ke 17)*; M. D. Mohamad, *Tokoh Sastera Melayu Klasik* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1987), p. 72-73; P. Riddel, *Transferring a Tradition: Abdurrauf of Singkili’s Rendering into Malay of the Jalalayn*
According to Haşjmi, al-Sinkīlī’s ancestors came from Persia. They came to the Samudera Pasai Empire in the late 13th century. They then settled in Fanșūr (Barus), an important old port city in the coast of West Sumatera. Al-Sinkīlī’s father was a brother of Ḥamzah Fanșūrī, a prominent Sufi who spread the teachings of *wujūdiyyah* in Aceh at the time. However, Azra doubts the statement of Haşjmi that al-Sinkīlī was really a nephew of Ḥamzah Fanșūrī, because there were no other sources that support this relation. Nevertheless, Azra acknowledges that al-Sinkīlī did have a sort of family relationship with Ḥamzah Fanșūrī, because al-Sinkīlī’s name was followed by an attribution “the nation of Ḥamzah Fanșūrī” in some of his works, as mentioned above. Yet, Azra’s opinion is questioned by Oman Fathurahman who refers to Voorhoeve’s analysis on the text. Voorhoeve views that the statement “the nation of Ḥamzah Fanșūrī” in Javanese manuscripts is written as “kang abangsa Shaikh Ḥamzah Fanșūrī”, and is not intended to refer that al-Sinkīlī had any direct connection with Ḥamzah Fanșūrī, not even a teacher-student relationships, or family relationships. It is further intended to refer to places all over the West Coast of Sumatera, including Sinkil and Fanșūr. However, because at a later stage there was a famous *sufi* of Fanșūr, the statement “the nation of Fanșūr” was eventually associated with “a nation of Ḥamzah Fanșūrī”

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commentary (Berkeley: Monograph No. 31, Center for South and Southeast Asia Studies, University of California at Berkeley, 1990), p. 4-5; Oman Fathurahman, *Tanbih al-Māsyī al-Mansīb ilā Thariq al-Qurıyāsyī, Tanggapan al-Sinkili terhadap Doktrin Wujudiyah di Aceh Abad XVII* (Depok: Universitas Indonesia, 1998), p. 150.

11 The mystical thought based on Ibn ‘Arabi’s teaching is called *wujūdiyyah* because it dictates that the only, real existence is God, while the existence of the universe comes from and is dependent to Him. Another name for *wujūdiyyah* is *wahdah al-wujūd* (the unity of existence). A. Haşjmi, Syekh Abdurrauf Syiah Kuala, “Ulama Negarawan yang Bijaksana,” *Universitas Syiah Kuala Menjelang 20 Tahun* (Medan: Waspada, 1980), p. 370; Azyumardi Azra, *Jaringan Ulama Timur…*, p. 190.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 190.

13 Oman Fathurahman, *Tanbih al-Māsyī…*, p. 26.
Quoting from Peunoh Daly, Azra views that al-Sinkīlī’s father, Shaikh ‘Alī (al-Fansūrī) was an Arab who married a local woman from Fansūr. They lived in Singkil, where their son, ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf, was born. This means that al-Sinkīlī’s father was not a Malay, but a settler who came from Arabia. However, no other sources confirm this.

Al-Sinkīlī is often called ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf ‘Ali al-Fansūrī or ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf Singkel or ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf al-Sinkīlī. He is also called “Tengku Shiah Kuala”, a more popular title among local people. At first, the title reads “Tengku Shaikh in Kuala” because of his knowledge in the field of religion. For the purpose of simplification, people started to call him Shaikh Kuala, and later it changes to “Shiah Kuala”. Therefore, the title of Shiah Kuala given to ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf al-Sinkīlī has nothing to do with Shi‘ia, a school of theology that has a strong basis in Iran and Iraq.

Little is known about the early life of al-Sinkīlī. He received his early education from his family. About 1642, al-Sinkīlī went to Mecca to continue his pursuit of knowledge and learn from the scholars in the Haramayn. When he returned to Aceh (around 1661 AD), his religious views soon attracted the attention of Sułṭāna Şafiyyah al-Dīn Shah, who ruled the Sultanate of Aceh from 1662 to 1675. The Sułṭāna assigned him as Qadḥī Mālik al-‘Ādil, or muftī who had a responsibility over the administration of religious matters. Al-Sinkīlī was appointed as a royal judge (Qadḥī) during the periods of Naqiyyah al-Dīn al-‘Alam (1675-1678 AD) and Sułṭānah Zakiyyah al-Dīn (1678-1688 AD). Al-Sinkīlī died in 1693 AD and was buried beside the tomb of Teungku Anjong who is deemed as the most sacred person in Aceh, near to Aceh Kuala river, a village of Kuala Dayah Raya district, about 15 km from Banda Aceh. Hence, in Aceh, he was known as the Teungku in Kuala. Until now, his tomb has become a place of pilgrimage for many Muslims, either from Aceh itself or from other regions. Because of his fame, the name of

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14 Peunoh Daly, “Naskah Mir’at al-Thullab Karya ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf al-Sinkīlī,” Agama, Budaya, dan Masyarakat (Jakarta: Balitbang Depag RI, 1980), p. 133; Azyumardi Azra, Jaringan Ulama Timur…, p. 190.

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al-Sinkīlī is taken as the name of a university in Aceh, the University of Shiah Kuala.

Like other sufī, al-Sinkīlī is often connected with various mythical narratives. He is considered as the first scholar who Islamized Aceh, even though Islam might have been there since earlier times. Another narrative says that al-Sinkīlī was a man who managed to convert prostitutes who were allegedly offered to Ḥamzah Fanšūrī in the capital. All of the various narratives did not always correspond with historical facts, but at least they demonstrate the fame and the role of al-Sinkīlī as a great scholar in Aceh.

The Works of ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf al-Sinkīlī

As a scholar and expert in various fields of religious sciences, al-Sinkīlī had produced a variety of essays that covered the field of jurisprudence, hadīth, Sufism, Qur’anic commentary, and other religious sciences. Al-Sinkīlī’s productivity is inseparable from his important positions in the kingdom of Aceh. He enjoy the patronage and the protection of the rulers of the kingdom. His works were written in Arabic and some in Malay. According to Azyumardi Azra, most of his works are written in Arabic, for he realized that his Malay language was not as good as his Arabic because he had lived for a long time in Arabia. However, Azra’s opinion is questioned. Oman Fathurrahman argues that most of al-Sinkili’s works are indeed written in Malay, using the Jawi script, the Arabic alphabets adopted for the Malay language. So far, there have been approximately 22 works written by al-Sinkīlī, which cover the issues of fiqh, tafsīr, kalām, and Sufism.

His works in fiqh include Mi‘rāb al-Ṭullāb fi Taysīr al-Āhkām al-Sharī’yyah li al-Mālik al-Wabīb, Bayān al-Arkān, Bidāyah al-Balāghah, Majmū‘ al-Masā‘il, Fātiḥah Shaikh ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf, Tanbīḥ al-’Amil fi Taḥqīq al-Kalām al-Nawāfīl, Waṣīyyah, Doa yang Dianjurkan oleh Shaikh ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf Kuala Aceh, and, Sakarāt al-Mawt. His works in sufism include Tanbīḥ al-Māsbi‘ al-Mansūb ilā Ṭariq al-Qushāshī, ‘Umdah al-Muḥtajīn ilā Suluk Maslak al-Mufridīn,
Sullām al-Mustafidin, Piagam tentang Dhikr, Kifāyah al-Muḥtājīn ila Masbrab al-Muwaḥḥidūn al-Qā'īlīn bi Waḥdāb al-Wujūd, Bayān Aḥmad al-Masā’il wa al-Ṣīḥāf al-Wajībah li Rabb al-<Article-129-Daqa’iq al-Ḥurūf, Risalab Aḥad Murid akan Shaikh, Munyaḥ al-Yiqād, Bayān al-Iṣlaq, Risalab Aḥīyān al-Thābitab, Risalab Jalan Ma’rifah Allāh, Risalab Mukhtasarab fi Bayān Shurūṭ al-Shaikh wa al-Murid, Sya’īr Ma’rifah, Otak Ihlim Tasawwuf, ‘Umdah al-Ansāb, Iṣlāḥ al-Bayān fi Taḥqīq Masā’il al-Adyān, Ta’yūd al-Bayān Hasbihayah Iḍāḥ al-Bayān, Lubb al-Kashf wa al-Bayān li Mā Yarāhu al-Muṣṭaḍar bi al-Īyān, Risalab Simpan, and Shaṭṭārīyyah.15 In the field of tafsīr, his works include Tarjumān al-Muṣtiṭi, which is the first complete Malay commentary of the Qur’ān. In the ḥadīth field his works include al-Arabʾin Ḥadīthan li al-Imām al-Nawawī, and al-Mawāqiz al-Badiʾah.

Mirʿāb al-Ṭullab fi Ma’rifah al-Abkām al-Sharʿīyyah li al-Mālik al-Wabhāb was written upon the request of Sultāna Ṣafīyā al-Dīn. In this work, al-Sinkīli presents a comprehensive discussion of ḥaṣb (jurisprudence), not merely limited to the issue of worship, but also the problems of human interaction (muʿāmalāt) that are rooted in Muslims’ political, social, and economic life. This work can be considered as al-Sinkīli’s most famous work in this field, especially when compared to the work of al-Rāni, Sirāt al-Mustaqīm, which focuses only on the issues of worship. The main source of this work is Fath al-Wabhāb by Zakariyyā al-Anṣāri. Al-Sinkīli also refers to Fath al-Jawāb and Tuhfah al-Muḥtāj, both of which are the works of Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytāmī (d. 973 H/1565 M), Nibāyat al-Muḥtāj of Shams al-Dīn al-Ramlī, Tafsīr al-Baydāwi of Ibn ʿUmar Al-Bayḍāwī (d. 685H/1286 M), and Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim of al-Nawawī (d. 676 H/1277 M). Although Mirʿāb al-Ṭullab is not used any longer in the Malay world today, in the past the work was spread widely. Hooker says that Lumaran, a collection of Muslim laws, was widely used by Muslims in Maquidanao, the Philippines, since the middle of the 19th century AD.

15 Oman Fathurahman, Tanbīḥ al-Māshī…, p. 29.
Mir’ah al-Ţullāb is one of its primary resources.¹⁶

Meanwhile, Tanbīh al-Māshī al-Manṣūb ilā Ţarīq al-Qushāshī contains an explanation of the ontological relationship between al-Haqq (God) and al-khalq (creature). The explanations given were intended, among other things, to answer questions such as the ontological status of al-khalq, whether nature is identical with God or whether the universe has no form at all. It is the only book written by al-Sinkīlī in Arabic. Another book by al-Sinkīlī, Umdāḥ al-Muhtāţin ilā Suluk Maslak al-Mufridīn, contains some practices to be implemented by a mystic. Al-Sinkīlī divides this book into several chapters. After the introduction (muqaddimah), the first chapter is about some obligations on a mukallāf (religiously an accountable person) to know the nature of human duties. The second chapter discusses the manners and procedures of recitation. The third chapter talks about the prophetic tradition, which talks about the virtue of la ilaha illā Allāh, one of the major pillars of Muslim faith. The fourth chapter discusses the benefits of remembering la ilaha illā Allāh in depth. The fifth chapter contains an explanation of talqīn between teachers and students with la ilaha illā Allāh, ritual ordinances and talqīn bai’a. The sixth chapter discusses recommendable (sunna) prayers and ḥajj recitation by a sālik. And the seventh chapter discusses the properties of the congregation and the explanation of the Apostle’s companions about the attitudes of the believers. In the closing of the book, al-Sinkīlī introduces himself through his scientific autobiography just to confirm his genealogy of noble origin and high value of teaching.¹⁷

It is worth noting that most of al-Sinkīlī’s works are written in the form of prose. Ma’rifah is the only work by al-Sinkīlī, which is written in a poetic style. Its manuscript was copied in Bukit Tinggi in 1859 AD. This poetic work discusses four components of Islam: faith, Islām, tawḥīd

¹⁶ Azyumardi Azra, Jaringan Ulama Timur…, p. 202.
¹⁷ C. Snouck. Hurgronje, Aceh: Rakyat dan Adat Istiadatnya, trans. Sutan Maimoen from De Atjehers, Vol. II (Jakarta: Indonesian-Netherland Cooperation in Islamic Studies (INIS), 1997), p. 13-14.
and ma‘rifah. This poem work also asserts that these four components determine if a person is considered as the perfect man (Insān al-Kāmil).

According to Braginsky, the discussion above shows that al-Sinkīlī can be considered as the true successor of writing tradition on ‘religious-mystical poetry’, which previously had been initiated by Ḥāmzah Fanṣūrī. Braginsky’s conclusion is quite interesting because he does not choose ar-Rānīrī as a successor of that tradition, although al-Rānīrī writes many poetic verses in his Busṭān al-Salātīn.

Definition of Tawḥīḍ

‘Abd al-Ra‘ūf al-Sinkīlī contributed to the development of the wahdah al-wujūd doctrine, because he lived after the conflict over mystical thought, especially between the followers of Ḥāmzah Fanṣūrī and Shams al-Dīn al-Samaṭrā‘ī who were the strong defenders of the wujūdiyyah teaching against the followers of Nūr al-Dīn al-Rānīrī, who emphasized the heterodoxy of wujūdiyyah at the cost of shari‘ah. That fight was a big tragedy in Aceh, resulting in the burning of wujūdiyyah-related works and the killing of the followers of Ḥāmzah Fanṣūrī and Shams al-Dīn al-Samaṭrā‘ī by al-Rānīrī and his followers. Following that tragedy, al-Sinkīlī wandered to Hijaz to learn religious knowledge, which later he greatly contributed to his career in the Malay world, especially in Aceh. Al-Sinkīlī lived in Hijaz for a long time and maintained intellectual dialogues with various streams of Muslim intellectuals. The fight against mysticism and tariqah in Islam, especially in the Ḥaramayn, gave him the experience necessary for him to find a solution to the conflict in Aceh. Later, he developed the tariqah of Shatṭārīyyah from his beloved teacher, which is often seen to work under the shades of wujūdiyyah. Al-Sinkīlī brought much influence to the social religions situation and condition of the Acehnese people at that time. His mastery of religious knowledge, his close relation to the leaders of Aceh, and his intellectual network with the Ḥaramayn enabled him to play a bigger role in religious fields and
to give a solution to religious problems at that time. Moreover, al-Sinkīli was not a radical scholar like al-Rāni, who openly fought the teachings and practices of Islam, which were regarded as outside the framework of Islamic orthodoxy.\(^\text{18}\)

Al-Sinkīli seems to be very much concerned with the theme of \textit{tawḥīd}, because in some of his work like \textit{Tanbūḥ al-Māshi\textasciiacute}, \textit{Kīfāyah al-Muḥtāji\textasciiacute} and \textit{Sullām al-Mustafidīn}, he emphasizes the importance of \textit{tawḥīd}. For instance, after he explains the writing background of \textit{Sullām al-Mustafidīn}, al-Sinkīli explains the first obligation of a matured Muslim which is to believe in the Oneness of Allah (obligation of \textit{tawḥīd}). These works of al-Sinkīli explains the attributes of Allah and His prophets: the good attributes, the impossible attributes, and the possible attributes (\textit{jā'iz}).\(^\text{19}\)

In \textit{Tanbūḥ al-Māshi\textasciiacute}, al-Sinkīli in states that “actually the first obligation for you is to accept the Oneness of \textit{al-Ḥaq\textasciiacute}, and purify Him from all things in appropriate to Him with the statement of \textit{lā ilāha illā Allāh}, which covers the four stages of \textit{tawḥīd}”.\(^\text{20}\) After emphasizing the importance of \textit{tawḥīd}, he explains what he means with that \textit{tawḥīd}. It is an associated action, like association of something to the truth or association of something to the lies, instead of making. Allah is One, without we try to make Him One. Allah is true without having a truth legitimating from us and also the association of Allah to the nature or the action which is suitable to Him.\(^\text{21}\)

In our discussion on \textit{Tanbūḥ al-Māshi\textasciiacute} and \textit{Kīfāyah al-Muḥtāji\textasciiacute} above, al-Sinkīli explains that the \textit{tawḥīd} testimony (\textit{shahādah}) stated by a student needs to be followed by a confirmation to release any attributes not

\(^{18}\) Quoting some hadiths, al-Sinkīli warned Muslims not to accuse other Muslims from different Sufi orders as infidels. ʿAbd al-Raʿūf al-Sinkīli, \textit{Tanbūḥ al-Māshi\textasciiacute} al-Mansūb ilā Ṭarīq al-Qushāshi\textasciiacute, based on four copies in National Library in Jakarta (A 655 and A 101) and Leiden University Library (Cod. Or. 7030 and Cod. Or. 7031), p. 45-56.

\(^{19}\) Oman Fathurahman & Munawar Holil, \textit{Katalog Naskah Ali Hasjmy Aceh}, Jakarta: Pusat Pengkajian Islam dan Masyarakat (PPIM) UIN Jakarta & Centre for Documentation and Area-Transcultural Studies (C-DATS): Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (TUS), (2007), p. 152.

\(^{20}\) Al-Sinkīli, \textit{Tanbūḥ al-Māshi\textasciiacute}…, p. 2.

\(^{21}\) Al-Sinkīli, \textit{Kīfāyah al-Muḥtāji\textasciiacute}…, p. 8.
suitable to *al-Ḥaqq*. That confirmation appears in one statement of *lä ilāha illā Allāh*, which covers four stages of *tawḥīd*. Through this confirmation, Allah is believed as the one existence. There is no existence without the existence of Allah (*lä ilāha illā Allāh*). In that statement, there are two meanings, to negate any existence (*al-nafyu*), and to confirm only one existence (*al-ithbāt*), which is the existence of *al-Ḥaqq*.

**The Oneness of God**

According to the Qur’an, the unique and regular system which controls the entire universe is a clear evidence about the unique and the Oneness of the Creator and the Controller of the universe. We have been asked to think of the systematic and comprehensive system how to know the Oneness in the creation and command.  

Al-Sinkīlī states that one of the evidences concerning the Oneness of Allah is not from the imbalance of the universe. His statement is strengthened by a Qur’anic quotation: “*Had there been within the heavens and earth gods besides Allah, they both would have been ruined. So exalted is Allah, Lord of the Throne, above what they describe*” (al-Anbiya’ [21]: 22). So, unbroken sky and earth are the evidence of the Oneness of Allah, and because sky and earth cannot be separated from the universe.  

When we state that “Allah is One” it means that God is the unique essence and nothing can equale Him. It is impossible to accept other existences equal to Him. Therefore, to understand the Oneness of God it is important to know God Himself truly; we ought to have a true conception regarding the term of “God” in our mind. If we understand this theme as to what it means, then we can reach a conclusion by our

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22 Many verses in al-Qur’an attract human attention to the real signs in the system of the universe that show the oneness of Allah as the Creator. Some of that verses are: al-Baqarah (2): 163-164; al-Ancām (6): 94-99; al-ʿArāf (7): 58; Yūnūs (10): 3-6, 67-68; al-Nahl (16): 10-20, 65-74, 80-81; al-Isrāʾ (17): 12; Yāsīn (36): 33-41; al-Jāthiyah (45): 1-5, al-Ikhlās; Sayyid Muhammad Husayni Baheshti, *Tuhan Menurut Al-Qur’an: Sebuh Kajian Metafisika*, trans. Arif Mulyadi (Jakarta: Penerbit al-Huda, 2003), p. 90.

23 Al-Sinkīlī, *Tanbih al-Māshi…*, p. 2.
self that, if God is One, He cannot be two or many, and His essence cannot walk with the duality and multicity of concepts.\(^{24}\)

There are two perspectives about the Oneness of God in Islamic thought: \textit{tanzīḥ} and \textit{tashbīḥ}. Both of them have different perspectives in the foundation of \textit{tawḥīd} or the Oneness of God. \textit{Tanzīḥ} designates the meanings of incomparability, transcendence, or unreachible being. With \textit{tanzīḥ} Allah is beyond the qualities and attributes of His creatures. Armstrong explains that the word of \textit{tanzīḥ} comes from the word \textit{nazzaha}, which means to “protect something in order not to be mixed with something else”. The rational faculty (\textit{al-'aql}), Armstrong continues, is confirmed by the unreachability of Allah. Allah says “\textit{there is no one like Him}” (QS. 42:11). It shows the incomparability of Allah. Meanwhile, in the same chapter Allah says “\textit{and He is the most Hearing also the most Seeing}.” It shows His immanence. Sufis claim to know Allah through Allah (\textit{al-ārifūna bihi}), feeling the unity of His transcendence (\textit{tanzīḥ}) and His immanence (\textit{tashbīḥ}). His transcendence associates Allah with the essence, while His immanence associates Him with God.\(^{25}\) Kautsar Azhari Noer who defends Ibn ‘Arabi’s doctrine of \textit{wahdah al-wujūd} states that the doctrine does not only emphasizes on the immanency of God, but also on His transcendece. Ibn ‘Arabi, according to him, does not merely teach \textit{tashbīḥ}, but also \textit{tanzīḥ}. The unity of \textit{tashbīḥ} and \textit{tanzīḥ} are the principle of \textit{coïncidence oppositerum} or \textit{al-jam` bayn al-`adād} in the system of Ibn ‘Arabi. It also exists at both spiritual (\textit{al-bātīn}) and the empirical (\textit{al-zāhir}) levels, and between the oneness (\textit{al-wāhīd}) and the multiplicity (\textit{al-kathi>r}).\(^{26}\)

From those both perspectives, al-Sinkili emphasizes more on the \textit{tanzīḥ} than on the \textit{tashbīḥ}. It is because of his prudence in reinterpreting

\(^{24}\) Sayyid Muhammad Husayni Baheshti, \textit{Tuhan Menurut Al-Qur'an…}, p. 116.
\(^{25}\) Amatullah Armstrong, \textit{Khazanah Istilah Sufi: Kunci Memasuki Dunia Tasawuf}, trans. M.S. Nasrullah & Ahmad Baiquni (Bandung: Mizan, 2001), p. 286.
\(^{26}\) Kautsar Azhari Noer, \textit{Tasawuf Perenial: Kearifan Kritis Kaum Sufi} (Jakarta: PT Serambi Semesta, 2002), p. 27-28.
the concept of *wahdab al-wujud* that people in general did not understand precisely (unknowledgeable). Many times in his writing, he says about the inability of man to know the essence of God, and to know the essence of himself is the only way to the knowledge of God. In the understanding of self, al-Sinkīlī still confuses the ability of human to fully know himself. Therefore, when trying to give an interpretation of a prophetic saying (*hadīth*), “*man ‘arafa nafsahu faqad ‘arafa rabbahu*” (one who knows himself knows his God), he gives more emphasis on a meaning that he quoted from Abū Ḥasan al-Shādhili, “*for a man who knows himself as a faqīr (dependent), it confirms that he knows his God.*”

For him, human can never fully know himself. He says “*human’s soul cannot reach the essence of himself (‘ihātah).* This argument is strongly stated by the Qur’an, “*Tell it (o Muhammad)! The spirit (ruḥ) is in my God knowledge*”. With that verse Allah reminds human that he will never fully know himself, even though he attempts to be close to God. If human knowing God is fully impossible, human will accordingly never know exactly the essence of His word (*kalam*), His attributes and His action.

Although emphasizing on *tanzīh*, al-Sinkīlī denies the existence of *tashbīh* as implied in this statement, “*and if connected to al-Ḥaqq, the universe looks like His shadow. There is no other essence beside the essence of Allah that has been known from the beginning.*” So, this universe is different from Allah, but not really separated from Him, because separation needs two existences, each of which stands by itself, while in reality it is only Allah the Almighty who can stand by Himself.

From the explanation above, in relation to the causality, we can analyze that the law of causality for al-Sinkīlī is a big power in the system of the universe. Although this law is created by God, human also has

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27 Al-Sinkīlī, *Tanbih al-Māshi…*, p. 10.
28 Ibid., p. 10-11.
29 Ibid., p. 13.
30 Ibid., p. 3.
power, but the relative one, because it is derived from God. With this power, human can do anything he wants under certain circumstances in this world. Therefore, in order to accomplish his actions, human needs to know the law of causality in his life. It is only through this law that man can act. Without knowing this law his actions become useless. Concerning human actions, it is God who enables human to act freely, to act whatever he wants as long as it is still under the rules of God.

It means that the causality system itself is under the domination of God’s will. Human and other creatures can act only within the limits allowed by this system. But, God is beyond this system; it is not applied to Him because He is the Absolute and the Creator of this system. He creates causes with specific effects. When God has a will, He will create particular causes and surely make His will real. He can dismiss the power of fire that could have burned the Prophet Abraham, for example. This shows how absolute God is.

The Signs of God

The Qur’an contains an explanation that not only does Allah have the bātīn attributes but also the zāhir. Allah is al-bātīn in the sense that He is hiding from any human knowledge. He is the transcendent God, the incomparable. Allah is also al-zāhir in the sense that He is the real God, whose manifestation can be found in any places. The reality of Allah is connected with the existence of divine signs inside the universe. These signs are intentionally spread by Him as a way for humans to know Him. He is like what is mentioned in a hadīth “the hidden Wisdom”.

Al-Sinkīli differentiates between God’s empirical attributes and His spiritual attributes, between al-zāhir and al-bātīn by giving an explanation to the incorrect concept of unity between God and His creation. He contends that the reality is the Truth except from the side of fusion, and

31 Al-Anbiyā’ (21): 68-70.
32 “huwa al-awwalu wa al-akhiru wa al-zāhiru wa al-bātīnu wa huwa bikulli shay’in qadīr” (QS. 57:3).
there is no difference in the One. Now if everything has been seen in the reality, then the unity of everything is not needed anymore, because the seen realm has its own law, and so does the unseen. The unseen law is an indistinct law, while the seen law is the real law.  

So, the empirical reality (zāhir) of God is the evidence of His existence to us, and His bātîn remains because human reason cannot catch His Essence, and His Substance cannot be seen either in this world. Al-Sinkîli continues his explanation, “He is real from the side of knowledge, but unreal in the side of form”. Nothing is similar to the al-Haqq, but He covers the entire thing in this universe.

The reality of Allah cannot be illustrated by any appearance in this world. Because the physical eyes cannot catch Him, Allah shows His existence through physical evidences. His essence is manifested in multilevel empirical realities, a concept which in Islamic philosophy is known as emanation (fayd). Those evidences are His signs, which in the Qur’an are called as ayāt (signs). Those multilevel evidences, on one hand, show the wisdom of Allah, and on the other hand, are directed to human in order for him to know God in an feasible way. In this regard, al-Sinkîli states that it is only Allah Himself who can know Allah because human reason is incapable to know the substance of Allah. It is confusing for human to know the higher position of Allah because human can only grasp His tajallīyāt (disclosures).

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33 Al-Sinkîli, Tanbîb al-Mâshi..., p. 15.
34 Ibid., p. 13.
35 Al-Qur’an mentions this word around 400 times. In general the word āya means a sign that gives an information about a reality. More specifically, that word is used to show everything in the sky and in the earth that informs the existence of God. Sachiko Murata and William Chittick, The Vision of Islam (USA: Paragon House, 1994), p. 52-53.
36 The confused feeling is knowledge itself because from confusion human can attain knowledge. It is what has been illustrated by the Prophet when he prayed to God to give him knowledge about something. The Prophet did not pray in order for God to fix everything. The final step of knowledge is confusion. This knowledge will never be achieved except with sincere zhîkr and pure akhlâq. Al-Sinkîli, Tanbîb al-Mâshi..., p. 16.
37 Ibid., p. 14.
The signs of God, according to Sachiko Murata and William Chittick, can be categorized into two categories: (1) the prophetic signs that consist of (a) the writing signs, i.e. the scripture, and (b) the physical miraculous signs shown by a prophet (mu‘jizah); and (2) the natural signs, which consist of (a) the external signs of Allah in the universe (nature or society), and (b) the internal signs of Allah, that exist beneath human consciousness.  

Therefore, al-Sinkīlī suggests that we should go back to the Qur’an and hadīth because the revealed knowledge with great spiritual importance has been delivered by the Prophet Muhammad in particular, and inside every human in general. Through this knowledge, human can reach to and know Allah. Concerning natural signs, al-Sinkīlī contends that the world is created by Allah as a sign or as a facility in order for human to know His existence. Even he gives an analogy that the world is like khātam (stamp), whose function is a tool to know the stamped thing.

From this point of view, al-Sinkīlī emphasizes that there are two signs of God that lead human to the knowledge about His existence: metaphysical sign and physical signs. The metaphysical signs work in the reality, while the physical ones work in the phenomena. Although both signs have different laws and work in different worlds, they are inseparable. The metaphysical signs become the foundation of the physical signs because Allah is the ultimate cause for the universe that even human senses cannot know. The existence of Allah can be known through His signs in the universe.

**The Names and the Attributes of God**

As we have known, two statements of faith (shabādatayn, asḥabdu an lā ilāha illā allāh wa asḥabdu anna muḥammadan rasūl allāh) are the most fundamental pillar of Islam. These shabādatayn become a formula that

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38 Murata dan Chittick, *The Vision…*, p. 54.
39 Al-Sinkīlī, *Tanbīh al-Māsyī…*, p. 7.
40 *Ibid.*, p. 2-3.
differentiate Muslims from non-Muslims. People who have sincerely uttered the *shabādatayn* are considered as Muslims. On the contrary, people who deny the pledge of *shabādatayn* are called infidels or *kuffār*. Therefore, the *shabādatayn* have an important value in Islam.

Al-Sinkīlī states that it is compulsory for every *mukallāf* to pledge the *shabādatayn* as the recognition of the Oneness of Allah and the truth of His book that was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. The *shabādatayn* consist of the introduction to the attributes of God and His messenger: compulsory, impossible and also possible attributes. Al-Sinkīlī like other Ash’āri’ followers states that Allah has 20 compulsory attributes, which are: *wujūd, qidam, baqā’, mukhālafah li al-ḥawādith, qiyāmuhu binafsih, wahdaniyyah, qudrah, irādah, cilmu, ḥayah, sama’, baṣar, kalām, qādir, mūrid, ‘ālim, ḥayy, sāmi’, bāṣir, mutakallim*.

In addition to those compulsory attributes, Allah also has impossible attributes, which are completely contrary to the compulsory. They also consist of twenty attributes. The prophet is also known to have compulsory, impossible and possible attributes. The compulsory attributes of the Prophet are: *Ṣīdīq, amānah, tablīgh, faṭanah*. Meanwhile, the impossible attributes are: *kidhb, khiyānah, kitman, and balāda*, while the possible attribute of the Prophet is his human nature.

### The Stages of *Tawḥīd*

In his *Shāṭtārīyyah* manuscript, al-Sinkīlī divides *tawḥīd* into four stages.

The first is *tawḥīd ulūhiyyah*, which is *tawḥīd* in worship. This kind of *tawḥīd* requires that Muslims always make Allah the only destination in all forms of worship; They should not worship except Allah. This *tawḥīd* has two sides: Allah’s side and human’s side. Allah’s side implies that there is no being that deserves to be worship except Allah. Meanwhile, human’s side

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41 ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf al-Sinkīlī, *Umdab al-Muḥtājin ilā Sulūk Maslak al-Mufridin* (Jakarta: Perpustakaan Nasional, tt.), p. 3.
42 *Ibid.*, p. 3-4.
43 Al-Sinkīlī, *Shaṭṭārīyyah* (Jakarta: Perpustakaan Nasional, tt.), p. 8-9.
implies that human cannot worship other than Allah. The second is *tawḥīd afʿāl*, which requires Muslims to believe that Allah is the Only Creator, the Ruler and the Controller of the universe. This *tawḥīd* is an attribute to the Oneness of Allah by confessing that Allah is God for the entire creatures, the Ruler, the Creator, and the Substance who makes living and death, and gives human safety or danger.

The third is *tawḥīd ṣifat*, which requires Muslims to believe in the singleness of God’s attribute and His Substance. Both can never be separated from each other. Muslims should believe that Allah has *asmā’* (names) and attributes, without any *taḥrīf, taʿlīf, takyīf*, and *tamthīl*. And the forth is *tawḥīd dhāt*, which requires Muslims to believe that Allah is *wājib al-wujūd* (Absolute Being). There is no duality or even plurality concerning the Substance of Allah. His Substance is pure, and not arrayed from several parts like the creatures.

According to al-Sinki, *tawḥīd dhāt* is the highest level of *tawḥīd* for people who follow the paths to Allah. The form of *tawḥīd dhāt* is like what has been explained by the author of al-Jawāhir, “You are not seeing in this substance except the substance itself, which is called as *tajallī dhāt*. This stage is the end of human journey in seeking Allah. There is no place closer from that worship.”

Like al-Junayd al-Baghdādi and al-Ghazāli, al-Sinki divides *tawḥīd* into many categories. Quoting Shaikh Muhammad al-Ghawth, he explains three types of *tawḥīd*. The first is *tawḥīd* for lay people to testify that there is no God other than Allah. The second is *tawḥīd* for specific persons who testify that there is no anything other than Allah. The third is *tawḥīd* for the most specific people who testify the Oneness of God’s Substance, His undivided Substance”.

This is like what Ibn al-ʿArabī has said that *tawḥīd* is knowledge, thing, then knowledge. First, knowledge is a kind of *tawḥīd* in terms

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44 Al-Sinki, *Tanbih al-Masbi*…, p. 44.
45 Ibid., p. 43.
of explanation. This is the general *tawhīd* for general people. The deep meaning of *tawhīd* is the esoteric one, *ma‘rīfah Allāh* (knowing God). He also places *tawhīd* in the *maqām* (station) position. It means that *tawhīd* can be reached by people who have passed a number of *maqāms* (stations).46

Finally, al-Sinkīlī advise Muslims to return to the Qur’an and *hadīth*, for both are the great legacy that Prophet Muhammad SAW left to his people. In the face of these problems, both are the right formula. Look at the Prophet’s saying, “I leave two things for you, the Book of Allāh and my *sunnah*, then explain the Qur’an with my *sunnah*, for your eyes will never be blind, your feet will not slip, and your hands will not be cut off as long as you held them tight. “*With this hadīth al-Sinkīlī emphasizes,*’ Understand and hold fast the Qur’an and the Prophetic *Sunnah*, you will surely be guided and remain on the straight path.”47

**Conclusion**

Al-Sinkīlī is consistent to the theme of *tawhīd*, because in some of his works like *Tanbīh al-Māshi‘, Kifāyah al-Muḥtājīn* and *Sullām al-Mustafidīn*, he emphasizes the importance of *tawhīd*. It is the first obligation for Muslims to accept the Oneness of *al-Ḥaqq*, and purify it from all other things inappropriate to Him with the statement of faith *lā ilaha illā Allāh*, which covers the four stages of *tawhīd*. Al-Sinkīlī also states that *tawhīd* is an associated action, like associating something to the truth. Allah is One, without we try to make Him one. Allah is the Truth without a need to having a truth legitimization from humans. Humans should not associate Allah with nature or actions which are not suitable to Him.

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46 Jauhar Hatta, *Penafsiran Ibnu ‘Arabī Atas Aytat Aytat Tawhid* (Jakarta: UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, 2007), p. 167-168.
47 Al-Sinkīlī, *Tanbīh al-Māṣīḥ…*, p. 7.
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